Scientific Articles

SCRIPT ADVENTURE ANALYSIS — Adventurttts in "The Empire Strikes Back" by Stephen B. Karpman, M.D.

The analysis of adventure stories has relevance in the analysis of the life scripts of persons having banal scripts such as the "Nothing Ever Happens" script. In the Script Drama Analysis article (TAB 7:26, 1968) I analyzed drama as arising from switches in roles (Persecutor, Rescuer, and Victim in the Drama Triangle) and location (near-far, private-public, closed-open spaces in the Location Diagram) by the characters set in the Role Diagram.

Adventure Analysis here will focus on the units of excitement I call "adventurttts," and the total number of adventurttts crammed into a time frame determines the excitement of the participants and their audience.

The stimulus for this article is George Lucas' Star Wars sequel The Empire Strikes Back which I've seen three times (the stimulus for Script Drama Analysis was The Valley of the Dolls and Wuthering Heights movies). Both articles analyze fairy tales. Star Wars was written as a fairy tale with morals for children. The units are named and randomly listed as adventurttt inserts that can be inserted into any adventure story (or script) by the writer to hype the excitement and involvement level (see discussion later). The list is not exhaustive nor organized by TA concepts, but the reader can find many of the currencies, drivers, ego states, etc. as they study the list.

ADVENTURTTTS:

1. TRAVEL TO FAR PLACES: a galaxy far, far away.
2. A BATTLE OF GOOD AND EVIL: imperial forces vs. rebel alliance.
3. ROYALTY: Princess Leia.
4. EXTREME PERSECUTOR: relentless Darth Vader; asteroid field.
7. COMEDY TEAM: R2-D2 and C-3PO.
8. NATURE'S VIOLENCE: snowstorm on Hoth; rainstorm on Dagobah.
9. EXTREME OUTDOORS: humid swamp on Dagobah; frozen tundra of Hoth.
10. EXTREME INDOORS: ice-cavern headquarters on Hoth.
11. DRAMA TRIANGLE SWITCHES: Admiral from persecutor to victim.
12. LOCATION SWITCHES: barren planet to busy interior of Star Destroyer.
13. CHALLENGED SIGHT: blinding zero visibility of Hoth snowstorm.
14. CHALLENGED HEARING: the assault on Chewbacca in Cloud City; the silence on Dagobah.
15. CHALLENGED SMELL: Cutting open the Tauntaun's belly.
17. CHALLENGED TOUCH: Leia and Han embrace; unstable footing in asteroid.
19. FIRE: explosions, fires.
20. FIRE + EARTH = LAVA: Han's molten casing in carbon freezing.
21. FIRE + AIR = HEAT: sweltering heat on Dagobah.
22. FIRE + WATER = STEAM: R2-D2's steam screen; bubbling swamp on Dagobah.
23. EARTH: asteroid cave; R2-D2 dropped twice to ground on Dagobah.
24. EARTH + AIR = DUST: soiled clothes.
25. EARTH + WATER = MUD: Dagobah swamp mud on R2-D2.
26. AIR: flying through space.
27. AIR + WATER = MIST: clouds around Cloud City; muggy air on Dagobah.
29. UNIQUE CHARACTERS: Yoda, Vader.
30. UNIQUE ANIMALS: Tauntauns, Mynocks.
31. UNIQUE MACHINES: R2-D2, imperial AT-AT walkers.
32. WISE TEACHER: Ben Kenobi.
33. BOUNTY HUNTERS: Boba Fett.
34. MAGICIAN: Yoda.
35. GHOSTS: Ben; holographs of Vader and Emperor.
36. LEECHES: Mynocks.
37. HORSEBACK: riding along on Tauntauns.
38. PIGGYBACK: Yoda on Luke; C-3PO on Chewbacca.
39. UNIQUE TRANSPORTATION: snowspeeder; Millennium Falcon.
40. UNIQUE HOUSING: ice-cavern; Cloud City.
41. UNIQUE NAMES: Chewbacca, Skywalker, Mynocks, Yoda.
42. MASS EVACUATIONS: rebel alliance from Hoth.
43. UNIQUE WEAPONS: ion cannon; light sabres.
44. UNIQUE AIRCRAFT: TIE fighters; X-wing fighters.
45. LUCKY ESCAPE: Han escaping ice-cavern and asteroid cave.
46. LUCKY HIT: asteroids hitting TIE fighters.
47. BEING CAPTURED: Han on Cloud City.
48. BEING TRAPPED: Han's carbon freezing; prisoners.
50. INJURIES: Luke's hand; C-3PO dismembered.
51. DEATH: admiral; battle victims.
53. SUSPENSE: awaiting Yoda on Dagobah; awaiting winner of battles.
54. THREAT: Vader and Calrissian.
55. HUNGER: mealtime on Dagobah and Cloud City.
56. WEALTH: riches for bounty hunter.
57. POVERTY: Yoda on Dagobah.
58. SLAPSTICK HUMOR: droids bumping into walls and ceilings.
59. DRY HUMOR: design of AT-AT walkers; acting of Vader's new commander.
60. VICTORY: Yoda lifts aircraft; rebels cheer escape; snow walker is downed.
61. DEFEAT: Vader loses track of rebel craft; The admiral is a failure.
62. DOUBLE CROSS: Vader to Calrissian; Calrissian to Solo.
63. REUNITED: Solo and Calrissian as old friends.
64. REVENGE: Calrissian to Vader; Chewbacca to Calrissian.
65. BATTLES: land battle on Hoth; air battle in asteroid field.
66. CHASE SCENES: TIE fighters going after the Millennium Falcon.
67. HIDING AWAY: rebels on Hoth; Han inside asteroid.
68. AN INVESTIGATION: Vader must find rebels and sends out probes for clues.
69. A SEARCH PARTY: Han goes out to find the missing Luke on Hoth.
70. LURKING DANGER: a sense of uneasiness with Luke on Dagobah and Han in asteroid cave.
71. SCARED OF THE DARK: R2-D2 on Dagobah; Leia inside asteroid tunnel.
72. UNDERGROUND PASSAGEWAYS: ice tunnels on Hoth and corridors on Cloud City.
73. SHELTER: ice-cavern; inside dead Tauntaun; Luke safely on Dagobah.
74. IRRESISTIBLE ATTRACTION: tractor beams; Luke for rescue in Cloud City trap; Leia for Han.
75. ROMANCE: Han and Leia.
76. SUSPENSE: awaiting Yoda on Dagobah; awaiting winner of battles.
77. THREAT: Vader and Calrissian.
78. HUNGER: mealtime on Dagobah and Cloud City.
79. A GANG OF FRIENDS WITH TEAMWORK: Han, Chewie, Luke, Leia.
81. EXCLUSION: R2-D2 excluded from Yoda's cave; Luke hiding on Cloud City.
82. SURPRISE IDENTITY: Darth Vader's revelation; Yoda's revelation.
84. A RACE AGAINST TIME: Han's disappearance just before the tractor beam is turned on.
85. VERY HIGH SPEED: aircraft chase; laser beams.
86. AWESOME BEAUTY: Cloud City at sunset.
87. ACHILLES' HEEL DISCOVERED: power generators on Hoth.
88. GHOST TOWN: abandoned ice-cavern on Hoth.
89. MACHINES BEING REPAIRED: Han and Chewbacca working on the Falcon.
90. PERFECT EFFICIENCY: electronic marvels; Han's narrow squeeze on the asteroid.
91. CRUCIAL MALFUNCTION: light-speed failure on the Millenium Falcon.
92. INGENUITY UNDER STRESS: Han's attaching onto Star Destroyer; use of Tauntaun for shelter.
94. FALLING DOWN: Luke into hole and out window while battling Vader.
95. SWINGING ON ROPE: Luke on cable under snow walkers and on vines on Dagobah.
96. SHARP CONTRASTS: big and small snow walkers; light and dark planets.
97. SYMBOLISM: peacefulness on Yoda's planet; metallic darkness of Vader's Star Destroyer.
98. SUPERLATIVE EFFECT: originality of imperial snow walkers; Yoda's charm.
99. A WELCOME PARTY: Lando welcomes Han's arrival.
100. COMING OUT OF RETIREMENT: Yoda at work again.
102. CUNNING: Darth Vader.
104. DECISIVENESS: Vader reacting to probe's findings; Han flies into asteroid field.
105. FREE SPIRIT: Luke leaving Dagobah prematurely; Han's daring exploits.
107. BEWILDERMENT: Puzzle over Han's disappearance behind Star Destroyer.
108. PREMONITIONS: "I've got a bad feeling about this."
110. DROWNING: Suspense of R2-D2 in swamp; Luke in medical tank; Han in carbon freezing.
111. SORROW AND TEARS: Wookie's reaction to lost Luke; Leia to Han's mummy.
112. RAGE: Vader at incompetence of his admirals.
113. GUILT: Lando regrets the double cross.
114. FEAR: Yoda warns Luke that he will be afraid.
115. TEENAGE ANTICS: Han's bravado and shunning of romance.
116. A SPREE: planet to planet joyride at a carnival pace.
117. PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP: Han loves his Falcon as his own jalopy.
118. SIDELINE OBSERVERS: R2-D2 and C-3PO.
120. PHILOSOPHY: Zen messages from Yoda.
121. PROVEN SUBJECT MATTER: science fiction; fairy tales; epic war stories.
A WRITER'S GUIDE. The weaving of adventurets into a flowing story can be done by script writers whose left brain and right brain get along with each other (left = logic, right = romance). A right brain writer can learn to logically insert a high number of adventurets without losing the intuitive flow and artistry. A left brain writer can list and outline a prescribed number of adventurets then allow an inspired imaginative story to flow from that. A third type of writer will have learned the adventurets so thoroughly that they appear automatically in the intuitive creative process. In telling bedtime stories to my sons Eric (neighborhood stories) and Justin (science fiction stories) they pick four adventurets each and with their help I weave a story from their choices.

A SCORING SYSTEM. Generally, the success of an adventure story is directly related to the total number of adventurets in it. A viewer may casually add up the number of adventurets in several movies and know why some were boring and some were involving. A writer may set a minimum number of adventurets as a standard for his/her stories. When a high-adventure series such as Sinbad the Sailor doesn’t have the mass appeal of a Star War series, it is often because a high number of personal experience adventurets are omitted. The Wizard of Oz adventure had a very high number of personal experience units.

Some variations in the one-point-for-one-adventuret adding system is tempting for the scorer. It may seem useful in rare instances to give a double plus for an adventuret of astonishing originality, astonishing contrasts, exceptionally touching humanness, etc. These usually turn out to be a combination of adventurets. For example, R2-D2 peering into Yoda’s cave in the driving rain (like the “Little Match Girl” on a snowy Christmas Eve) has three adventurets: exclusion, nature’s violence, and superlative effect.

In technical scoring, it may be useful to include minus points for periods of endless repetition, inaction, slow entry of drama triangle roles, predictability, and other boring lapses that lag, sag, and drag the energy level down. These minus scores can be called dragetts or drainetts. Hypnotic techniques that are used inadvertently and create sleep induction can be called sleepetts. If an adventuret is highly offensive and gets people to indignantly walk out of the theatre, they need to be scored in a separate category, such as offenderetts, a unit of offensiveness.

The adventuret system lends itself to computer analysis of drama and adventure, as a creative aid to writers, but presumably not to replace writers.

SCRIPT ADVENTURE. As far as script adventure goes, people vary from adventureholics to teetotalers. Some adventure abstainers use only one adventuret a year called “vacation” or the once-in-a-lifetime reward adventuret called “gold watch.” Some use short term adventurets called “political activist” or “ethics charge.” Some yearn for their Aspiration (from Berne’s Script Apparatus, which added scriptbreakers to Steiner’s Script Matrix), but wind up in Antiscript or Counterscript instead, still a slave to their long ignored “Don’t Act” and “Don’t Be Well” injunctions (Rx: See Bob and Mary on Dagobah). Some have adventure and deny it in the service of their “Don’t Enjoy” injunction and “I’m being gypped” racket that support an Almost-Win script. Psychotherapy usually gets a person in touch with those personal experiences they have denied, and gives permission to trade in the “Banal” script button for the “Banal No More” one. And then, despite the “Be cautious,” “Don’t take risks,” “Play it safe,” “Please others’” tapes, the potential for high adventure is within us, and the fairy tale level of the Star Wars saga suggests that the Role Diagram of Skywalker, Vader, Leia, Solo, Artoo, Threepio, Ben, and Yoda are all within us, waiting to be liberated for brief moments by a master story teller, ourselves.

(3527 Sacramento St., S.F., Ca. 94118)