

Generative Dramatics

Structure for the Playwright, Director and Critic

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Abstract

Drama can be created and interpreted structurally: from the work, we can discover objects and operations that can be used to analyze and synthesize stage theatre. In this paper, generative dramatics is a structured system that creates well-formed sentences that satisfy a set of narrative constraints.

In this paper, a possible generative system is the genre of character-driven structural drama where the characters and their objectives are the objects and the techniques used by the characters (often on each other) to further their objectives are the operations. These are the nouns and verbs of the generated play. Some algebraic topological possibilities are explored, an informatics approach that generates a dramatic synopsis is shown, and a vocabulary of criticism is developed.

Case histories are sketched and kits are included for producing *Hamlet* on the small stage and for a collaborative structuralist workshop. Examples of plays written consistent with structural methods are analyzed and traditional composition techniques are restated in the structural terms.

The limits of structure are approached and speculations arising from structure and de-structuring are presented. It is admitted that culture does not generally reduce to structure.

Keywords: creative writing drama theory linguistics algebras criticism structuralism cognitive science math

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Drama

Structural methodology can be used to analyze a domain of information.

This paper takes Jean Piaget’s formulation of structure as analogous with the mathematical group.

“[The arithmetic] mathematical group is a system consisting of a set of elements (e.g., the integers, positive and negative) together with an operation or rule of combination (e.g., addition) and having the following properties:

1. performed on elements of the set, the combinatory operation yields only elements of the set
2. the set contains a neuter or identity element (in the given case 0) such that, when it is combined with any other element in the set, the latter is unaffected by the combinatory operation (in the given case $n + 0 = n...$
3. the combinatory operation has an inverse in the system (here subtraction)
4. the combinatory operation (and its inverse) is associative ($[(n + m) + 1 = n + [m + 1]]$)”

[12]

Piaget applied structural analysis to the domains of child psychology, mathematics, and physics.

The paper approaches an understanding of the dramatic domain of information by reducing it to an analogous algebra of objects and operations, a closed set-theoretic system within which the researcher can write expressions, relationships and transformations.

Algebra

This paper will use the arithmetic group and character-driven stage drama as parallel structures illuminating their domains.

| | Arithmetic Group | Dramatic Group |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Objects | Integers such as -1, 0, 1, 2, 3... | Characters, Objectives of the characters such as Al, Bob, Money, Power... |
| Operations | Addition + | Actions that influence such as Flattery, Bribery, Seduction. |

This paper assumes that the objects of character-driven drama are the characters and their objectives. The operations are the techniques that characters use (often on each other) to obtain their objectives. For example, four men seek the big money. One has a little money, one has the big money, one has the gun and the fourth has nothing at all.

This dramatic writes well-formed sentences: who does what to whom, in what order and with what result. Well-formed sentences have consistent syntax. The sentences can be transformed into dialogue and stage directions and can be staged within the material confines of the theatre and the abilities of the performers.

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Generally | Subject | Predicate | Direct Object | Indirect Object |
| Specifically | Al | tries to force | Bob | to give Al the money. |

The dialogue and story are initially out of scope. Dialogue is the written or improvised sequence of speech and other physical actions on stage. Story is an interpretation of the characters' dialogue and movement. Multiple stories can be extracted from the same script.

The moral is an abstraction of the story where criticism tries to fabricate why the story happened the way it did. Each story can have multiple moral interpretations.

It must be allowed that everything can be constructed in fiction, if only by reference.

The physical play provides a basis for its criticism, such as the character history, multiple stories and hidden intentions.

The first task of this paper is to discover a dramatic algebra that creates a synopsis that could become a stage play and that would provide a basis for commentary.

Formal Models

This section examines models of synthetic drama.

IDTention

Nicolas Szilas' program IDTention models video-game drama where the audience (the gamer) is part of the structure. The action branches at the gamer's decision points.

Szilas uses a narrative model that includes the layers of discourse (including morality), story (the action) and perception (conflict and emotion). At center is a narrative sequencer that listens to the world of the story (written by humans), a narrative logic unit, a user model (measures audience satisfaction) and a theatre with audience. In a field of values, characters navigate obstacles to perform tasks to achieve their goals. The program explores nests of conditionals. An example shows sequences of 30 plausible tasks that establish a goal and achieve a goal. The synopsis could be scripted in dialogue and stage directions. [1]

Table 2. Automatic generation of a piece of story. The two columns c

| Piece of story 1 | Piece |
|--|----------|
| Anna tells Joe he could try to buy Mr D., the witness | Anna t |
| Joe accepts | Joe acc |
| Bill tells Joe to kill Mr D. | Bill tel |
| Joe refuses to do that. | Joe ref |
| Joe tells Anna he could kill Mr D. | Joe tel |
| Anna dissuades him to do so! | Sylvie |
| Joe tells Anna he wants to buy Mr D. | Anna i |
| Anna incites him to do so | Bill in |
| Bill incites Joe to kill Mr D. | Joe me |
| Joe meets Mr D. | He pro |
| He proposes him some money for changing his testimony, but Mr D. | wants : |
| wants a lot of money, and Joe is not rich enough | Joe tel |
| He then decides to get money | Anna c |
| He tells Anna about it | Joe pro |
| Joe tells Sylvie he could kill Mr D. | but Joe |
| Sylvie dissuades him to do so! | He the |
| Joe tells her he is trying to get money | He tell |
| He tells Bill too about it | He tell |
| Bill inform him that he could rob the bank | He tell |
| Joe accepts. | Bill in |
| He tells Anna he wants to rob the bank | Joe acc |
| Anna incites him to do it | He tell |
| He tells Bill about his intention two | Sylvie |
| Bill incites to do it | Bill in |
| He tells Sylvie about his intention | He tell |
| Sylvie dissuades him to do so | Anna i |
| Joe robs the bank, and he is successful | Joe rob |
| He pays Mr D. | He pay |
| He obtains the withdrawal of testimony from MR D. | He obt |

In pursuit of structuralized video games, Szilas finds that “...effects like suspense or conflict need a more global view on narrative (imagining some future actions, anticipating reactions, inventing actions from out-stage characters, finding the ending of the story)...” are difficult to model but can be discovered by human improvisation. [2]

Dramatica Pro

Dramatica Pro interviews the story designer, providing choices among lists of characters, situations, outcomes, problem-solving styles and other dimensions of variability. The choices then are used to generate a story that serves as an outline for the human writer to animate realistically. [3]

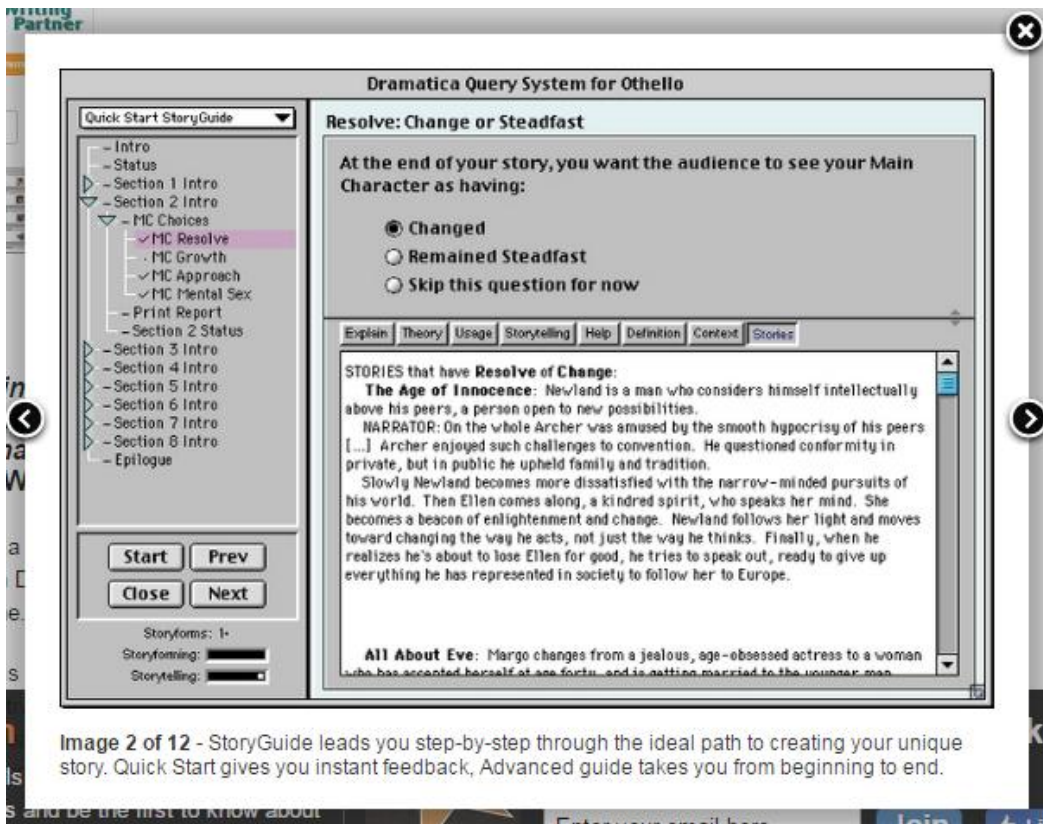


Image 2 of 12 - StoryGuide leads you step-by-step through the ideal path to creating your unique story. Quick Start gives you instant feedback, Advanced guide takes you from beginning to end.

Mark Kobernick

Mark Kobernick's *Semiotics of the Drama and Style of Eugene O'Neill* uses communication frames to identify structural features. [4]

Context
Message

Addresser-----Addressee

Contact
Encoding [ref]

The communications exhibited as tables show, for example, intersections of the date of the writing of the play, urban or rural setting.

| Plays in order of composition | Early Period | | Middle Period | | Late Period | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | 20th c. urban | 19th c. rural | 20th c. urban | 19th c. rural | 20th c. urban | 19th c. rural |
| <i>Anna</i> | + | | | | | |
| <i>Desire</i> | | + | | | | |
| <i>Strange</i> | | | + | | | |
| <i>Mourning</i> | | | | + | | |
| <i>Long Journey</i> | | | | | + | |
| <i>A Touch</i> | | | | | | + |

When the initial chart is spread across motif-duals (such as expulsion vs receiving), dramatis personae configuration (family hierarchy), and Aristotelian divisions (such as shattering of a dream) a shower of dramatic ideas become visible. When a dimension is added to the matrix, the number of elements is multiplied

According to inspection of the physical evidence, the intersections are valued with a plus or minus sign. To condense the data, Kobernick superimposes multiple values on to one value, the sign of the sum of the signs at the expense of detail. [6]

Kobernick looks for asymmetries and irregularities as literary artifacts, such as O'Neill's coupling the physical setting of the play with family architecture. A critical vocabulary evolves.

Kobernick refers to generative dramatics "... as already indicted in Chapter 2, this study does not attempt a generative dramatics." [7]. "... many grammarians and text linguists, like Traugott and Pratt, strive for a generative system while the present study uses a more purely descriptive system."

Kobernick quotes Umberto Eco: "... the structural model is no more than a general schema to be embodied in a new substance. The difference between that schema and a given work is the same as that between a code and its possible messages." [8]

In Kobernick, characters are caught in multiple dilemmas, free-will vs fate, the intersection of place and time, social hierarchy and Aristotelian classes. These are the components the critic can see but the characters cannot, which reflects Kobernick's analytic intentions.

Kobernick's discoveries include "oppositional motifs" such as material and psychological dominance, expulsion and reception, hiding and revealing. [9]

In the generative model, motifs are not characters with objectives and the means to achieve them. The human writer can map motif into character, perhaps satisfying motif with a persistent character for the critic to see.

Vladimir Propp

Vladimir Propp examined Russian folklore to identify their common components.

Propp catalogued 28 events, such as absenting oneself from home and interdiction addressed to the hero, techniques that could be added to the dramatic vocabulary of verbs. [10]

Propp's catalogue could be used to write a synopsis, although the play would be plot- and theme-driven unless the human writer successfully wrote it from the outside while it appeared to be lived from the inside, the actions seeming to be the natural results of the characters' efforts.

108 Beat Play

A program [13] was written that generated 108 well-formed dramatic sentences using characters, objectives and techniques established before the execution. The generator concatenates the items with one another to form sentences. They form a rude synopsis that could be translated into dialogue and stage directions and support the first task of this paper.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Al tries Flattery on Al to get Little Money | Al tries Bribery on Bob to get Little Money | Al tries Coercion on Carl to get Little Money |
| Bob tries Flattery on Al to get Little Money | Bob tries Bribery on Bob to get Little Money | Bob tries Coercion on Carl to get Little Money |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Carl tries Flattery on Al to get Little Money | Carl tries Bribery on Bob to get Little Money | Carl tries Coercion on Carl to get Little Money |
| Al tries Flattery on Al to get Gun | Al tries Bribery on Bob to get Gun | Al tries Coercion on Carl to get Gun |
| Bob tries Flattery on Al to get Gun | Bob tries Bribery on Bob to get Gun | Bob tries Coercion on Carl to get Gun |
| Carl tries Flattery on Al to get Gun | Carl tries Bribery on Bob to get Gun | Carl tries Coercion on Carl to get Gun |
| Al tries Flattery on Bob to get Big Money | Al tries Bribery on Carl to get Big Money | Al tries Murder on Al to get Big Money |
| Bob tries Flattery on Bob to get Big Money | Bob tries Bribery on Carl to get Big Money | Bob tries Murder on Al to get Big Money |
| Carl tries Flattery on Bob to get Big Money | Carl tries Bribery on Carl to get Big Money | Carl tries Murder on Al to get Big Money |
| Al tries Flattery on Bob to get Little Money | Al tries Bribery on Carl to get Little Money | Al tries Murder on Al to get Little Money |
| Bob tries Flattery on Bob to get Little Money | Bob tries Bribery on Carl to get Little Money | Bob tries Murder on Al to get Little Money |
| Carl tries Flattery on Bob to get Little Money | Carl tries Bribery on Carl to get Little Money | Carl tries Murder on Al to get Little Money |
| Al tries Flattery on Bob to get Gun | Al tries Bribery on Carl to get Gun | Al tries Murder on Al to get Gun |
| Bob tries Flattery on Bob to get Gun | Bob tries Bribery on Carl to get Gun | Bob tries Murder on Al to get Gun |
| Carl tries Flattery on Bob to get Gun | Carl tries Bribery on Carl to get Gun | Carl tries Murder on Al to get Gun |
| Al tries Flattery on Carl to get Big Money | Al tries Coercion on Al to get Big Money | Al tries Murder on Bob to get Big Money |
| Bob tries Flattery on Carl to get Big Money | Bob tries Coercion on Al to get Big Money | Bob tries Murder on Bob to get Big Money |
| Carl tries Flattery on Carl to get Big Money | Carl tries Coercion on Al to get Big Money | Carl tries Murder on Bob to get Big Money |
| Al tries Flattery on Carl to get Little Money | Al tries Coercion on Al to get Little Money | Al tries Murder on Bob to get Little Money |
| Bob tries Flattery on Carl to get Little Money | Bob tries Coercion on Al to get Little Money | Bob tries Murder on Bob to get Little Money |
| Carl tries Flattery on Carl to get Little Money | Carl tries Coercion on Al to get Little Money | Carl tries Murder on Bob to get Little Money |
| Al tries Flattery on Carl to get Gun | Al tries Coercion on Al to get Gun | Al tries Murder on Bob to get Gun |
| Bob tries Flattery on Carl to get Gun | Bob tries Coercion on Al to get Gun | Bob tries Murder on Bob to get Gun |
| Carl tries Flattery on Carl to get Gun | Carl tries Coercion on Al to get Gun | Carl tries Murder on Bob to get Gun |
| Al tries Bribery on Al to get Big Money | Al tries Coercion on Bob to get Big Money | Al tries Murder on Carl to get Big Money |
| Bob tries Bribery on Al to get Big Money | Bob tries Coercion on Bob to get Big Money | Bob tries Murder on Carl to get Big Money |
| Carl tries Bribery on Al to get Big Money | Carl tries Coercion on Bob to get Big Money | Carl tries Murder on Carl to get Big Money |
| Al tries Bribery on Al to get Little Money | Al tries Coercion on Bob to get Little Money | Al tries Murder on Carl to get Little Money |
| Bob tries Bribery on Al to get Little Money | Bob tries Coercion on Bob to get Little Money | Bob tries Murder on Carl to get Little Money |
| Carl tries Bribery on Al to get Little Money | Carl tries Coercion on Bob to get Little Money | Carl tries Murder on Carl to get Little Money |
| Al tries Bribery on Al to get Gun | Al tries Coercion on Bob to get Gun | Al tries Murder on Carl to get Gun |
| Bob tries Bribery on Al to get Gun | Bob tries Coercion on Bob to get Gun | Bob tries Murder on Carl to get Gun |
| Carl tries Bribery on Al to get Gun | Carl tries Coercion on Bob to get Gun | Carl tries Murder on Carl to get Gun |

If each unit of dialogue took 1 minute to enact, the play would be 108 minutes long, each page an attempt by a character to obtain from another an object of desire using a small number of techniques.

The program calculated a cross-product of the 4 original vectors of the structure, resulting in a single vector of 108 sentences, formed from all possible combinations of nouns and verbs. The combinations were programmed to look like sentences involving characters, objectives, and techniques. Accidentally listing Murder as the last in the table of techniques creates the illusion of a climax.

Absurd things happen such as a character tries to murder himself to get the gun. Murdered men continue to pursue their objectives.

There is no sense of necessity in the sequence of events: one event follows exactly the same way each time the program runs. Change anything of the input lists and the results change. There is no temporal dependency. Because the sentences are independent, there are no logical branches.

The program could be made to prefer absurdities, possibly generating anti-narratives, stories that destroy the means by which we tell stories, using non-sequiturs, absurdities and anachronism, and producing only surprises. Increasing the number of characters, techniques or objectives increases the number of sentences and performance time.

Filtering out absurdities reduces the stage-time. Eliminating self-references (subject = predicate) reduces the synopsis to 72 statements. No one robs himself.

Keeping track of the health and wealth of each character would prevent the dead from acting and create the illusion of time as the audience could see health and wealth changing.

The probability of success for each beat can be randomized, creating a different play each time the program runs as some branches of possibility survive and others die out. Al has the gun but maybe Carl will take it.

In the branching model, the action can be made intricate, the actors following sequences of probabilities with a large amount of dependency between one moment and the next, like an adventure game.

Sorting the techniques such with the more innocent actions explored first would lead the audience to think of the characters as decent people but the natural escalation reveals their inner wickedness. Coupling technique to character could lead to a story where good and evil gradually change roles, meeting in neutral territory in the middle, and then both breaking the audience's original expectations.

It could be that the moral of character-driven drama is that there is no morality, as in physics and biology, that living things want to continue living and do so at the expense of others. Every point illustrates that there is no point. Could be an oscillation between values that settle on neutrality.

Crust of Bread: An Entropic Monoid

In the first sentences of the 108 Beat Play, the characters ally against Al to get the little money.

In the 72 Beat play, a filter forbids the subject=object absurdities. Add a lists for health and wealth, add alliance to the list of techniques and another name to the list of characters.

Health is depreciated when a character loses an encounter. Prevent low-health characters from being the subject of sentences.

Alliance multiplies the health of the allies.

The depreciation of health introduces irreversible processes and is no longer a structure. The play is an analogue of the monoid semi-group. The *108 Beat Play* can be set to run endlessly but *Crust of Bread* will run down.

The play limits the number of sentences in the play by reducing the number of characters during the course of the performance. Actuals players can Rochambeau for results of encounters, the play becoming a cascade of improvisations.

The program could generate many unique stories and collect statistics in bulk. Identifying interesting features would be the challenge: because all the variables are known before generation, what could be surprising about the results?

Could be modeled as a control system with set points and feedback. It could search through the statistics to change its own parameters and control functions, searching through the debris for the unidentifiable unusual.

In production, the actors would find themselves in a plot- or author-driven play, literary jail and their challenge would be to become particular people and escape.

The universal objective is a crust of bread. Dead characters stay on stage as strengthless ghosts that can neither act nor be acted upon, yet can torment survivors, amplifying the claustrophobia.

In the *108 Beat* the character driving the action changes frequently. From the lore, the audience derives the main character and point of view from the character who is in every scene. Find the play where the least healthy and most oppressed wins the objective.

Dramatic Topologies

The system's initial conditions are the number of tables and rows.

The 108 Beat Play halts when all combinations have occurred.

The 72 Beat Play filters out some absurd sentences.

Crust of Bread is limited by the dynamically reduction of players on stage.

In the analysis of a play, multiple structures can be abstracted.

The action in a character-driven play is driven by individual selfishness, originating authentically from each personality in the situation. The writer engages paradox in the writing of drama necessarily from the outside and the narrative requirement that the story be about the individual from the individual's testifying experience from the inside.

Plot is simply the series of efforts. Characters must be resourceful, must abandon their commitment to fate, abandon the chains of immutable character and even in the apparent act of generosity always act persistently in their own interest. Humans do not have a nature. Humans make choices. Characters are condemned to freedom. The spectators can see the layers of civilization peeled away by the words and actions, revealing the true character within, the strong originator of action.

Plot- and theme-driven action is limited by plot and theme. When the plot or theme is satisfied, the play is over, ending happily or sadly or ambiguously. The hero must be heroic and generous. The bad guy must be deceitful and selfish. They might cross over. The action is driven by off-stage-principles that the characters are doomed to follow. The individual, that ingenious character invented during the Enlightenment, is trapped in morality, history, political parties, and family. If the theme is that there is no point to life, then the characters are trapped in pointlessness.

In representations of reality, we are likely to interpret events as the results of selfishness tempered by principle. We can suppose that consumerism is a policy of selfishness that must deal with the paradox of community values. As ever, we play in the irreconcilable intersection of ethics and politics.

Opening a Structure

By definition, structures are closed, containing objects consistent with the original set of objects, making it a set-theoretic system, an algebra, a formal system.

Opening a structure breaks its logic and a different set of theorems can be proved.

- Adding or subtracting a character increases or decreases the number of combinations of actions. Continually adding characters overwhelms the audience's efforts to form a closed narrative.
- Add an object, such as a chair, that exceeds its definition by acquiring objectives and techniques. When the audience accepts the new rules of the game, add another object.
- Create possibilities that attack generalities.
- Bring the audience or the street into the story. Characters may directly address, emerge from or join the audience.
- Names of characters can be used as coded messages from author to audience.
- Actors can drop their character's objectives and remember that they are working artists who came to the theatre, this very theatre that we are in today, the theatre right now and not the illusion suggested by the producers of the play, and the actors have their own problems with public transportation and bills to pay.
- Bring the author into the play and then kill him.
- Story within a story. Write a play about a screenwriter who is writing a movie about a poet writing about a poor artist who paints pictures of medieval aristocrats who think they're writers who write about the state of art in the distant future.
- Roshomon the story, attacking the narrative, same story many times, inconsistently.
- Fragment or reorder time, undermining the audience's narrative attempts.
- Look for possibilities to use formality to discover the problems of formal systems. A structure as complex as arithmetic can contain unreachable truths. Is a character who claims to lie telling the truth?
- Irreversible processes create claustrophobic plays.
- There is nothing of substance, only the pursuit of objective. Reference travels faster than the speed of light.

Structuralist Workshop

The workshop delivers a collaborative environment for the development of dramatic dialogue. Useful materials include laptops, a printer, a ream of paper, white boards, and a copier. Each step is accompanied by discussion and role-playing.

Whiteboard a list of monosyllabic first names of characters. Choose the first 3 characters with a unique first initial.

Whiteboard a list of possible objectives of your characters, such as money, marriage, divorce, power, sex, food, reputation or security. Select one objective that all characters are committed to achieving and that only one character can achieve.

Whiteboard techniques that one character might use on another to achieve the objective, such as flattery, threat of force, bribery, seduction, and deceit. Order the list by increasing risk.

Whiteboard a list of settings such as a bar, office, warehouse, playground or boat. List possible social roles such as stoner, financial type, homeless, engineer, and farmer. Select setting and roles for the characters.

Ask the writers in small groups and singles, to compose a single unit of dialogue (beat), each beat a single attempt by one character using one technique to obtain an objective from a second character. Include each beat on its own single page. The writers should make it clear who is driving, who is driven, what technique is being used and whether the driver succeeds or fails.

Collect, copy and distribute all copies to all writers.

In small groups and singles assemble some of the beats into short scripts.

- Strengthen or eliminate beats that are not clearly successes or failures.
- Combine or eliminate similar beats.
- Strengthen or eliminate beats that do not show a character trying to achieve an objective.

Cast and read some of the edited scripts.

Ask attendees to analyze each of the beats in terms of the following.

- Who is driving the beat?
- What is the driver's objective?
- What technique is the driver using?
- Did the driver clearly succeed or fail?
- Who is being driven?
- What technique is the driven using to oppose the driver?
- What is the driver risking?

Construct a character-versus-character matrix that depicts the change in relationship between each pair of characters from start to finish. Calculate the total number of changes. Are the changes primarily positive or negative? Check that evidence of each change is actually in the story.

| About Domination | Char A | Char B | Char C | Changes | Sign of Changes |
|------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|-----------------|
| Char A initial | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | +1 |
| Char A final | 1 | 1 | 0 | | |
| Char B initial | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Char B final | 0 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Char C initial | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | +2 |
| Char C final | 1 | 0 | 1 | | |
| Totals | | | | 8 | +3 |

In the example, there are 8 changes out of a possible 9, which indicates high-action. Accounting for direction of change, the sign of changes is positive, representing a net gain and suggesting comedy. Characters A and C gain the most.

Construct a time-line for the story including all characters. Enter the relationships from the character relationship matrix. The points of inflection are opportunities for action.

Case Histories

The following sections express widely-known cultural artefacts in structural terms.

Poker as Structure

The 5 Card Draw poker consists of three sets of elements: cards, players, and chips.

Operations consist of the ante, deal, bet, raise, fold, call, and show.

The set is closed over the set of possible hands. The possible hands are ranked. Some possible hands are equal.

For any player, a winning hand might be followed by a losing hand, hence the play is reversible.

If the ante is zero, it's possible for a hand to result in no change.

If there is a house-rake, the players lose irreversibly. If a player becomes bankrupt, the number of players decreases.

Of Human Bondage

Alice loves Leslie who loves Bette who loves no one. Thus Alice loves but is not loved. Leslie loves and is loved but not by the same person. Bette is loved but does not love.

The asymmetric relationship drives the action. Alice increases her love for Leslie as she loses him.

With Alice waiting, Leslie is free to roam while keeping her around. Leslie, with the most symmetry is most pleased.

Bette is unsatisfied with her asymmetry, tied to Leslie by the thread of being loved but not loving. For amusement, she tantalizes her lover, keeping him in tow.

The relationships are generally reversible, in that any may forgive the trespasses of another and return to a seductive state. Anyone of them is free to reject the beloved or the lover.

Time, however, is unforgivingly irreversible.

Ghost World

The young woman is at the distant center of her social universe that wants to forget her. She is trapped at the center. The structure is spherical, almost perfectly symmetrical in every direction.

One or two relationships are relatively open, unbalancing the sphere, and suggesting motion.

By leaving town, she closes the nearly open relationships, risking increased isolation.

Dead Man

The young man is in the distant center of his hostile social universe that wants to kill him. There is nowhere to turn. All forces converge on him.

One friend provides relief, breaking the symmetry.

12th Night, or What You Will

| Wooer | Agent | Woored | Agent's beloved | |
|--------|---------------|--------|-----------------|--|
| Orsino | Viola/Cesario | Olivia | Orsino | |

| | | | | |
|---------------|----------|---------------|----------|--|
| Olivia | Malvolio | Viola/Cesario | Malvolio | |
| Viola/Cesario | | Orsino | Orsino | |
| Sir Andrew | Sir Toby | Olivia | | |

Viola, disguised as Cesario, is sent by Orsino to woo Olivia in Orsino's name.

Olivia, disdainful of Orsino, sends Malvolio to woo Viola in Olivia's name.

Viola is in love with Orsino, her hidden wooer.

Malvino thinks that Olivia, his hidden wooer, is in love with Malvolio.

Malvolio parallels Orsino and does not parallel Viola.

Viola, because she is in love with and must be faithful to Orsino, is eloquent and sincere in her praise of Orsino, the hidden wooer.

Malvolio, because he is in love with himself and cannot be faithful to anyone else, praises himself, and is consumed by vanity.

***Oleanna* and Dominance**

The characters exchange roles, initial to final.

The figure has high symmetry but the figure being small, the difference is significant.

| | <i>Tenure Board</i> | <i>Carol's Group</i> | Political Relationships |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---|
| <i>John Initial</i> | 1 | 0 | Matrix displays the relationships between the characters and their political support. It can be supposed that they derive their power from their groups. Thus the political power relationships can be talked about as the foundation for interpersonal dominance. Ethics connects to politics. |
| <i>John Final</i> | 0 | 0 | |
| <i>Carol Initial</i> | 0 | 1 | |
| <i>Carol Final</i> | 1 | 1 | |

In the following chart, '1' indicates a positive personal relationship to the political group.

John's wife and real estate agent can also be brought in as support for the Professor. Carol makes allies of them all.

Inferences

The characters exchange relationships, initial to final. The female role, at first submissive, finally conquers the male.

The matrix begins to illustrate the richness and resonance of the play.

Using only the initial and final states, the matrix could illustrate the precipitous fall of the professor, who holds onto his dominance until he is defeated. If Carol is initially scored as in control of herself, the play

has additional asymmetry. The actor playing her part would be in charge of her certainty throughout the play.

An Avalanche of Loss

John loses everything: his job, his freedom, the deposit on the house, his wife and child.

Carol achieves victory, although she suffers physically and emotionally from the battle although she continually wins support from her Group.

Two characters begin with formal cordiality and end in familiar hatred.

Neither character wavers in their self-interest. The question is their effectivity.

Carol helps John down the staircase of his destruction.

Reversibility: Carol offers to retract her claim before the Tenure Committee. John sees the price that he must pay for the restoration as a profound loss.

He refuses and commits an irreversible crime.

Operations of Dominance

The following chart identifies dialogue illustrating attempts to seize control of the conversation.

John defends Carol from her guilt/confession.

Carol offers to defend John from the committee.

Carol claims injury several times but these actions are included as Accusations.

Coding was problematic:

Every line in the play attempted to seize control.

Time division was arbitrary. Cut into scenes.

Inferences

Carol exhibited more opportunities to seize control of the conversation (47 to 33)

Carol displayed more variance in her operations from beginning to end.

Carol displayed less variance independent of time.

Carol attempted to dominate the conversation 47 out of 80 times.

The frequency of attempt was about once per minute.

Simplicity

By identifying a dozen or so dominance-techniques that the characters used to try to seize control of the conversation, the reader can speak about the pacing, tension, morality, changes, and poetics of the play.

The very limited cast contributes to the simplicity.

Pacing

The pacing of the play arises in part from the frequency (about once per minute) with which the dominance-techniques are applied. The play can be scored like a boxing match, counting the hits delivered.

There is tension: Who will win? Because the characters take their hits so well, the winner is not obvious until the end.

At the end, John has lost and he discontinues his effort.

Amorality

Characters want to dominate the conversation and each other. Game-like. Barbarian.

Post-Modernity: There are no absolute rules.

The play can be talked about as if:

John determines the rules

Carol learns the rules from John

Carol beats him at his own game

While not appearing explicitly in the play, morality might be talked about as though it were lurking behind the play, that the play was a cautionary tale. The reader should approach this cautiously, as this is not in the play itself and is the reader's idea.

Mamet's Poetics

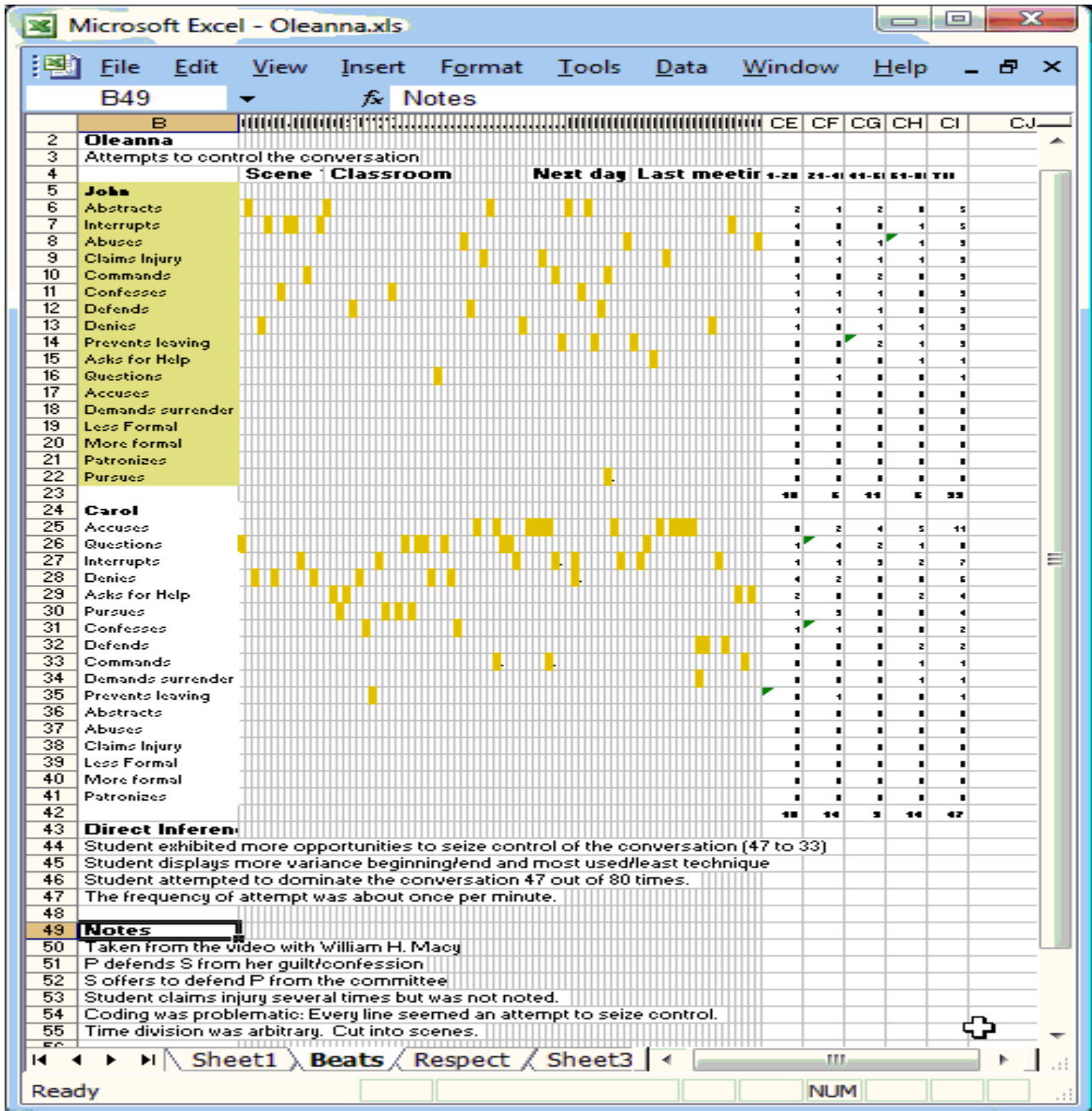
Dialogue does not call attention to itself.

Clean and simple. Without ornamentation. Like a building whose every part holds up the building. No gingerbread. Neither Victorian nor Baroque. Modern but not post-modern.

Each line is driven by the desire to dominate.

Changes

John loses everything.



Glengary Glen Ross

Desperate men do what they must to get the object of their common desire, in this case the marketing leads needed to make sales.

If the characters were identical, the shape of the drama would be spherical with its characters on its surface and their profit deep in the center.

But each character is singular, working for that flash of genius that will carry him into success, cracking the symmetry with advantage. The play quickly focuses on Levine the Machine, who reveals that he has a more at stake as he must make a sale to save his daughter.

And each character mourns his last success.

The play can be seen as an analogue of hunting, the proud and cruel warrior-predator bringing home the bacon.

Hedda Gabler

Structurally, Hedda Gabler's situation is similar to the central character's in *Ghost World*: She is equidistant from all other characters. Her environment is claustrophobic: her social world is closing. Her best marriage prospect is Tesman; while not interesting, he is at least safe and she will have social opportunity. She compromises adventure for safety. The men in the play are not as constrained.

However, Tesman's position at the university is not assured and he must cut back on expenses. No coach with a driver? Not even a saddle horse? She is trapped in the rural manor house. No, she cannot be queen of the house: Tesman's Aunt Julianna is first in Tesman's limited affections and now that her sister has died, Julianna will stay with Hedda and Tesman. Her safety in the house is threatened by Commissioner Brock, who wants her as his toy. She is at first able to keep him at arm's length.

No, she may not go to the party. It is for men only and their riotous behavior. She must stay at home with her even more socially deprived friend. She sees Luvborg as the soul of adventure and notes the heavy fee he must pay for his freedom. She provides Luvborg the cause and the means of his destruction, incidentally providing Brock with the ammunition for sexual blackmail and her world shrinks further.

She cannot even talk about it. She conceals her anguish from the others. Occasionally an aside suggests the progress of her inner thought. Death is an irreversible process.

View from the Bridge

In Arthur Miller's play, the nuclear family disintegrates, pulled apart by self, community and nation.

Eddy the father determines who sleeps with whom with ritual invocations and threats of coercive force. The vigilantes watch out for the community and punish informers. Meanwhile Beatrice is perceptive, heedful, trying to get everyone to share her virtues. She recites the aphorisms that invoke the laws.

Katherine is Beatrice's orphaned niece, on the threshold of adulthood but under the guardianship of uncle Eddy.

Marco, the older of the cousins, sends money to his wife and children in Sicily, and protects Rudolfo against the patriarchal Eddy.

Marriage between Katherine and Rudolfo threatens to legitimate their relationship, which is detestable to Eddy. But neither does Rudolfo come to Eddy to ask him in the old way for the Katherine's hand in marriage. Is something broken in the ritual? The family cannot survive the stress between Eddy's jealous, law, the vigilantes' informal justice, and the immigration police.

Conflict in the family arrives with their merger of two families. Eddy must appear to be generous to the young immigrant. Eventually, in his madness and pride, he attempts to prevent the marriage of Katherine and Rudolfo, by deporting the brothers. In an avalanche of tragic loss, his family abandons him and the vigilantes punish him.

Stresses

- Eddy gave Rudolf the roof over his head, food off Eddy's plate, and a blanket from Eddy's bed.
- Rudolfo has tried to deceive Eddy regarding Rudolfo's relationship with Katherine.
- Rudolfo has tried to deceive Katherine into marrying Rudolfo so that he can stay in the country.
- Rudolfo is ungrateful, disrespectful, and selfish.
- Beatrice's attempts to reconcile and facilitate
- Beatrice retells the story about what happened to the immigration snitch.
- Beatrice tries to get Eddy and Katherine to talk to each other.
- Beatrice tries to get Katherine to move out of Eddy's house and out of his jurisdiction, expecting to defuse the situation.
- Beatrice tries to get Eddy to apologize to Marco.
- Beatrice tries to psychoanalyze Eddy. His waning interest in her is projected on to Katherine, thus getting to the root of Eddy's angst. Katherine and Rudolfo are second cousins.

The Greek Play

Prologue: The Lawyer-character tells some of the back story and points out the set of laws that they all must heed.

Chorus: The neighbors, in their support from Eddy, represent the greater mass of the people.

Incest: The six main characters are all related by blood or by marriage. Beatrice suggests that Eddy's love for Katherine is unnatural.

Death of the monarch (family monarch in this case) leads to disintegration of the wider community (family in this case).

Hamlet for the Small Stage

Hamlet is a long play with many characters, settings, and themes, not to mention the extensive production history and the reputation of the Author that burdens every new attempt. Small theatre companies with limited resources attempting to stage the full play tend to produce good readings of the play that are overwhelmed by the number and diversity of the characters, the chaotic action and play's

burdens. If 1 hour of rehearsal is allotted for every minute on stage, the 400 hours for space rental and the hundreds of hours of actor and crew time require too much funding for a small theatre. The company settles for actors showing up on cue and clearly reciting their lines.

Evil Hamlet, is Shakespeare's play edited to 2 hours by condensing characters and centralizing the theme: Hamlet's struggle against Claudius struggle for the throne. The characters desire the throne and will go to any extreme to get it, including murder. [14]

The centralization enabled the reduction of the number of characters to the 6 who die plus Horatio, the Gravedigger, and the Ghost. The 6 who die are essential to the production as they change the most in their relationships with each other.

Hamlet's assumption of greatness as he contemplates his situation are done as soliloquies and can be delivered seriously, as private asides to the action, as he plunges into the whirlpool.

Analysis

All characters begin with an expression of love for each other. The statement of Claudius can be played as such.

“CLAUDIUS: [to Hamlet] You are the most immediate to our throne;”

In the chart, when one character kills another, they are no longer in love. Ophelia kills herself and so she falls out of love with herself. At the end of the play, Laertes begs and receives forgiveness from Hamlet but they had already killed each other in hatred. Laertes and Claudius knew about the poison yet did not save Gertrude. Claudius plays Laertes against Hamlet, ridding himself of 2 rivals. Hamlet is not in love with himself in his first scene, as he is brooding. Later on, he considers suicide, “...to be or not...” but does not follow through. Hamlet loves himself at the end of the play. He already killed the murderers of his father and mother, and for the moment inherited the crown, the universal objective of *Evil Hamlet*. He dies with no demerits on his ghost.

| Character A loves Character B | | Hamlet | Gertrude | Claudius | Polonius | Ophelia | Laertes | Changes | Sum of Changes | |
|--|---------|--------|----------|-----------|---|---------|---------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Hamlet | Initial | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | -3 | out of possible 6 |
| | Final | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| Gertrude | Initial | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | -4 | out of possible 6 |
| | Final | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| Claudius | Initial | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | -6 | out of possible 6 |
| | Final | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | |
| Polonius | Initial | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | -3 | out of possible 6 |
| | Final | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Ophelia | Initial | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | -4 | out of possible 6 |
| | Final | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | | | |
| Laertes | Initial | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | -4 | out of possible 6 |
| | Final | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | | | |
| Totals | | | | | | | | 26 | -24 | out of possible 36 |
| Hamlet's family loves each other | | | | 12 | out of possible 18 (sum of initial and final states within Hamlet's family) | | | | | |
| Polonius' family loves each other | | | | 16 | out of possible 18 (sum of initial and final states within Polonius' family) | | | | | |
| Hamlet's family loves Polonius' family | | | | 9 | out of possible 18 (sum initial/final states between Hamlet's/Polonius' families) | | | | | |
| Polonius' family loves Hamlet's family | | | | 9 | out of possible 18 (sum initial/final states between Polonius'/Hamlet's families) | | | | | |
| Total loves | | | | 46 | out of 72 possible. | | | | | |

Inferences

Out of 36 possible changes in state, 26 actually occurred, which produces an active play. That most of the changes were negative, produces a tragedy. Within the family of Polonius, the members continue to love each other, with the exception of Ophelia, who does not love herself at her end. Within Hamlet's family, the persistence of love is less, due to the animosity between Claudius and Hamlet and finally between Claudius and Gertrude. Love is least apparent between the families. The play can be produced as a war between 2 families.

Extensions

The play can be produced with a view to the war between the families for the crown. Polonius is typically portrayed as a bumbling clown, which is a weak character, as in the scene where he reads the letter from Hamlet to Ophelia

POLONIUS: [To Claudius and Gertrude, reading letter from Hamlet to Ophelia]
 "... In her excellent white bosom ...")

I believe all directors notice Polonius disingenuously leading Claudius and Gertrude to the conclusion that if Hamlet marries Ophelia his mad disease will be cured. But many directors fail to take much advantage of it, preferring the king and queen either unexplainably wasting their time with the bumbler or even taking him seriously, both of which are weak choices.

Better is to depict Polonius as a consummate actor who tries to charm the royals while pretending to bumble, giving Gertrude and Claudius stronger choices. They have seen this before. Polonius is trying to get his genes on the throne of Denmark. Hamlet sees it too, hence his contempt for Polonius and Ophelia.

Life at court is one assault after another and to stay in power you must be brilliantly ruthless. Claudius adroitly turns the rage of Laertes against Hamlet, thus pitting 2 of his rivals against each other. Either way Claudius wins.

Ophelia uses their love, which can have some reality, to gain a better position for herself at court.

“HAMLET: [to Ophelia] ...you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God’s creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance...”

The death of Polonius means the end of hope for her. Not only will she not be queen but she will no longer live at court. Moving back to her father’s farm is a disgrace as pointed out by Polonius when talking to Claudius about eavesdropping on the couple.

“POLONIUS: [to King Claudius] Mark the encounter: if he love her not and be not from his reason fall’n thereon, let me be no assistant for a state, but keep a farm and carters.”

Her father’s farm would fall to her brother Laertes, who might not be generous to her. With her pregnancy, she has lost the chaste treasure that Polonius and Laertes had carefully guarded. She becomes mad for her loss and finally, with nothing left to lose, can speak without lying, which is crazy. She kills herself because she cannot accept her diminished position and falls further still as a suicide is denied a Christian burial. She has fallen from a great height.

“GERTRUDE: And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up: which time she chanted snatches of old tunes; as one incapable of her own distress, ...”

After jealous Gertrude’s lovely speech regarding Ophelia’s drowning, Gertrude and the Claudius can turn to each other and smile. Claudius is happy that Hamlet does not have an heir in the works and so is less of a threat to the bloated king. While Gertrude wants to see her son happily enthroned, she is relieved that it is deferred. She enjoys her privilege as queen, such as the great banquets where she can entertain European aristocracy. She did not look forward to being replaced by the young and beautiful Ophelia. And Gertrude is pleased to be rid of Hamlet Senior. Despite all the praise lavished on the conveniently dead, he was not the party animal she finds in Claudius. She’s willing to have a child with Claudius, hedging her bet.

The play can be produced as Ophelia’s tragedy, as she loses so much so early. Ophelia lives and dies in the cruel politics of court life while Hamlet has only seen it from a distance. It then falls to Hamlet’s character to experience a greater tragedy.

Some say that the play is about a man who cannot make up his mind, which weakens Hamlet. Much stronger is that Hamlet felt cheated out of his heritage at his first brooding appearance on stage. The vengeful Ghost animates Hamlet’s angst, charging Uncle Claudius as the murderer, and putting Hamlet on the trail of convicting evidence that would justify the deposing and execution of Claudius. After the mousetrap scene, Hamlet has his proof but defers killing the king because the monarch has had the time to confess and therefore goes to Heaven to sing the glory of God while Hamlet’s father wanders in torment. Hamlet calculates.

All this is rational until he kills Polonius, triggering the mechanism that sends him to England, exposing him to uncertainties. Hamlet tries to cover his weakness with jokes. He's deported, miraculously escapes just in time to witness Ophelia's shabby funeral.

The issue of sex and babies as indexes of power can be found throughout. Claudius lusts after his wife, if only to produce an heir and strengthen his regime. Claudius does not want Hamlet to marry and produce an heir. In their bedroom scene, Hamlet tries to shame Gertrude into denying Claudius' sexual rights. Ophelia's implied pregnancy devalues her body. Polonius would be delighted to hear that Ophelia was with child if it would precipitate the marriage. Who can make a baby the fastest?

The king and queen have ordered Horatio to dig the grave of Ophelia. It was his child that was aborted. He plays at grave-digging, fearing Hamlet and fearing for him yet all the while trying to tell him something. At Hamlet's death, Horatio only pretends to try to drink, giving Hamlet plenty of time to knock the poison away. Horatio assumes the throne.

Structural interpretation can quickly yield results but cannot handle all of *Hamlet*. The death of Polonius does not follow structurally and the ensuing contraption of Rosencrants and Guildenstern to arrange the death of Hamlet to be shipped to England to be murdered but is captured by pirates who return him to Denmark just in time to witness the funeral of Ophelia is a lot to justify structurally. Simply put, the writer wanted Hamlet out of town so he could return to surprise Ophelia's funeral, with jokes and speeches ornamenting the montage. This machine is the Shakespeare's intrusion into the play and it damages the sensible drama. But the Bard must be worshipped, poetry is yet another reason to appreciate this complex play and we can excuse Shakespeare's failure to anticipate generative dramatics 4 centuries into the future.

Speculation

Freudian Structure and the Dividual

On stage. The superego is a choir of advice, supplied with unrequited love, a repository of ideals, cautionary tales, and other templates of behavior, a handy set of ploys and bribes to distract the ravenous id.

The ego is the persona that masks id for other creatures, a battered helmet to protect the impulsive id from the law guarding social objects of desire. It is the ego that appears in court. Law is the voice of the superego.

Freud suggests that we have multiple personalities.

A single consciousness might reside in any of the three or travel between or exist harmonically in the relationship. A person is a legal fiction, but existentially unnecessary. The audience, as voyeur, makes inferences about what lies beneath the mask, how the creature really is. The players, directors and

audience compound the numbers of personalities in play. Theatre is consciousness and the people within are its animation.

Could there be a dramatic frontier in the decentering of the unitary individual?

Constructing the Audience

In ordinary, non-dramatic composition, such as the essay, travelogue, technical description, event review, the author suppresses the author's voice. In the old way, the author should be ever-modest or the object of exposition might be occluded and subjectivity might sneak in and stab objectivity in the back.

In post-modernity, the author, objectivity, character, audience and story don't require hard boundaries. Actors can jump out of characters and explain their stories. The audience is part of the production, trying to maintain convenient remnants of antiquity or cheer their loss.

Cruel Transformations

If character-driven theatre is about selfishness, with the mortal self a multiplexed entity inhabiting every character, and if theatre is carried to an extreme, its amoral products will run aground of the critics. Why does the author, human or otherwise, write cruel stories that violate the thin skin of morality? Is the author guilty of propagating sin? Why have tragedy and its avalanche of loss showing up in art? Isn't there enough misery in the world without adding its artistic expression? Can and should art represent the human condition in all its aspects or just some?

Must art be a beast of burden to something else? To a political movement, a religious idea, an artistic school? Is rationality the measure of all things? Is art one of the ways in which freedom and its contradictions become apparent? Is art part of cultural evolution, picking up and discarding its conventions and paradoxes?

Can we expect to contain artistic expression, expect artists to create within a set of rules? Can we expect the observers of art to bless correct expressions and never yearn for the freedom found in the incorrect?

Art can establish rules and find cunning ways of breaking them. Structure is a building material and artists can use it to build a prison to break out of.

For Artaud, great theatre is like the plague. It should make the citizen uneasy just to hear about it, cause him to pack up and flee if it arrives in his city, and prompt the authorities to burn down the theatres and fill their cellars with rubble in an effort to prevent it from ever happening again.

Structural Criticism

Just as the writer can use structural techniques to synthesize drama, so can the audience use structure to articulate conveniently the components of dramatic work. Insightful comments can be formed by quickly noting the main relationships in a play and noting how they change.

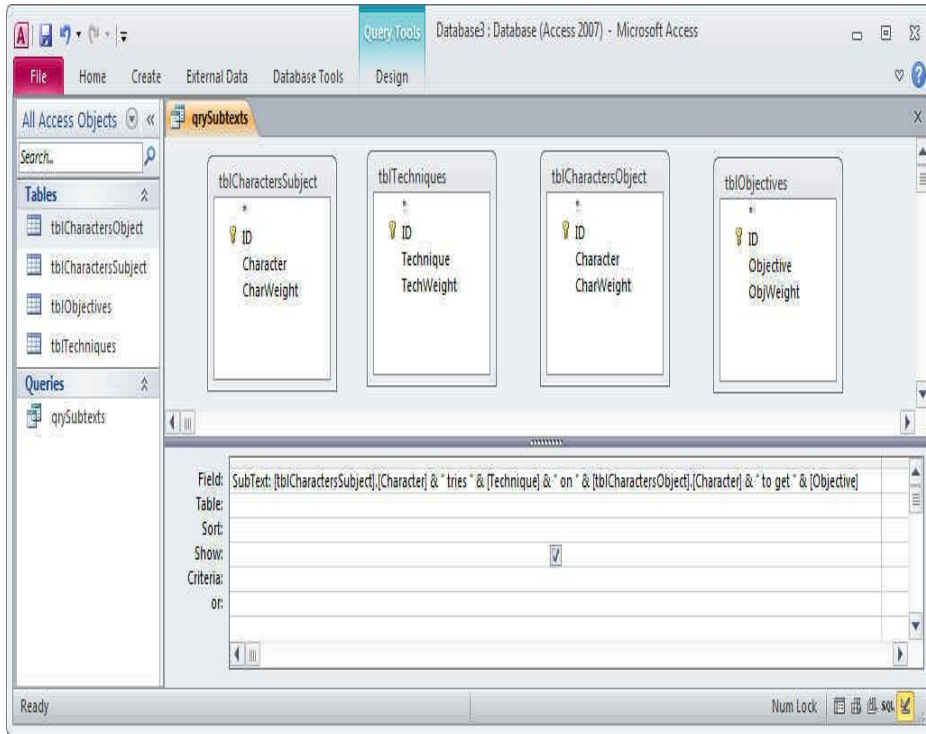
But not all plays nor all components in any play can be necessarily analyzed structurally.

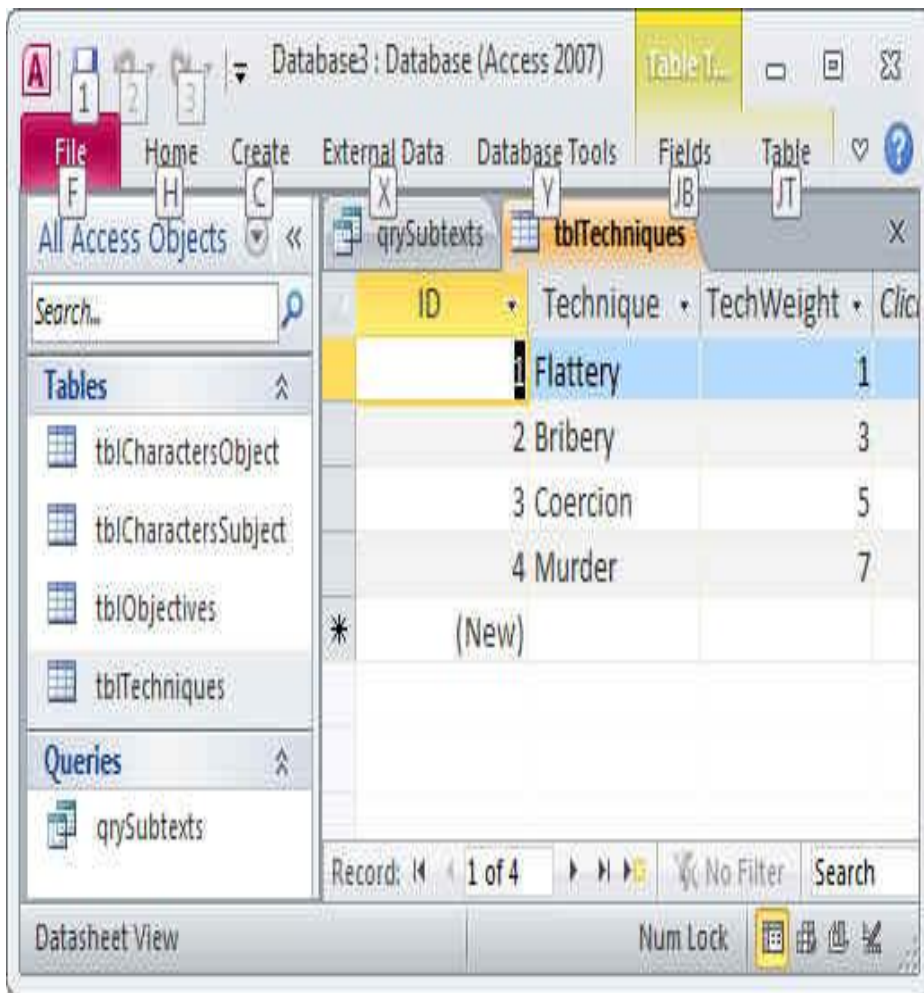
Because a play can be so analyzed does not mean at all that the play was written as such.

Structural techniques are convenient to the discourse in which the production floats.

Appendix A

Illustrating the MS Access objects that pull data from the tables and form the sentences.





[13]

Notes

[1] Nicholas Szilas *Idtension: a narrative engine for Interactive Drama*, Table 2, http://nicolas.szilas.free.fr/research/Papers/Szilas_tidse03.pdf

[2] Szilas, Section 1.3 The General Approach: Simulating the Narrative Laws

[3] Dramatica Pro <https://www.writersstore.com/dramatica-pro-story-development-software/>

[4] Mark Kobernick *Semiotics of the Drama and the Style of Eugene O'Neill* p 17 ISBN 90 272 3291

[5] Kobernick, p 272

[6] Kobernick p 31

[7] Kobernick p 35

[8] Kobernick p 6

[9] Kobernick Appendix B The Specification of Oppositional Motifs p 125

[10] Vladimir Propp *Morphology of the Folk Tale* chapter 3 <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/propp.pdf> The American Folklore Society and Indiana University 1968

[12] Jean Piaget *Structuralism* London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971, p 18 ISBN 0 7100 7044 6

[13] James Strope Downloadable application for generating the 108 Beat play: [Essay/SubTextGen.accdb](#) MS Access 2010 is required.

[14] William Shakespeare *Evil Hamlet* Catchy Name Theatre 2009, edited by James Strope <http://www.catchynametheatre.org/Scriptorium/index.htm>