# **ABOUT DRAMATURGY**

### 1. Early revelations

Aristotle is one of the best known and influential philosophers of all time. In his book «Poetics» (335 BC), he supported, among other things, a story telling rhythm. That is, the story follows a structured development leading to a sense of resolution for the audience. He pointed out that this should not be achieved through effects, such as stage trappings and music, but preferably through plot structure. The characters are a means of driving the plot. Therefore, the actors do not imitate the characters, but they adopt their character as a part of the plot. (www.wikipedia.org)

#### 2. Three acts

Syd Field is an American writer who became one of the most influential script writers in the film industry. Fields most important contribution to the area of structure was the division of a script into three acts (a fallback to Aristotle). In this division a script begins with half an hour of introductory information about the characters and their background story. Thereafter the plot reaches a turning point (plot point) that sets a goal for the protagonist that he must achieve. During half of the film the hero tries to reach this goal. Syd Field calls this the confrontation period. The last quarter of the film is the resolution and culminates with the conclusion of the film. (www.wikipedia.org)

## 4. Eight sequences

The eight sequence method was developed by the producer and writer Frank Daniel. It is part of the standard curriculum at the USC and the NY film schools. It is also earning increasing significance in Europe. Intuitive dramatic events are clarified by the eight sequence method. Writers who use it have at their disposal a powerful dramaturgical tool and a constructive vocabulary. (www.berlinscript.de)

The eight sequence method deepens and reinforces the plot as well as the character development of the protagonist. Writers are deliberately given the task of dividing the three acts of a script into 8 sequences according to their dramatic significance.

Act	Seq	Content of sequences (example)	Turning Point
1.	1.	The current world of the protagonists, Status Quo	
			Point of attack
			Introduction of the problem
	2.	The new situation	
			Decision point
			The protagonist makes a decision
2.	3.	The new road is bumpy	
	4.	There is a will, but there is still a long road to travel	
			Midpoint, 1. Culmination Point
	5.	Examine old options, figure out new ones	
	6.	The road to conflict and the willingness to face it	
			2. Culmination Point
3.	7.	The ultimate conflict	
			Twist (Outcome of conflict)
	8.	The new life	

Inspired and adapted from: http://indiefilmstar.wordpress.com/2010/02/15/designing-a-storly)

#### 4. Tips by Schrader

An individual method has been developed by Paul Schrader (writer, director and educator). He starts out by stating that the conventional feature film contains around 40 events, so to speak 40 scenes. His technique consists of writing the events down on a single page, assembling them into different combinations and evaluating the effects and relationships between the events.

#### 5. Parallels

There are basically no essential differences between Syd Field's division of a script into three acts and Frank Daniel's Division into 8 sequences. The core of the story that the film and characters must plausibly develop is in every instance the Second act. Syd Field's turning points (indicated by PP1 and PP2), can be interpreted in Frank Daniels 8 sequence model as the Decision Point and the 2. Culmination Point. Syd Field appears to assign more importance to his turning points. Both turning points claim respectively 3 and 5 pages from a total of a 120 script pages. In comparison, as indicated in his textbook «The Screenwriters Workbook», the Midpoint's function is of lesser importance, claiming only one page.

The three acts according to Syd Fields									
1. Act	PP1	2. Act			PP2	3. Act			
The 9 coguences according to Frank Daniels									
The 8 sequences according to Frank Daniels									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
The forty events according to Paul Shrader									

Paul Schrader's 40 events have nothing to do with dramatic structure. However, by laying out the various combinations of the story events the turning points may be recognized and taken into consideration.

## 6. Stories written by life

Film imitates life. The notion that life concludes with old age is in harmony with today's human perception of individual comfort. From this, life can be organized into three main periods:

First act	Second act	Third act
Childhood/Coming of age	Adulthood, Profession, Family, Crisis and Chances	Old age & Farewell

The second act is the longest and most significant period in our life. Any person or event that changes, tampers with or shortens the lifeline, will unsettle our personal sense of comfort.

#### 7. About beginning and end

Does life begin at birth or earlier? And does death mean the end of life? Likewise there are issues to satisfy at the beginning and the closing of a film. Thus a crime drama may begin with a reference to the problem at hand, (for instance a holdup). The opening of many James Bond films bear no relation to the following story, it is an expedient to introduce the actor representing Bond. This type of opening is labeled a «Hook», that is to say an action to capture and hold the attention of the public.

The closing titles of a film are of importance in determining the feeling we are left with after its conclusion. They have the potential to make the spirit soar, but many TV producers care little about that and end the film without honoring the credits. Some broadcasters discovered the alternative of showing the credits in fast motion. The closing music does not change its tempo and is prematurely faded out. Comedies featuring outtakes under the credits are more fortunate, giving the public a chance to bid farewell to the protagonists. Therefore it is advisable for dramas to show during the end titles some visually significant moments that cannot be edited out. (See «Avatar».)

## 8. Wider application of the models

The dramaturgical models appear to be cut out for feature films since these are discussed and analyzed the most, however they can also be found in documentary films. In addition Shorts, TV–spots, reports and even presentations may exhibit parallels to these dramaturgical models. The essential part will always be the second act. That is the one that must convince us by communicating sufficient information and justification.