8 A Tale of Two Boyfriends
A Literary Abstraction Strategy for Creating Meaningful Character Variation

Janet H. Murray

1. DERIVING A "WOMAN TWO PARTNERS" (W2P) FORMALISM

In early 1990s Joe Bates, one of the first researchers to apply artificial intelligence techniques to the creation of fictional characters, made an important but often forgotten distinction between believability and realism (Bates, 1992, 1994). Noting that computer scientists looked to realism as the standard for virtual reality, Bates pointed out that the great animators did not mimic actual motions but abstracted and exaggerated them, creating artificially expressive conventions (such as the unrealistically distorted 'squash and stretch') that were more persuasive than literal depictions. As interactive narrative has become the focus of artificial intelligence experimentation, computer scientists have again been excited by the possibility of creating detailed simulations of the real world. For example the impressive social simulation *Prom Week* (McCoy, 2013) offers eighteen multi-parameterised characters whose interactions are controlled by a social physics that is 'based on a set of over 5,000 sociocultural considerations.' The highly detailed back end does not necessarily make for more engaging storytelling. For example, the authors offer this exchange as a representative interaction:

> ZACK (whom the interactor has directed to seek a change in relationship to Monica): Do you want to date or whatever?
> MONICA (who is cold and honest): I kinda only should be seen dating you know popular people.

It is hard to care about Zach and Monica and the other sixteen characters because they are both under-dramatised and over-specified. The emphasis on simulation over storytelling can create a kind of uncanny valley that is neither game nor fiction, a problem that the developers addressed by switching their focus from open-ended storytelling to the setting of goal-directed puzzles in the form of social games. Despite the very impressive social modelling of *Prom Week*, the characters do not engage us as the developers originally intended them to because there is a mismatch between computational abstraction and dramatic abstraction.

How can we identify the appropriate level of abstraction for creating engaging characters within a coherent storyworld? One way to answer this

question is to look for durable abstractions—the equivalent of the animator's 'squash and stretch'—in existing story systems. In Western culture much of the classical canon, from the Greek epics to chivalric ballads, to Shakespearean comedy and tragedy, to Restoration drama, to 18th–21st-century novels, through the last one hundred years of storytelling in movies and television series, has focused on romantic triangles. Although gender roles and social values vary tremendously within this tradition, the basic situation of multiple rivals for the same partner is identifiable across nations and time. This essay offers a preliminary formalism for describing character relationships within this tradition, and more particularly character relationships within the story pattern in which one woman is positioned between two potential partners.

I call this pattern 'W2P,' and I offer it as an alternative to the familiar formalisms for fairy tales (Propp, 1928) and hero stories (Campbell, 1949), which have been extensively exploited by game designers and researchers in computational narrative systems. The W2P interpretation is also meant to be a corrective to dominant story traditions in which the woman is the hero's prize and monogamous marriage is heroine's reward. My approach to this pattern privileges the female position by evaluating the male figures as potential choices, or alternate boyfriends, even though the original source material may not offer much agency to the women. In contrast to the conventional Western male positioning of women as divided between Madonna and Whore, this proposed W2P pattern divides male characters into Boyfriends of ObliGation (BOGs) and Boyfriends of Desire (BODs). I am focusing on a heterosexual pattern because it is the predominant one in the mainstream canon, but this pattern can also accommodate same-sex and bisexual love stories as long as they fit the triangle structure of a desirable and obligated person romantically positioned between desire and obligation.

This essay deals with characters only, though a complete formalism would also include an integrated schema for events. Rather than simulating the reality of romantic relationships, or the psychological or sociological or historical interpretation of romantic relationships, the W2P formalism is a purposeful interpretative exaggeration of traditional story patterns. It is meant to be a model for a more general method that could be applied to other common story patterns in order to expand the expressivity of the emerging practice of parameterised, interactive story systems by exploiting the abstraction and variation techniques of age-old narrative traditions.

I have discussed elsewhere (Murray, 2011a, 2011b) two early examples of the two boyfriends pattern. The first is Helen of Troy, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta, whose seduction or capture by Paris, a son of the King of Troy, precipitates the Trojan War. The other is Guinevere, wife of King Arthur of the Camelot, who is seduced by Lancelot, a knight of the Round Table who is betraying his own allegiance to Arthur, thus precipitating a civil war, the death of Arthur, and the end of the idealised chivalric world

of Camelot. I have pointed out that the depiction of characters within these stories exemplifies the key narrative design value of dramatic compression, in which elements are clearly defined and selectively presented to intensify our focus on the central plotline. I also have emphasised that in successful narratives, characters and events reflect a consistent moral physics (Murray, 1997) that orients us to what is at stake in the characters' actions.

Although in both stories the partnering woman is relatively powerless, she is held responsible for dishonouring a legitimated partner and ruler with an illicit, politically disruptive lover. We can therefore use these two classic stories to identify contrasting attributes of the BOG and BOD characters as potential partners for a GWEN character (as we will call the focal female figure, after Guinevere). We can express these attributes as binary oppositions (see Table 8.1).

Table 8.1 Binary Attributes of the BOG and the BOD

THE BOG, or Boyfriend of Obligation Exempla: Menelaus, Arthur	THE BOD, or Boyfriend of Desire Exempla: Paris, Lancelot
Husband, sacramental and civically legitimised	Lover, violating sacred and legal order
Power of control	Power of rescue
Security, Protection, Confinement	Risk, Vulnerability, Mobility
Pleasures of Position (Queen, wife)	Pleasures of Love

However, there are other attributes that are distributed across the BOG and BOD categories, which could be expressed in relative rather than binary form. In particular there are positive attributes that are important in the originating storyworlds, and these attributes together make up heroism (see Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Scalar Heroic Attributes of the BOG and the BOD

Heroic Attributes	THE BOG (Boyfriend of Obligation) Menelaus, Arthur	THE BOD (Boyfriend of Desire) Paris, Lancelot
Potency in battle	Arthur: High Menelaus: Medium	Lancelot: High but below Arthur Paris: Low
Charisma	Menelaus: Average with men and women Arthur: Higher than Lancelot with men	Paris: Only with women Lancelot: Higher than all other knights with men and women but below Arthur with men
Honourableness/ Chastity/Faithfulness	Menelaus: Good standing Arthur: Gold standard	Paris: Negative Lancelot: Very high until fall
Handsomeness	Menelaus: Average Arthur: High	Paris: Highest Lancelot: Very high

2. THE BOYFRIEND OF DESIRE (BOD)

To create a formalism for describing or generating characters of the BOD type, one could start by combining the Helen and Guinevere scenarios. It could arrange the characters as exemplars on a spectrum and assign values to the prototypically heroic and villainous figures of Hector and Mordred, and then place Paris and Lancelot in relation to them (see Table 8.3). We could use a system with these distinctions to create foils for the main character or to create different versions of the same character for successive instantiations of the same scenario. We could also use these differences in scalar values to calibrate the moral trajectory of a single character—such as Lancelot's decline from chastity and loyalty into lust and betrayal. It is important to identify a limited number of attributes and to limit ourselves to qualities that have clear dramatic behaviours associated with them.

Table 8.3 Spectrum of Classic BOD Moral Qualities

	Mordred	Paris	Lancelot	Hector	
Treason	−5	−3	−2	+5	Loyalty
Self-interest	−5	−5	+2	+5	Sacrifice
Villainy	−5	0	+4	+5	Heroism
Lustful violence	−5	−3	+2	+5	Chastity

It is also useful to think in terms of qualities that can be transposed across time and social contexts. For example, an updated version of these characters might involve treason against a powerful benefactor or employer, as in Season Four of the HBO TV series *The Sopranos* when Carmela, the neglected wife of Mafia capo Tony, has a flirtation with the tempting BOD Furio, a Mafia soldier bound by loyalty to her husband just as Lancelot was bound to King Arthur. The situation creates a dramatic tension in which Carmela and Furio, like Guinevere and Lancelot, are risking their lives by flirting with one another, a scenario that would be productive for interactive narrative because it creates a choice with powerful opposing incentives and clear dramatic possibilities.

Creating a limited matrix of attributes forces an author to concretise the moral physics of the story, to identify what kinds of choices will be important dramatically and how they will be operationalised so that they make for a consistent worldview. For example, in specifying the attribute of chastity in a modern story, an author would have to decide whether to imagine it as serial monogamy, faithfulness to one's current partner, or as having a limited number of lifetime partners. Faithfulness might be particularly important in a twenty-first century BOD character if paired with an adulterous husband in the BOG role, but the author would have to decide if male adultery was going to be given the same dramatic weight and consequence as female adultery.

3. THE BOYFRIEND OF OBLIGATION (BOG)

We can similarly refine the BOG Character Class by drawing on contrasting prototypical examples from the husband figures in the Helen and Guinevere stories and their many foils. In the *Iliad,* our view of Menelaus is regulated by comparison with the other heroes around him, his brother Agamemnon who commands the fleet (and whose wife, Clytemnestra, will later kill him), Achilles, who kills Paris' braver brother Hector (and who experiences the loss and return of his concubine Briseis as a parallel to Menelaus' loss of Helen), and Odysseus, who was once one of Helen's unsuccessful suitors and whose wife is the proverbially faithful Penelope (and thus a foil to Helen). The world of *Camelot* offers fewer potential foils for Arthur. Mordred is relevant here as a prototype of the illegitimate king and husband, since he briefly holds the throne and he aspires to be Guinevere's husband (and in some versions of the tale he succeeds). In addition, when we think of both stories as part of the same story system, we can also see the wronged King Priam, sorrowful but dignified in defeat, as a parallel figure to King Arthur, who more heroically manages to deal a mortal blow to Mordred even as he is vanquished (see Table 8.4).

Only the potency value can be easily quantified here, but the other attributes could be linked to specific behaviours. Some of these attributes could also be directly transposed into surviving patriarchal structures within the modern world, such as the royal families, the Mafia, the military or perhaps a large corporation.

We can find more variety of BOG figures in plots from later eras where the model of marriage is companionship and love rather than obligation. For example, the conventional but boring suitor is a staple of romantic fiction from Mr Collins, the dull curate in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* to the rejected businessman fiancé in many classic Hollywood romantic comedies. In *His Gal Friday* (1940), for example, the BOG is a stolid fiancé, played by Ralph Bellamy, who wants to take the snappy newspaper reporter GWEN character, played by Rosalind Russell, off to wedded bliss in Buffalo and away from her career in New York City and her ex-husband and BOD, a fast-talking, devious, but irresistible Cary Grant. Throughout the film, the GWEN character is given a choice of continuing to report on an exciting story for her devious ex-husband editor or meeting her reliable but less exciting fiancé to take the train out of town. Such choices would also be appropriate for interactive storytelling.

Another familiar BOG figure is the dependent, unworthy whiner who has somehow wed the more passionate GWEN character despite her attraction for a more energetic and transgressive BOD. There are two such figures in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the fastidious Edgar Linton who marries Cathy Earnshaw though she is in love with the romantically rugged Heathcliff, and Linton Heathcliff, a sickly boy whom Heathcliff maliciously weds to Cathy's daughter Catherine instead of to the roughly

Table 8.4 Comparative Attributes of Boyfriends of Obligation (BOGs)

Attribute	Mordred	Achilles	Agamemnon	Menelaus	Arthur	Priam	Odysseus
Authority	Bastard and usurper, menacing potential captor-husband	Unruly, but gods are on his side	Absolute but oversteps (takes Briseis)	Rightful husband of Helen, pact-maker among young Helen's suitors	Ideal King	Doomed king of besieged city	Charismatic leader, challenged but rightful husband and king in Ithaca
Potency: Heroism to Villainy scale	-5 Treason	+5 Defeats Hector	+4 Needs Achilles to win	+3 Wins battles but goddess swoops Paris away	+5 A hero when young; even in defeat, kills his enemy Mordred	+2 Figure of pathos	+5 Wins battles, leads men home through many dangers, defeats Penelope's suitors
Patriarchal Privilege	Bastard and captor of Guinevere	Possessive of concubines, spoils of war	Absolute patriarch. Sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia to get to Troy, for which he is killed by his wife, Clytemnestra and her usurping lover, when he returns home	Helen is the emblem of his patriarchal authority—he wins her, loses her, goes to war to bring her back to Greece	Patriarchal but not hierarchical with men (Round Table)	Defeated patriarch	Most legitimate patriarch whose wife is true to him when he is away, and who defeats would-be usurpers when he returns home
Temperament (Kind of attachment)	Murderous envy	Hot-headed possessiveness	Murderous control	Legalistic possessiveness	Judicial (willing to burn Guinevere at stake)	Forgiving	Coolheaded but relentless in general; fiercely loyal but wandering

treated but much more vital and worthy BOD, Hareton Earnshaw, whom she eventually takes for her second husband. Cathy is the exception, being granted a second marriage by the death of the first husband. More commonly, nineteenth century GWENs wind up committing suicide as the inevitable result of transgression against their BOGs. In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1877), the husband is not a King but works for the government, and he has the authority of the patriarchal laws and the weight of public opinion behind him. As a BOG, he is devoid of attraction but impossible to leave. In Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856), Charles, the cuckolded husband, is cluelessly devoted to a woman he completely misunderstands. The bourgeois life he offers bores her by its lack of resemblance to her fantasies of romantic heroes, the BOD she seeks repeatedly in secret love affairs. Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* (1899) is seeking a more feminist autonomy in her love affairs, but the boring businessman husband is once again the fate she can only escape from by suicide. An interactive story system could offer more agency to the woman, and could accentuate the conflict between one's love for one's children and attraction to the BOD, which many of these stories introduce.

The expanded social opportunities of women in 20th-century Western countries gave rise to another version of the undesirable BOG, the disapproving, discouraging authority figure, often robotically analytical and opposed to new ventures. For example, the impeccably proper fiancé in *Pat and Mike* (1952) has only to show up in the grandstands to cause the spunky athlete heroine to miss her swing or drop the ball; she trades him in for Spencer Tracy as her lower class but encouraging BOD-as-coach. An interactive narrative could further dramatise the tensions of crossing social classes or the pressure of athletic performance and build up the pathos of disappointing the committed fiancé. Or it could exaggerate the comic contrast between the two potential marriages and allow the interactor to switch between visions of the heroine swinging a golf club in a championship round, or smashing a formal table setting out of boredom with her privileged life.

Another familiar modern stereotype of the undesirable husband is the self-absorbed, unfaithful sexist who is often portrayed in late 20th-century films as the first husband whom the heroine has to leave in order to begin her journey to self-fulfilment. For example, in the film *Heartburn* (1986) based on an autobiographical novel by the feminist writer/director Nora Ephron, the BOG is a D.C.-based philandering journalist not unlike Ephron's ex-husband Carl Bernstein, and the heroine, like Ephron, finds professional success and a more suitable partner in New York City. The BOG can also be more menacing, like the gangster husband whose jealousy is dangerous, or the abusive husband who holds the heroine captive with violent threats and actions, or the wealthy fiancé who tries to murder the rival lover in *Titanic* (1997). A menacing BOG character also can be a comic figure, as in the classic Judy Holiday comedy *Born Yesterday* (1950) where a bookish journalist steals the heart of a corrupt and bullying junkman's showgirl mistress.

Drawing on all of these unlovable BOGs, we can create an attribute table based on summary prototypes that would work particularly well for stories where the GWEN-BOD relationship is positioned, not as a transgression against legitimate order as in the Helen/Guinevere pattern, but as an empowering escape from a confining, joyless individual (see Table 8.5).

Table 8.5 Attributes of the negative modern BOG

Attribute	Wimp	Robot	Chauvinist	Scary Gangster	Evil Captor
Authority	Manipulative	Rule-based	Conformist	Dictatorial	Menacing
Potency	Impotent	Withholding	Controlling	Despotic	Violating
Patriarchal Privilege	Exploitative	Snobbish	Unfaithful	Abusive	Tyrannical
Attachment	Cloying	Cool	Objectifying	Jealous	Sadistic

We could choose one of these five familiar prototypes as our BOG or create a more composite BOG figure drawing from multiple columns, such as a conformist who is faithful and withholding but highly jealous. We could also provide some positive BOG or BOD characters, aligning their virtues to make explicit contrasts with the vices of the oppressive BOG figure (see Table 8.6).

Table 8.6 Benevolent BOG / Rescuing BOD Prototypes

Attribute	Hippie	Scientist	Marshall	Knight (BOD)	Sugar Daddy
Authority	Communitarian	Rational	Legal	Physical	Financial
Potency in	Sexuality	Knowledge	Legal System	Fighting	Wealth
Patriarchal	(anti)Pacifist	(anti) Egalitarian	Protection / Punishment	Macho gallantry	Sheltering
Attachment	Supportive	Encouraging	Impersonal	Amorous	Indulgent

Depending on the moral physics of the story, we could choose to populate the world with only negative BOG and BOD examples, leaving GWEN to ally with other women or to rescue herself.

4. THE GWEN FIGURE

The classic GWEN figures cannot be seen outside of the ideology of patriarchy that defines them in relationship to men, so a feminist presentation of their stories might contextualise their limited agency by presenting their stories as part of a wider spectrum of female roles. Instead of limiting the

characters to traditional GWENs (women with two suitors), we can make the patriarchal social structure explicit by including Briseis and Iphegenia as the mute victims of male power, Clytemnestra and Penelope as prototypes of active resistance to male aggression, and the Sirens who tempt Odysseus as male fantasies of women's sexuality divorced from patriarchal control (see Table 8.7).

The patriarchal structure allows little room for agency. In the patriarchal story world, there is often little difference between the BOD and the BOG, both of whom may have an attitude of exploitation. The violent women do not triumph in the end, and the sexually adventurous are punished. This pattern can persist, even in explicitly feminist popular narratives, such as *Thelma and Louise* (1991). We could nevertheless use this taxonomy to create an interactive narrative with agency for the protagonist by creating a GWEN who is in constant danger of exploitation and violation but who can use the power of seduction or withholding sexuality, or the resourceful cunning of a Penelope, as survival strategies. Or with a more feminist moral physics, we could create a world in which women unite to help one another to escape from patriarchal power.

We could also give the GWEN figure more agency by taking the W2P story into other genres where women's adultery does not lead to catastrophe. For example Chaucer's "Miller's Tale," one of the *Canterbury Tales* (ca.1395) belongs to the genre of the fabliau, which is comedic and vulgar. It takes a sympathetic view of the adulterous couple, Alisoun, the wife of a carpenter who has an affair with Nicholas, a student who is a boarder in their house. Nicholas concocts a scheme to trick her husband into sleeping in a tub hanging out the window thinking that Noah's flood is coming again, while the lovers spend the entire night together. There is a foil to Nicholas, another student Absalon, who is also trying to sleep with Alisoun. His attempts to get into the room are comically foiled with some bathroom humour, causing a ruckus that sends the carpenter crashing to the ground. His neighbours see him as a madman and a cuckold, a fate he deserves according to the logic of the story because he is a fool. Although the Chaucerian story is told from Nicholas' point of view, we can appropriate Alisoun as another reference point on the GWEN spectrum, a woman who is frankly sexual and whose sexual transgression is celebrated and unpunished within the moral physics of the fabliau. We could make the comic arrangements to fool the husband into active choices in the story, while separately programming the interventions of the rival Absalon to make him more or less of a threat. The moral physics of the story would work to reward adultery by making it the hard to achieve a winning ending.

However, to imagine a system in which women have agency, we need to move to narrative traditions that take the woman's choice of sexual partner as the focus of dramatic action. Jane Austen is a pivotal figure here, and her revitalised popularity, evidenced by book club discussions, derivative novels, film and television adaptations and interactive narratives in

Table 8.7 GWEN Characters within a Patriarchal World

Patriarchal Role	Woman as Danger		Woman as Possession		Woman as Commodity		
Narrative function	Man-killer	Femme Fatale	Beauty	Queen	Trophy-captive	Sacrifice	Captive to be rescued
Exemplum	Clytemnestra Circe Avenging Furies	Sirens	Helen	Guinevere (Courtly love object)	Briseis	Iphegenia	Penelope
Status	Queen, God	Illicit Temptress, outside the norm	Singular beauty that is out of reach	Contingent on her position and virtue; she is adored but out of reach	Defenceless after husband is killed (as will be all the women of Troy when their men are defeated); pawn between Agamemnon and Achilles	Daughter, Virgin	Wife of absent lord, target of predation because of her wealth
Agency	Murder, Castration	Irresistible deadly sexuality, seduction to transgress moral boundaries	Beauty—her presence is rapturous to others but does not bring her happiness	On a pedestal where she receives gestures of adoration and can bestow tokens of recognition on knights	None—praised for love for her captor Achilles, totally in the power of men	None—deceived and betrayed by father—must obey and be sacrificed	Uses cunning to delay sexual violation while awaiting rescue
Contemporary Examples (in news stories and fictional stories)	Nurse Ratchet in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*; Tony's mother in *The Sopranos*	Vampires Con artists *The Postman Always Rings Twice, To Die For*	Princess Diana after divorce Betty Draper, the ex-model and remarried first wife of Don Draper on TV series *Mad Men*	Princess Diana before divorce Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*	Real life stories: Schoolgirls kidnapped in Nigeria, women raped as a war tactic; war brides of invading soldiers from conquered countries.	Real life stories: Girls sold into marriage or slavery by impoverished families; expectation of self-immolation of widows in rural India.	Stories of predatory suitors and husbands such as Henry James' *Washington Square* and *Portrait of a Lady*; *Reversal of Fortune*

our own era, make her a particularly appropriate source for prototypical characters for W2P system. Although Austen's world can be rendered as a social simulation governed by clear rules of behaviour, the novels owe their appeal to the specificity of the dramatic characters and to their place in a world with consistent moral physics that give their actions meaning.

Austen's most-adapted novel, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), is a rich source of prototypical female characters, with two sisters as protagonists (Elizabeth Bennett, the main focus, and Jane) and their three younger sisters, the bookish Mary, and the flighty Kitty and flightier Lydia, as well as Elizabeth's neighbour and close friend Charlotte Lucas, as clearly defined moral foils (see Table 8.8). Elizabeth is a Penelope character, remaining self-possessed in a situation of relative powerlessness by virtue of her sharp mind. Jane is almost a Briseis character in her complete dependency on the good will of more powerful men; she never does anything wrong, but she is without any direct agency in her own destiny. The novel traces Elizabeth's courtship by Mr Darcy and Jane's by Mr Bingley, who is led by Darcy to temporarily abandon Jane. Jane's social conformity and ladylike accomplishment are made less wimpy through juxtaposition with the pretension of her sister Mary, who is as eager to perform as she is talentless. Mary's pedantic conversation is also a contrast to Elizabeth's easy intelligence. Lydia and Kitty are two giddy young teenagers, boy-crazy for the local soldiers. The most telling foil is Charlotte Lucas, who marries the odious curate Mr Collins, who will one day inherit the Bennett's house because of its entailment to male heirs. Elizabeth rejects his proposal in a comic scene that mocks his stupidity, pomposity, and sense of entitlement. Charlotte acts out of economic necessity, a sensible decision that dooms her to life with an insufferable fool who is also a slave to his snobbish patroness (see Table 8.8).

Table 8.8 GWEN Exemplars and Foils in *Pride and Prejudice*

	Lydia/ Kitty	*Elizabeth*	*Jane*	*Mary*	*Charlotte*
Social Behaviour	Reckless Flirtation	Witty, Confident	Modesty, Warmth	Affected, Tactless	Practical, Circumspect
Intelligence	Cunning	Smart	Smart but Emotional	Bookish but idiotic	Strategic
Autonomy	Shameless/ easily led	Conscientious, Responsible	Gentle, Dutiful	Oblivious to others	Self-protective

The main action in *Pride and Prejudice* is the eliciting and acceptance or rejection of marriage proposals. The protagonist Elizabeth has three suitors, her true love Mr Darcy, who is handsome, intelligent, rich, but too prideful and against whom she is prejudiced because of his snobbish attitude toward her family; the horrid Mr Collins, a clergyman whose stupidity and fawning attendance on his snobbish patron, Lady Catherine DeBourgh, makes him

one of the most odious characters in the novel; and the handsome, charming, intelligent, but secretly corrupt Mr Wickham who ultimately elopes with Lydia and has to be bribed to marry her. Since Mr Darcy is the hero, the other men can be seen as foils to him. Collins' snobbery makes Darcy's seem less offensive, and the upstart Wickham's treachery makes Darcy's hereditary superiority seem justified (see Table 8.9).

Table 8.9 Attributes of Suitors in *Pride and Prejudice*

	Wickham	*Collins*	*Bingley*	*Darcy*
Honesty	Deceitful	Hypocritical	Frank	Blunt
Selfishness	Exploitative	Selfish	Caring	Responsible
Intelligence	Cunning	Pedantic	Reliable	Superior
Manners	Smooth	Smarmy	Congenial	Entitled

These attributes are related to the BOD qualities of Loyalty, Sacrifice, Heroism and Chastity, but they are tied to the social practices of the drawing room rather than the tribal battlefield. Wickham is a Paris-figure whose seductive charms lead to ruin and the threat of social chaos. Mr Darcy can be seen as a Lancelot figure (his counterpart in *Emma* is actually called Mr Knightley) who comes to the rescue of the maiden with his wealth and good character, despite being forbidden to her by their difference in social status. However, Darcy is also clearly the socially approved but undesirable husband, like Collins, whom a GWEN might choose to marry purely for economic security. This is the figure he presents in his first proposal to Elizabeth, the figure whom she is clearly right to reject. In his second proposal, he is the positive BOG figure, the husband who is protective and supportive rather than oppressive. By creating all these parallels that reinforce a common moral distinction—class snobbery versus civilised respect, economic self-interest versus true love—Austen increases our belief in the fictional world and our appreciation of the happy ending.

Emily Short and Richard Evans have had significant success in reproducing the texture of the Austenian world in a simulation-based story system (Short, 2013a, 2013b; Evans and Short, 2013), and the *Lizzie Bennett Diaries* (2012) was similarly successful in transposing the storyworld of *Pride and Prejudice* to a contemporary story told in social media. I envision a somewhat similar digital adaptation, further from the particular plot of any existing novel but more closely based on Austenian methods of character abstractions. Such an interactive story would present the interactor with an array of potential suitors, and invite her to use appropriate social rituals to uncover clues to the underlying selfishness, intelligence and honesty of each of them. The suitors would not be based on any existing characters, but they would differ from one another in ways similar to the ways in which Mr Collins, Mr Bingley and Mr Wickham differ from Mr Darcy. The plot need not be set in the Regency period, but it would emulate the

Austen novels by presenting a central female protagonist who would elicit and respond to proposals of marriage while indulging in matchmaking of supporting characters, who would differ to her in ways similar to the ways in which Jane and Charlotte differ from Elizabeth. The moral physics of the story would determine whether marriage was desirable (as in Austen) or not (as in many 21st century stories) and what actions would be good evidence of a suitable partner.

One way to think about the creation of characters from the Austen template who live in a very different moral physics is to compare the sexually adventurous women characters on two 21st century HBO television series, *Sex and the City* and *Girls,* with the women in *Pride and Prejudice.* All three storyworlds are based on one observant single female protagonist surrounded by contrasting girlfriends, all of whom are engaged in looking for male partners (see Table 8.10). Unlike Austen's world, the TV protagonists can earn a living on their own and suffer no ill consequences from having sex before marriage. As a result, hedonism is treated as just another way to go through life, similar to rationalism or social conformity. Social conformity remains an issue for all these women, but conformity changes to reflect changing value structures. Jane Bennett's modesty and dutifulness reflect the norms of her society, as do Charlotte's WASPy preppiness in *Sex in the City* and Shoshanna's fashion obsessions in *Girls.* The sister/best friend is specifically designed to provide clear contrasts with one another and to exaggerate or complement aspects of the protagonist's personality. For example, Charlotte Lucas accepts the proposal that Elizabeth rejects; Miranda has a baby as a single mother (the only character to become a mother); and Marnie's absurd sense of entitlement provides a strong contrast to Hannah's profound self-doubt (see Table 8.10).

Table 8.10 Parallels between GWEN characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sex in the City,* and *Girls*

	Hedonist	*Rationalist*	*Everywoman*	*Conformist*
Pride and Prejudice	Lydia	Charlotte Lucas	Elizabeth Bennett	Jane
Sex … City	Samantha	Miranda	Carrie Bradshaw	Charlotte
Girls	Jenna	Marnie	Hannah Horvath	Shoshanna

Although the contemporary stories of young women in search of romance often feature multiple sexual partners, they tend to focus major storylines on W2P rivalries. Both *Sex in the City* and *The Good Wife* sustained multi-season plots around a choice between a BOG and BOD character. On *Sex in the City*, as in *Pride and Prejudice,* wealth is appealing, and so the hard-to-get, adulterous older rich guy called Mr Big is the BOD and the faithful young carpenter-artist is the BOG fiancé whose heart gets broken when Carrie betrays him. On *The Good Wife,* the main character, a lawyer, is married to a philandering politician (played by the same actor who played

'Mr Big') and is in love with a younger lawyer. She has an affair with the law-yer but breaks his heart when she returns to her kingly husband (now gover-nor) because of her allegiance to her children. The *Good Wife* W2P romance is paralleled by a professional rivalry plot in which the protagonist betrays the law firm that has made her a partner—a partnership of obligation—to create a start-up with younger associates—the partnership of desire. A feminist interactive story might create a similar professional parallel to the underlying romantic triangle with similar trade-offs in status versus risk.

5. CULTURALLY SITUATED STORY PATTERNS

The W2P pattern, like the fairy tale or hero's quest, is not an objective, empirical taxonomy. It is a product of culture, in Geertz's sense of a semiotic system (Geertz, 1973), a shared set of symbols and relationships efficiently compressed by millennia of human experience, whose meanings are being constantly renegotiated (Vigotsky, 1962) and whose use is always situated (Suchman, 1987) within particular times, places, traditions and particular storytellers and audiences. It is one of many such culturally situated story patterns that are familiar to us when we encounter them, even across great differences in media and moral code.

The practice of storytelling, in contrast to simulation-building or game design, is primarily focused on exploring highly charged emotive and moral contradictions within these culturally situated patterns. A satisfying fic-tional story is not an objective recording of the world, a solvable puzzle or a winnable contest. It is a highly compressed sequence of actions among characters whose fate we care about because they have been engineered to exemplify meaningful emotional and moral contrasts within particular traditions of human culture. The W2P pattern is open to multitudinous interpretative frameworks, which in turn could produce countless authori-ally honed instances of internally consistent storyworlds with dramatically meaningful variations for the interactor to explore. It is offered as just one example of how a culturally situated narrative abstraction schema might serve as a resource for interactive digital narratives.

In a culture with a strong narrative tradition, elements of stories such as character types and plot events form open systems of signification, always growing and changing and capable of infinite combinatorics. It is not surpris-ing that game designers and simulation-makers have made use of this age-old system of abstraction, nor is it surprising that storytellers are increasingly drawn to the digital medium in order to create formal structures that allow for a similar fluidity of recombination. As these three distinct but overlapping tra-ditions continue to grow in ambition and expressive power, it is important that we distinguish the aesthetics of storytelling from those of gaming and systems engineering, and that we create computational structures that allow us to focus on the abstraction layer in which traditional narrative creativity takes place.

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