

Archetypes in Multiple Protagonist films

A quick note on *You Can Count on Me* - a terrific film., I thought. One of the big problems in Multiple Protagonist films is to re-invent the archetypes of *The Outsider*, *The Dominant Character*, *The Traitor Within* etc - and to find new archetypes. Poor films render normal archetypes as stereotypes. A good recent example of a stereotypical and utterly predictable *Traitor Within* is in *Space Cowboys*, where the young astronaut is clearly in pay of the baddies from the start, so when he tries to take command in outer space there is no surprise or interest. In *You Can Count on me*, the two siblings are multiple protagonists - both versions of the same character (child orphaned in small US town now grown up). While usually multiple protagonist films have many versions of the same protagonist, YCCOM has only two. BUT EACH COMBINES A NUMBER OF THE NORMAL ARCHETYPES. So that the brother is *The Dominant Character* (the trouble maker) but is also *The Outsider*. Both are sometimes *The Traitor Within*. And so on. Interesting technique.

PS Many people suggested that I see *Pay It Forward* as a flawed parallel narrative structure, so I did. You're right. I don't think it works. I thought the story in the present about the journalist was distracting and told us nothing new - even worse, inhibited pace. I think the story in the past alone would have done the job better. Perhaps the moral is, only split the story if it adds to the suspense and each story can inform the other.

NOTE This Craft Skills material is written and made available for free by Linda Aronson, who is a novelist, screenwriter and script doctor based in Sydney Australia but working internationally. It was originally intended for colleagues and students and is made free to all as a service to new writers and to promote discussion of and respect for screenwriting craft skills generally. It is not a discussion list. Please respect my copyright in any craft skills notes and do not distribute this information without my permission (I might want to publish it sometime).