

## Calling All Writers--It's Party Time!

"Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself.

I am large, I contain multitudes." -- Walt Whitman, Song of Myself

The dedicated writing student must continually search for tools to explore the core balance of plot, character, and poetics, multiple ways of climbing the great, misty mountain called story. But the major difference between Lifewriting? and other systems is that we concentrate on the tools from writing that also help us understand our lives...or the tools from psychology or spiritual disciplines that help us understand our craft.

With that in mind, the Parts Party from Ericksonian hypnosis is worth exploring. The "Parts Party" is a powerful tool created by Carol Erickson, the daughter of Milton Erickson, the master hypnotist largely responsible for legitimizing hypnosis in the therapeutic community. Basically, the Parts Party technique is used with a client who lacks access to her own internal resources, or is dealing with values conflicts. Placed in trance, the client is invited to imagine a cocktail party. Each "guest" is a personification of a different aspects--or "parts"-- of her personality. In other words, "Ambition"? Meet "Compassion." "Passion"? Meet "Self-Respect." The therapist can then engage in what is called "Zero Content Therapy" where a client is led to heal herself without specific intervention.

An example would be a client of mine who was terrified to perform in a singing competition, despite months of practice. The competition would begin in mere hours, and I was brought in as a last-ditch emergency effort. I placed her in a trance, and established a communications signal-raising the right finger for a "yes" and the left for a "no." Then I invited her to imagine a party, at which among the guests she would find Ambition, Fear, The Artist, Her Younger Self, and Her Future Self. I impressed upon her that the nausea and shaking she experienced when contemplating her performance was just her own inner guardians trying to protect her. And yet, there was another part of her that truly, deeply, wanted to prepare for a singing career. I suggested that if there was a way for her to satisfy the need for safety and also enjoy performing, that that would be a desirable outcome. Then I asked her future self--the one who was a professional singer (her goal) to hostess the party, to introduce the various aspects to one another, and then to let them talk it out.

After ten minutes, she signaled that the conversation was over, I brought her out of the trance--and she jumped up and said "let's do it!" with a verve I'd never seen from her. She blew the roof off at the recital! I never asked her exactly what conversation had gone on...in fact, it was none of my business.

A story is much the same. As one famous writing technique says, "A story is an argument in a story mind." In other words, every secondary character exists as a shadow aspect of the main character's personality. If the conflicts between them can be resolved, the character gets to move to the next level of her life.

Seen this way, in *The Godfather*, various characters represent Michael Corleone's ambition, love for family, spirituality, venality, passion, homicidal nature, and so forth. Watching these different aspects "work out" their differences is a fascinating process, leading ultimately to Michael's utter defeat and destruction at the end of the third film.

As you craft a film, book, or story, looking at it as a "Parts Party" can be an extremely useful tool. It also allows you to enter the realm of the most primal and powerful story, the Therapeutic Metaphor, where a story is structured to create a change in the mind of the reader or viewer. Here is the suggestion: write your first draft with no concern for anything but story and character.

Then, in the process of re-write, search for meaning. Try to gain a sense of what your unconscious mind was up to, what you were trying to say. What is your thesis and counter-thesis? Once this has been determined, look at your characters again. Who is the main character? What aspects of her personality might the other characters represent? Now the conflicts between them can be seen as external versions of the internal struggles we all endure as we try to change, grow, and heal. Those actions and words can provide the lessons necessary to grow (remember the gathering of Allies and Powers on the Hero's Journey?)

Your character may succeed, or may fail. Or may fail to get what they want, and instead get what they need. These are your choices, based upon your beliefs about human nature and the ethical structure of the universe. Controlling the secret meaning of your subsidiary characters can be an incredibly powerful way of creating meaning and emotional depth to your work...and speaking to your reader's deeper consciousness without being polemical.

When you do this, there is another wonderful result. You are also speaking to yourself, your own inner wisdom. And you develop sensitivity to the multitudes within us all. During quiet moments of meditation, or in the "hypnogogic" state between waking and sleep, you will hear voices within you.

How powerful it can be to identify the voices as aspects of our personalities as well as positive or negative figures from our past! This approach is perfect for Lifewriting? because it allows a writer to strengthen the connection between the inner and outer worlds. When you look at your craft in this fashion, everything that you do to improve and heal yourself automatically makes you a better writer...and everything you write automatically increases your integration as a human being.

And that is a worthy goal. THAT is Lifewriting?.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

### About the Author

NY Times Bestselling Writer Steven Barnes is a dual black belt as well as a Tai Chi instructor. He was trained in Ericksonian model Hypnosis. He is creator of Lifewriting?, the high-performance success system for writers and readers. Learn more at [www.lifewriting.biz](http://www.lifewriting.biz) and [www.lifewrite.com](http://www.lifewrite.com)