

Chat immediately following the workshop

Erik: I was formulating a thought experiment to see if I was using the terms correctly. I would appreciate it if Ron or any of the Workshop participants would welcome it.

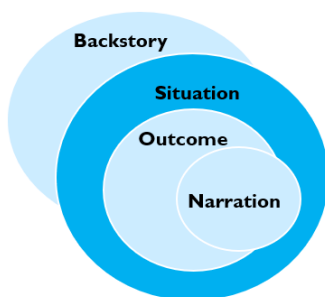
My analysis precedes the example. My adaptation of the Pool for a Space Anime game has a rule where a player is granted a very content-specific kind of Outcome authority in addition to the ones already in the game. It is also grants a narrow kind of Setting authority that must be acknowledged in any relevant future Situations.

- I like those military-themed anime where some piece of gear is improvised and then becomes part of the setting. Like "Dr. Hitomi's modifications to the Vickers Gun have made shoot twice as fast."
- let's say I am playing the Pool and I win a space combat of some kind & space combats are important to the game. So I write a rule to the effect that "A player who wins a space conflict can state how the gear used in that conflict has revealed a new advantage -- this happens whether the player took the die or the Monologue of Victory."
- Going forward all players must take that advantage into consideration in any situation where that piece of gear comes up. It will also guide the GM as to how many Bonus Dice they should give.
- A player may write a new 15 words into their Story and dedicate dice to it if they wish.

My reply: Let's begin by disallowing terms adaptations. Authority refers only to situations in play. There is no such thing as "Setting Authority" or any other modification, regardless of whatever behavior about play or information management is happening. When you talk about someone describing new gear's capability as part of playing in a situation, that falls within the terms I presented, so let's stay with those without need for new or adapted terms.

My first point is to course-correct you about the concepts. Outcome Authority refers specifically to resolving the known-unknowns at hand, e.g., whether we kill these broos, whether any of us is killed, whether I can fix this broken gadget, whether the corrupt noble realizes that I'm his murdered enemy's son, things like that, which we knew were on the line. ("We killed two broos," "Devizad is killed," or subsets like "My leg is badly hurt," et cetera) Consequences beyond that, due to the outcome, are potentially referenced in Narration Authority as a subset or follow-up to the Outcome statement. That's why in the Lamentations example, "she is killed!" is an authoritative outcome statement, but "OMG, you stabbed right through her eye and head!" is, in this game, a narration statement concerning a bit of retcon, because it was not incumbent prior to the outcome to know it could potentially happen.

Remember the diagram: narration authority concerns subsets of concluded outcomes or bits of outcomes along the way; they must minimally describe that known outcome a little, and they have other potential functions like the retcon/clarification thing, the immediate context consequence like the gunpowder smell throughout the room (which pokes into situation a little), or in the "biggest" case, like changing some aspect of something outside the immediate outcome but clearly due to it. Note that any given table is going to have its own boundaries and sense of what can and cannot be said or changed, for any of these.



Therefore, here is specifically the course-correction: you are talking about Narration Authority. The outcome concerned the space conflict, so Outcome Authority only applies right up and including the moment when it's stated that this space conflict concluded, so we know who was victor and vanquished. All this new-gadget stuff is inside Narration Authority as a presumed extension of that outcome.

My second point is that the new-gadget rule is merely formalizing the potential that any narration statement has, to poke its nose into situation. You're adding a situational component which is available for use, and you've stated a point in play when this is available for people who otherwise don't establish such things via Situational Authority. That's all! Does this make sense?

Erik: Yes it does. That concluding statement clears up the fog in my head. The little rules change I proposed just formalizes the kind of thing that happens when any narration statement is made. And thank you for the paradigm cases of when certain concepts apply:

- Outcome Authority covers everything up to the moment it's stated ... not future implications of that particular outcome
- Narration authority incorporates the consequences of the outcome that immediately preceded it
- Don't apply the terms applicable to play to parts of a role playing game that are unrelated to the activity of play

Sean: This is my first set of thoughts I wanted to share.

It seems to me that if one is aware of and takes the expression of their authorities seriously, then all questions about how to "role play" are exposed as mere affectation. Because executing authorities is what we all do, whether in funny voices or stoic monotone. So whatever the authorities are, expressing them is PLAY. I am not sure if this is revelatory, but it struck me during the chat that suddenly all the decades of explaining what role-playing is, suddenly did not seem relevant.

My reply: I completely agree. It was revelatory to me, certainly. The good part was being able really to enjoy getting involved with whatever kind of play might be available through a wide variety of texts and rules concepts, but without thinking of the diversity as itself difficult. It's a bit like linguistics: all of a sudden there are no easy or hard languages, no advanced or primitive languages, no such thing as an agrammatical language if people are using it. Granted, for a language or for a role-playing system, a real and actual learning curve is required, and also granted, personal preference is not only real but a make-or-break feature. Those aren't bad things though. It's why I'm always talking about how the littler mechanics are good or bad insofar as they make sense in context; this is the context (as well as interactions among all the littler mechanics of the moment). Also, how A and B may be present and absent, respectively, in one game, and absent and present, respectively in another game, and neither game is missing anything ... and either may well be worse if it had both A and B.

My request to everyone: Here's something for you all to consider. Given what Sean said above and (if it matters) my follow-up ... think of all the things that aren't actually priorities or anxieties. Certainly I may want my character not to die, but the fact that this system includes a stochastic way for that to happen means that I accept that and arguably want that possibility to exist, because I could easily be playing another game instead in which that doesn't happen. Or more fundamentally, I'm not concerned with the specific proportions that different people contribute to play, in terms of literal spoken input, because what matters is that for anything within my authorities, across all four types, everyone is not only reliant upon but also undeniably interested in what I provide. Nor am I scrambling for speaking-space in order to "matter," for the same reason, and nothing about play is about "getting my way," or having it stolen. I don't think this is a matter of style or method. It's the basics. What do you think?

Pedro's reply: At the risk of sounding too spartan or seeming like I'm merely "nodding my head" in sheepish agreement, I really only have to say that I fully agree with your post as it stands.

Erik's reply: The drama or improv borrowings to describe role playing have obscured the basics. A player can exercise authority without performing a voice or explaining their reasons or citing text from the rule book. They are following a basic rule — employing an authority — if they just state: “my guy goes up to the bar and looks for anyone he recognizes.”

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We're just exploring the basics but assume that discussion of play will have to hook up with a discussion of what isn't play but is part of game system — preparation. One dysfunction I recognize in my prep is trying to stack the deck so that certain kinds of content are more or less likely to show up in an upcoming session. Playing before play as it were.

My reply: I agree about the interference of theater in many variables. I can see why that's happened. It's the nearest or superficially most easily-referenced superfamily of media, and as I mentioned, we didn't and don't have useful vocabulary for our own. It's also complicated, as I see it, by LARP and adjacent activities being legitimately identified as theater. Again, though, I ask that we stay in our topic. It's very tempting to step outside it and see if the boundaries can be located from that position, but before doing that, we have a lot of work inside. For the role of preparation and also of distinguishing among what cannot, what might, and what must be changed in play, see the "Story, Story, Story" workshop. (and @Craig that goes with the secrets / mystery / investigation issues we talked about earlier)