

The Technique of Drama by Gustav Freytag

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"The poet thinks he is driving his characters, and he is secretly driven by them."

Background information:

Freytag's "Technique of Drama" is described as "curious" in the epilogue of modern editions, "because it was created and published at a time when dramatic production in the German language was at a remarkable low, with the exception of Friedrich Hebbel and Franz Grillparzer. The explanation is often given that in Bismarck's era, the dramatic political and social reality preempted the stage drama: the stage drama had difficulties to succeed because the real drama on the stage of contemporary politics worked so well. Gustav Freytag was the speaker, writer and representative of the liberal bourgeoisie in the 19th century. In 1839 he became a lecturer in German language and literature in Breslau. However, when his lectures on cultural history, some of which were critical of society, were banned, he ended his academic career and became editor of the national-liberal journal "Die Grenzboten," (The Border Sentinel) which set itself the task of reconciling the bourgeoisie with the revolutionary mood that dominated in the society after the failed revolutions of 1848 / 1849 and bring about compromises in society's power relations.

His successful contemporary novel "Soll und Haben" (Debit and Credit) gives a good insight into the bourgeois emotions and worldview of the time.

At the time of the publication of Freytag's dramaturgy, there was an inflation in theories of dramaturgy. "Das Drama der Gegenwart", "Das neue Deutsche Drama", "Zur Geschichte des Dramas" and "Das Moderne Drama" appeared in the same period. The intention of all these works was to "provide younger art lovers with some craftsmanship rules in an undemanding form."

The belief in the value of rules was reawakened after the turbulent Sturm und Drang period and the politically troubled times of the pre-March Era: "We easily think that restriction by rules means the death of free artistic creation. No error has never been greater. Precisely a well-developed system of individual regulations, a certain restriction rooted in popular habit, in the choice of materials and the construction of the pieces have been the best aid to creative power at different times." Freytag's structural analysis of the drama as a five-act, pyramid-shaped work appeared to some of his contemporaries as a "cookbook for dramatists", but it has retained its canonical value to this day. Freytag's structural sketch is still used today in schools to explain the structure of a tragedy. Freytag left out how a comedy should be structured, although he himself wrote one with "Die Journalisten". Its methodically listed criteria cannot compete with the sharpness of mind and the wit of Lessing's dramaturgy, but

the work is characterized by a precise clarity and orderliness, which makes the structure of the drama more accessible to the reader than the extravagant, associating trains of thought by Lessing.

Freytag differs from Lessing, whom he appreciates very much, since he does not see the function of the drama in moral purification through compassion, but sees the drama as a means of spiritual elevation through the enjoyment of art. He interprets Aristotle differently than Lessing and is influenced by the high ideals of his time. In essence, Freytag agrees with Aristotle's predominance of plot or action. However, he describes in detail Shakespeare's strength in the character description and emphasizes that the importance of the characters compared to the pure course of the plot has increased compared to antiquity.

However, in accordance with Aristotle, he evaluates the plot as the determining element to which the characters subordinate themselves as dramatic elements. The book is clearly structured and a good read. The comparison of the Attic and Germanic mentality (to which he also counts Shakespeare) reflects the efforts of Freytag's epoch to sort and classify things into tangible structures.

Definition of the drama:

"The drama represents in an action through characters through words, voices, gestures, those soul processes that a person goes through from the first occurrence of an impression to passionate desire and finally action, as well as the inner movements that are stimulated by their own and others' actions." "Dramatic are those strong movements of the soul which harden themselves to the point of will and doing, and those soul movements which are excited by an action; as well as the influences which one's own and other people's actions produce in the soul; thus the outflow of willpower from the deep mind to the outside world and the inflow of determining influences from the outside world into the inside of the mind; thus the becoming of an action and its consequences on the mind." Freytag describes the action itself and the passionate movement as not being dramatic.

"The task of dramatic art is not to portray a passion as such, but to portray the passion that leads to an action. The task of dramatic art is not the representation of an event itself, but its effect on the human soul."

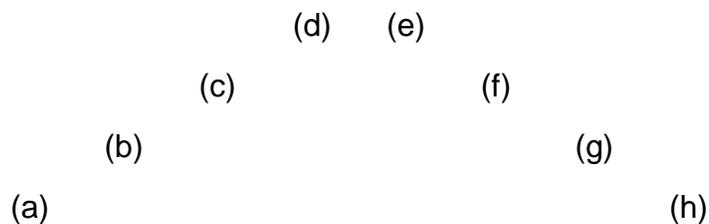
Structure of the drama

The structure of the drama is supposed to show the two opposites: outflow and inflow of willpower, the becoming of the deed and its reflexes on the soul, fight and counter-fight as a unity: "The content of the drama is always a fight that causes strong soul movements which pit the hero against opposing forces. "These two opposing forces of the drama are connected by a point, roughly in the middle of the plot, the climax. The climax forms the apex of the

pyramid-like course of the drama." It rises from the introduction with the introduction of the exciting moment to the climax and falls from there to the catastrophe."

The five parts are both divided and connected by three dramatic moments that are between introduction and intensification, between climax and reversal, and between reversal and catastrophe.

Elements of the drama:



- (a) Introduction
- (b) Approximate location of the first dramatic moment (excitement)
- (c) intensification
- (d) Climax
- (e) Approximate location of the second dramatic moment (tragedy strikes)
- (f) Fall or Reversal
- (g) Approximate location of the third dramatic moment (ultimate tension)
- (h) Disaster

The introduction (a) characterizes place, time, social setting, living conditions and the active or passive behavior of the hero. The rhythm and the mood of the piece are introduced. It is at the discretion of the poet which part of which force he lets dominate in the course of the action: the active hero will act first, then, after the climax (d), provoke the hostile reaction of those around him and plunge into catastrophe(h). A passive hero reacts first to the pressure of the hostile environment until at the dramatic climax his opponents plunge him into disaster. The five parts of the drama: introduction (a), intensification (c), climax (d), falling plot or reversal (f), and catastrophe (h), are both separated and connected by three important scenic moments, the moment of excitement (b), the moment when tragedy strikes (e) and the

moment of ultimate tension (g). The five parts of the drama roughly coincide with the five acts of classical tragedy already listed by Aristotle. Each act contains an introduction and a climax as a unit of action.

Freytag recommends "striking the first chord after the opening of the stage as strongly and emphatically as the character of the piece allows", or, he suggests to show the first ripple of the waves by "small soul movements of the main characters." The introduction (a) usually includes the exposition, the exciting moment and the first scene of intensification (b). With the exciting moment (b) on the threshold between introduction (a) and intensification (c), the actual action takes place. In terms of content, it describes the moment at which the hero's need that has grown in the soul forces him to act, or at which the opposing element decides to use its levers to set the hero in motion. The exciting moment (b) can fill an entire scene or consist of just a few words. It has the function of a trend-setting, preparatory motif, it should not be insignificant, but also not stand out too strongly in order to allow further tension to be built up. The intensification (c) changes the state and quality of the action set in motion. The main characters explained their nature and their motives and thereby justified their participation. Now mood and passion rise. This is where the antagonists are introduced at the latest. The intensification can include several scene sequences with increasing intensity up to the climax (d). The climax is the culmination of the action resulting in a the fight. In terms of content, the "breaking out of the deed from the hero's soul or from the fateful impressions flowing into it, the first great result of the intensified struggle or the beginning of the deadly inner conflict" is dramatized. "The poet will have to use all the splendor of poetry, all the dramatic power he possesses to bring out this center of his work of art."

The dramatic climax of the event must stand in firm connection with both the preceding and the following. The moment of climax comprises moments that are grouped around a strongly protruding central scene. The tragic moment represents the beginning of the counteraction and stands exactly between climax and reversal. it is supposed to occur suddenly and unexpectedly to describe something "sad, terrible, dark" as a result of the causal connection of the events. Freytag attaches the following conditions to the tragic moment:

- "1. It must be important and momentous for the hero.
2. It must pop up unexpectedly.
3. It must be reasonably related to earlier parts of the plot through a chain of secondary events and be as such visible to the viewer. "

Freytag describes this beginning of the reaction to the hero's deed as one of the most important moments in the drama, since it vividly portrays the hero's finite possibilities and his fateful situation and re-motivates the suspense for the second part of the play. The tragic moment, which is characterized by importance and a certain size, is what the Greeks called *peripeteia*, or recognition, because it must always be accompanied by a new and surprising insight.

The following reversal describes the falling action leading to disaster. The focus here is on the opponent's reaction to the hero, or how the hero's reaction to his opponents' actions escalates into disaster. From this point on, the viewer can derive the idea, i.e. the intention of the poet, from the context of the events. Freytag describes this phase of the drama as the most dramaturgically demanding, since the aim is to re-establish the tension, which after the culmination fell considerably. Because of the saturation of the audience, a strong enhancement and intensification of the scenic effects and the fighting is usually necessary.

The reversal of the action should be shorter than the intensification. The more the climax is emphasized, the more vividly the end must be foreshadowed. The act of reversal usually consists of several scenes grouped around a significant central scene that contains the moment of the final tension.

The moment of final tension is located between reversal and catastrophe. A surmountable obstacle or a looming, unexpected solution nourishes hope for a conciliatory end and averting the catastrophe. However, the hope will be disappointed. In the following catastrophe, one last, great deed dominates, which demands full commitment and ultimate revelation from and of all characters involved. It must be a logical result from the previous course of action: Since the hero has put his whole life on the line, only the complete annihilation of this life can follow. Since the drama has to represent a self-contained, completed action, the epilogue is to remind us that nothing arbitrary was represented here, but an action that has received a general and understandable meaning through poetry. For the effective construction of a catastrophe, Freytag's rule is reduction to the essentials: useless words or actions are to be avoided, but nothing should be left unsaid that helps to clarify the idea of the piece as derived from the essence of the characters. Besides the final act, the act of catastrophe contains the last stage of the sinking act.

The acts are subdivided into scenes, which Freytag describes as an amalgamation of units of action from dramatic moments. He also sees the five-part structure of the drama reflected here: "An exciting moment must initiate the scene, the soul processes in it must be represented with clarity and by making use of effective intensification. The result should be shown in convincing strokes. Following the climax the conclusion must come about quickly and must be brief; for once its purpose has been achieved and the tension is released, every useless word becomes too much." The scene as a unit of action, well versed by the poet, sometimes does not overlap with the director's scene, since a change of decoration is not always necessary for the conclusion of a scene.

Basic dramatic principles:

Lessing's thesis on the function of drama is no longer relevant in Freytag's era. According to Lessing, "the tragic" should act on the viewer as an ethical force that stems from the plot and the characters. The viewer should be purified through fear and pity. Although Freytag also thinks that the humane, reasonable and sensible attitude of the viewer should rather be confirmed than hurt, he sees in expressions like "tragic guilt, inner purification and poetic

justice" nothing but platitudes and clichés. "When a poet puts his action together so that it becomes tragic, he should be given serious advice that he has little to worry about that: he should leave pleasant words like guilt, purification, and elevation to others." Freytag, like Aristotle, sees the domain of the dramatic art especially in entertainment. However, he also feels that it is the task of art and drama to transfigure reality. Only through the idealization of existence can man come to enjoy art. "The great representations of emotions lie like transfigurations on the essence of things. The person feels strangely moved, physically and mentally, and is lifted out of the moods of the day." Like Aristotle, Freytag grants artistic freedom when processing historical material, which always takes precedence over historical truth. However, the invention should not raise a sensitive contrast to a historical truth for his contemporaries. The plot of a serious drama is supposed to be probable. Not only the main topic should be causally linked to an inner unity, but also all secondary events should be understood as probable moments of the main event presented. The picture of reality emerges in the present as a product of the knowledge of the past and the currently prevailing moral code, which must also be observed in dramas with exotic content in order not to meet with rejection.

When the poet artistically transforms a subject based on a uniform idea, Freytag calls this process to "idealize." When the poet derives dramatically condensed characters from reality, then these characters become "ideals."

"The plot of the drama is the event arranged according to an idea, the content of which is presented by the characters" and mostly describes the dramatic actions of a hero, which result either from an internal need or the pressure of his external environment. The environment either promotes or inhibits the hero's passion. According to Freytag, the first process, namely man's inner struggle up to the point of action, is the most attractive. He describes the following process, the representation of the actual act itself, as "satisfying an aroused tension." Justifying events in a drama is called motivating. Individual parts of the plot are connected to an artistic whole through motifs. Within these limits, the action should move forward in unified contexts, so that "everything that follows can be deduced from the preceding as the effect of a previously presented cause." The dramatic action must convey everything that is important for its understanding through its means of language, intonation and gestures of the characters in a continuous intensification. Internal processes that are not shown are just as unfavorable as processes that are technically too complex. The dramatic person should represent human nature in its "strong bias, tension and tendency to change," always provided with a great and passionately moving interior force. Those qualities that really come into their own in a fight with other people are preferable, such as "emotional energy, force of willpower, or limitation through passionate desire". With the words, "Characterization has always been popular with the Teutons, the joy of structure has always been more popular with the Romanic," Freytag grants the characters in modern drama a stronger influence on the plot, but he still shares Aristotle's thesis that the action is more decisive than the character: "But however much the action depends on the needs of the character, it will only ever be allowed to be put together from details that belong to a certain event, and this event must reach from the beginning to the end of the piece."

The dramatic unity of a plot must also apply to the characters. They should be characterized by probability, importance and size and show only those sides of human nature through which the action is continued and motivated, because "only what serves the idea and action belongs to art." He describes Shakespeare's excellent character studies, as at the same time, "giving a deep insight into one's characters and yet leaving them ultimately unfathomable," praising them as exemplary, which only superficially is a contradiction. For Freytag, the liveliness of a character only emerges under the pressure to be "part" of an action: only the properties that are useful for the action become a basic trait, all other characteristics must be subordinate. The fate of the characters will be equal to the course of events generated by their personality, which at every moment must be understandable by the audience as reasonable and probable. Coincidence should only be represented as a result of a character-typical action and not a motive that breaks in from outside. The characters have made a fateful decision dependent on the course of events, which they are no longer able to rule. Freytag sees subplots only justified if they provide additional information about the characters or the course of the plot. Likewise, the basic mood of the drama should always be maintained. Other tones such as comedic insertions are only justified as a contrast or complement. These decorative ingredients, called episodes by Freytag, enrich the piece when used cautiously. Freytag adopts two more rules of antiquity: the drama should have only one main hero, around whom all characters are grouped, his/her character should be a mixture of good and bad qualities, so as to make it easy for the audience to sympathize with them.

Creation of a drama:

The material for a work of dramatic art can be an anecdote from life, a legend, a novella, a poetic story or an entirely fictitious process. "In the soul of a poet, the drama develops gradually from the raw material, the report of something that has happened, so vividly, forming connections with other events so that they can become the cause for the reorganization of the entire material, from which the dramatic idea then results. It is possible that the poet never develops this idea, "which he certainly carries in his soul, during his creative work, and only later understands it as the basic idea of the drama." But Freytag recommends "to pour the idea of the developing piece into a formula and describe it in words, in order to be able to create and execute the basic idea of the piece in a dramatically stringent manner. A poet's power only needs a few moments of the original material, only a strong and momentous contrast to form a plot from it." Treason and its punishment, a passionate act of hatred and its consequences, a scene from a great family quarrel, a defiant fight or a clever game against superior forces give him plenty of material. " The creative work consists of the design of the main and secondary characters and new moments of action, all of which are to be guided by the dramatic idea. Freytag names four rules for a stringent course of action: "Short duration, few people, few transformations, and even with the first draft strong emphasis on the important parts of the plot." In order to make the work easier, the poet should determine the character of his heroes, their position in relation to one another and the results of each individual scene before executing it. Freytag sees the advantage of a written

preliminary draft in the sense of an outline in the clarification of the individual intentions through reflection. The disadvantage is that this can easily paralyze the poet's imagination and flexibility.

Even with a well-prepared work, changes in the plot or the character can occur at a later stage. Freytag recommends not to write after the first impressions and to study extensively before writing a historical drama: "The maturation of the pictures is a creative force that is also active in hours when the poet does not dwell on his work." Freytag recommends a chronological process for the elaboration of the play, because the new situation must result always directly from the previously written situation and its mood. Freytag describes it as the poet's preeminent task to depict, with the greatest freedom and sophistication, the greatest influence of the power of passion. "The dramatic poet has to observe nature closely and continually. This applies most to the portrayal of the most violent of passions. But he should be aware that this is where he is least allowed to imitate nature." As a benevolent advocate for the performing artist, he should seriously study the laws and the art of acting. The number of players should be as small as possible: "What is created out of many things is less exciting and captivating than what comes to life from the soul of only the main characters." Extensive action excessively restricts the inner movement of the main characters. However, changes in the inner workings must be made comprehensible so that there are no cracks. The most important part of the dramatic plot takes place in dialogue scenes: Their purpose is to generate a result from the conflict of thesis and antithesis that drives the plot further. Often after the third escalation of a conflict, the result is achieved. If the characters part without an agreement, at least the attitudes of the two towards each other must have changed. The poet has to intensify the effects from the beginning to the end of the drama, since in the course of the action the audience becomes more demanding and the ability to absorb new things becomes less. The dramatic climax does not always need to play out; sometimes a hint that stimulates the audience's imagination is enough. This is called concealment.

Since monologues represent a point of calmness in an ongoing action, an excited tension is required if a monologue is to be used. Freytag only considers a monologue appropriate if a rich, inner life of a character has been hidden from the viewer for a long time. Otherwise the character has to be shown through his behavior. It is dramatically inept to have the characteristics of the hero explained by third parties or to let the hero account for himself. In epic moments, such as a report by a messenger, the speech cannot be one line too long in order to avoid fatigue." If the narrative contains broader details, it must be divided into paragraphs, provided with short interludes that indicate the mood of those involved, and must contain substantial intensifications in content and language." Prose is more easily accessible, but, according to Freytag, it more easily pulls "the images of art" down to "representations of ordinary reality." The meter, on the other hand, elevates the language into the realm of the noble. In reports from a distant time or a strange world, the corresponding attributes may only ever be used as aids that reinforce the basic color. The viewer must be familiar with the feeling and willingness of the character.

"Because not from the peculiarities of human life, but from the immortal core of it, from what we have in common with the old days, his successes blossom." Freytag does not banish the mysterious or the strange from the drama. The poet can use dreams, premonitions, prophecies or ghosts for occasional reinforcement, but primarily to work out the hero's inner need in the color and mood of the depicted time, and thus to set the dramatic plot in motion. When editing the play, the poet should carefully examine the plot, the character structure and the dramatic flow of his play. He should be his toughest judge: "The poet should respect and love his work as long as he carries it as an ideal; but the finished work must also be done for him."

Chinatown according to the rules of Gustav Freytag:

Freytag's definition still contains Aristotle's conception that the drama is a series of actions of its characters, but he extends this concept by an essential element. Freytag does not focus on the imitation of external reality, but above all on the representation of inner soul movements. He emphasizes here that it is not the portrayal of the passionate act itself, but the "becoming of an act and its consequences on the mind" that characterize what is actually dramatic.

Chinatown implements this claim in a cool, minimalist style. Right from the start, the viewer is invited to suspect the inner movements of the soul behind Gittes' cool facade, precisely because they only emerge in very specific moments. Gittes shows the viewer a rich but hidden inner emotional landscape that emerges though in full force when it comes to defending his honor or justice for the disadvantaged, and finally also when his love for Evelyn Mulwray breaks through.

In all other moments, Gittes acts as a professional who keeps his motives to himself. This makes him a passive hero. For a long time the audience believes that Gittes will be successful with this tactic. But by then, without realizing it, he has long awakened the anger of the mighty Noah Cross, who will ultimately destroy him.

It is different and yet similar with Evelyn Mulwray: She too tries not to let her inner emotional world show. But with Evelyn it happens from an attitude of weakness. She is afraid of the fatal consequences of her feelings, especially her anger at her brutal father. Evelyn is well aware that this disguised anger has already cost her husband's life. But her true essence breaks through again and again through the facade of the "cool, beautiful rich lady". Her motive to protect Gittes from her father's anger is at the same time her own and Gittes' (symbolic) death sentence: if she had confided in him earlier, then Gittes might have had a fighting chance against Cross. Evelyn gives the viewer enough insight, however, so that they understand that her concealment of emotions is not, as it is with Gittes, a power game but a survival and protection strategy. Her final outburst is all the more dramatic because the emotional moment now coincides with a crucial information element. When she admits the incest to Gittes, it throws a completely new perspective on her character and twists the course of the plot one last time into the final fatal direction. The film dispenses with the excitement of pity for the

main characters, Evelyn and Gittes. Instead, the grandeur of the "tragic moment" demanded by Freytag comes into its own in the finale. The world is so permeated with corruption and wickedness that even a hardened hero like Gittes has nothing to counter it. Here Freytag's demand for an exaggeration of reality finds its correspondence. In addition, Towne and Polanski manage to bring together the story's past and the current American moral code at the beginning of the 1970s: Nothing has changed and even valiant heroes like Gittes fail in the overwhelming task of putting a stop to the power-obsession of an exemplary Noah Cross.

The fact that this drama leads to a "transcendence of the soul" can be traced back to the skillful and clear structure of the material. Gustav Freytag's structure of tragedy can be perfectly applied to the tightly constructed script. Here one of Gustav Freytag's great achievements can be seen: his Aristotle-based but expanded model has retained its relevance to this day. In the introduction, Gittes is presented as a character as is his world and his work. His character, introduced through deeds and words at the beginning of the first act, has hero potential: Gittes is an expert on the corrupt jungle, LA, and he is active without having to be provoked from outside. The triggering element of the action is not the assignment, but the humiliation that someone tried to fool Gittes with a 'fake' Mrs. Mulwray: 'who dares?' Gittes asks here 'to test my coolness and unfailing judgement?'. Chinatown quickly reveals the rhythm and basic mood of the story: Gittes' "coolness" contrasts with the inner overheating (also in the physical sense—it's consistently hot in Los Angeles) of his environment. While the other characters only appear as 'laid back' and are in reality exhausted or simply indifferent, or both, Gittes keeps his cool. In fact, he's the only one who's really 'cool' in this town. Each scene propels the story forward, in the direction of an inevitable defeat for the hero Gittes, who initially appears invincible. The motive to keep a cool head in the face of a heated situation is already established in the sketched plot about the betrayed husband: be it when observing sex between the wife and her lover, or when Gittes brings the betrayed the sad confirmation, leading to a nervous breakdown, Gittes always keeps his composure. In the background, Gittes' powerful antagonist, Noah Cross, already takes measure of this character trait of Gittes in order to ultimately use it as a weapon against him.

The first research leads to an increase in the plot, which still belong to the first act, the publication of the photos and the appearance of the real Mrs. Mulwray. With the beginning of the second Act the degree of intensity increases, also in emotional terms: Gittes feels attacked in his professional honor, and he is actually attacked, because Evelyn Mulwray threatens him with a lawsuit. Hollis Mulwray's body is discovered, and Gittes' nose is ripped open while the waterworks are under observation. Now the hero is challenged to the maximum.

The intensification begins when Gittes realizes the business connection between Cross and Mulwray: the first dramatic realization (peripeteia) that things are different than Gites expected. At the same time, Gittes shows himself vulnerable for the first time when he begins an affair with Evelyn Mulwray, which corresponds to the required further intensification, before finally the second act culminates at the climax with the tragic moment when Evelyn reveals her incestuous past and thus the "sad, terrible and sinister" secret. All of Freytag's

conditions for the tragic moment are met: It is important to Gittes because this statement absolves Evelyn of suspicion of murder and strengthens his feelings for her. It is momentous for Gittes because he now decides to make his emotions a priority and help Evelyn and her daughter to escape. Gittes also seals his fate here because he decides to work against both the police and Noah Cross. In addition, the dramatic moment occurs completely unexpectedly. The revelation provokes a number of realizations: Kathrin was not the lover of Hollis Mulwray but his foster daughter. The meeting of Hollis Mulwray and Kathrin was family related. Cross wants to own Kathrin, the product of his incestuous relationship with his daughter Evelyn. Cross' greed is completely limitless, morally and factually.

Cross real motive, in fact, is that his son-in-law kept his granddaughter / daughter away from him. Evelyn's opaque behavior is due to her fear for Kathrin, and now also for Gittes. The dramatic moment also fulfills two further demands of Freytag: the drama finds expression in a close relationship and thus gains cruelty, the dramatic revelation "she is my sister and my daughter." actually represents a hint rather than a full revelation. What becomes clear here and yet remains veiled, makes the cruelty grow into the unspeakable.

As Freytag demands, the suspense is revived in this fateful moment. A realistic, achievable possibility of salvation and victory for the hero has opened. Gittes and Mulwray plan to escape and report Cross when they are safe. At first this seems to be successful: Evelyn and Kathrin flee under Kahn's protection to Chinatown, Gittes manages to escape from Escobar. The moment of the last tension is Gittes' attempt to get Noah Cross arrested. There is still hope for a happy ending, but, as Freytag demanded, it will be disappointed. The final scene, in Chinatown, describes the catastrophe's full extent. Escobar arrests Gittes and refuses to arrest Noah Cross. The panicked Evelyn Mulwray is shot by the police while fleeing from her father with her daughter / sister in the car.

Freytag shares the view that it is not the characters but the plot that is the determining element of the story, but admits that the characters shape the plot through their special traits and that the plot must be an expression of the characters. Fate is the course of events brought about by the personality of the character. The characters are defined by their past actions: Gittes and Escobar worked together in Chinatown in the past. Gittes fights an uncompromising fight for justice; it brings him defeat and costs a beloved woman's life. He leaves the police force, never getting over this humiliation. This prevents him from realizing his fatal weakness: when it comes down to it, Gittes loses his coolness and becomes an emotional fighter, whereby he will always be inferior to opponents like Noah Cross.

Escobar, on the other hand, learned his lessons from what happened at that time. He has given up trying to fight evil. He does what is asked of him, nothing more. As a "reward" he was appointed lieutenant.

Evelyn Mulwray's behavior is motivated by her incestuous past. She got to know the limitless violence of her father first hand. She is torn between the longing for a white knight to save her and the terror that everyone she comes close to is doomed to certain death through Noah Cross.

The design of a character as being strongly influenced by his passion that Freytag wanted is most clearly fulfilled with Noah Cross. His incestuous desire, his greed for power, blinds him to the extent of his destruction. Gittes is in no way inferior to Cross: his passion for recognizing and destroying evil makes him blind to the lesson he could learn from the past. He also ignores Escobar's advice and misunderstands Evelyn Mulwray's behavior for far too long as insincere.

Evelyn lives in fear and terror of her father. Instead of confiding in Gittes, she believes that she is protecting him by keeping quiet. This inhibition ultimately leads to disaster.

The subject matter of the play has been modified in poetic freedom according to the poet's dramatic idea. However, the limits of probability were preserved. The postponement of the water scandal from 1905 to the 1930s brings it closer to the viewer's time, which is not only legitimate, but also speaks for the poet's dramatic talent. In addition, no interpersonal drama could have better expressed the boundless greed of the speculators active in the original water scandal than an incestuous relationship between father and daughter. The detachment from the actual events enables the poet to deal freely with this monstrous speculation about an incest as a background.