

Forget "Good versus Evil": Use Power Dynamics Instead

One of the things we're talking about in our work-in-progress ebook *Under a Different Sun* is how archetypal pairs of forces create a familiar resonance in a setting. One of the items at the top of that list, of course, is the classic "good versus evil" contest.

Author Nancy Berman has some interesting things to say about the role this archetypal pair plays in settings and narratives. Reading some draft content about this, though, I realized I have a different take on the matter, and recently blogged about this at my authorial blog.

A common stance in fiction and rpgs is that a framework of "good versus evil" is a time-tested Good Thing and a fine structure to model a story line along. I disagree. Unless it is deftly executed (which happens a minority of the time), I find this classic opposition to be a great formula for shallow, mediocre dross. This is especially true of rpgs, where there is a constant pressure to frame Heroes with their necessary Villains to oppose.

The result is an overused and often poorly executed trope that spawns cardboard characters and predictable plots. I think there are specific reasons why this occurs, and I also think there's an alternative to be had. It turns the good/bad dichotomy into something more practically applied.

I felt this post touched more on writing craft than on world building per se, and so I posted it at my authorial blog. But I think it will be of interest to many world builders too, especially insofar as the alternative I propose (of focusing on power dynamics, and letting conflict evolve) has its roots in how you structure the social setting of your fictional world.

If you're interested, you can read that post here: [How to Build a Better Power Struggle: Forget Good Versus Evil](#)