

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

**Narrative analysis and development - the example of the
science fiction story ‘*Beta Galaxy*’**

MA Animation

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1 Introduction

The genre of the story world is a fictional sci-fi animation story, the visual form will be presented in the form of cyberpunk style animation film, the audience for all ages. The story will present the relationship between technology and magic, mechanical devices and genetic modification, and even the final conflict between war and peace.

It is a technology-centred technological universe with different technological galaxies and planets, each with its own number and with differences in culture, terrain, technology, nature and architecture between them. The story is roughly about how the protagonist *Nathan* and other guardians of galaxies in the Beta Galaxy defeat the mechanical dragons of *Viperia* and guard the energy of the galaxy.

2.Principal characters/individuals

2.1 *Nathan* (Main character)

Planet of existence: E-89

Hobbies: dancing, skateboarding.

Tech Points: blistering skateboarding.

Character traits: somewhat timid and cowardly. But he will not give up easily when it matters. Afterwards, he also overcame his weak character.

Character Background: After being ostracised by his schoolmates, he didn't go to school and worked part-time as a delivery boy at a restaurant, where he met some bullying classmates who stepped on *Nathan's* skateboard, and *Raika* came



Figure 1: *Nathan*(self-drawing)

to his aid, so he got to know *Raika*, who repaired his skateboard and modified it so that it could travel through the city at high speeds. The last time *Nathan* sees *Raika*, she gives *Nathan* a small pyramid model, which one day inadvertently opens up a technological planet-hopping journey to become a Guardian of the Galaxy.

2.2 *Wang* (Supporting Character)

Planet of existence: C-16

Expertise: Calculations.

Representative Energy Stone: Stone of Wisdom.

Technology Points: Grasp all kinds of information about the enemy through information glasses, deduce the



Figure 2: *Wang*(self-drawing)

enemy's moving direction, moving speed, etc., so as to find the enemy's weakness

to attack.

Character traits: Intelligent, rigorous, and venomous. Although poisonous, but very responsible, heavy righteousness.

Character background: Superior memory and mathematical calculations since childhood, thus becoming a Guardian of the Galaxy.

2.3 Skylar (Supporting Character)

Planet of existence: J-74

Expertise: farming, raising pets.

Representative Energy Stone: Stone of Love.

Technology Points: briefly control people or creatures by bringing them into the Sakura dream world through psychological hypnosis.

Character traits: Kindness, resilience.

Character Background: Lives in a very complete and loving family, doesn't want a war to come and put her family in danger.



Figure 3: *Skylar*(self-drawing)

2.4 Raika (Supporting Character)

Planet of existence: P-09

Expertise: challenging herself.

Representative Energy Stone: the Stone of Courage.

Captain of the Guardians of the Galaxy. Came to E-89 where *Nathan* was while chasing *Viperia*, and was captured alive by *Viperia* for stopping him.



Figure 4: *Raika*(self-drawing)

2.5 *Viperia/Snake Witch* (Villain Protagonist)

Planet of existence: Y-0 (extinct)

Expertise: mechanical or genetic modification inventions.

Tech Points: lost sorcery from the Y-0 civilisation, can manipulate machinery or creatures.

Villain Protagonist of the story. She is the former queen of Planet Y-0. Her biggest enemy is *Raika*, who led the other Guardians to sink the civilisation of Y-0 to the bottom of the sea. She wants to revive the Y-0 civilisation by



Figure 5: *Viperia/Snake Witch*(self-drawing)

collecting technological energy stones from various planets to power the mechanical dragons and start a war.

3. Narrative design elements

Common sense refers to some commonplace laws of nature and society. Plots that defy common sense are generally used to set up a worldview. Outlandish settings will attract the audience's curiosity and quickly build up the expectation of a new world. In addition magic, coincidence, technology and other reasons can also constitute a plot that defies common sense. Such plots are often constructed through foreshadowing and foreshadowing, in which the audience is only shown the incredible visual spectacle, which is revealed in the foreshadowing plot. Adding some specific narrative design elements to the creation of virtual worlds will bring more interest to the audience.

3.1 Narrative Design Elements in *Spider-Man: Across the Universe*

I also researched the parallel world settings in *Spider-Man: Across the Universe* when creating this virtual universe. Each of the different Marvel universes has a different stylistic element, a setting that may come from different cultures, eras or even species in real life, but then again, slightly defying common sense, these elements are only used as embellishments to the story, and can only exist as a narrative backdrop. In the end, these universes all have one thing in common: each world has a superhero, Spider-Man, because 'Spider-Man' is the centre of the thread that binds the different Marvel universes together.

For example, the Marvel Earth - 50101 references the cultural practices and

architecture of India, and, in creating this world's Spider-Man character, *Pavitr Prabhakar*, drew inspiration from different existing art forms in India, including thaiyam, yakshagana, temple architecture, haina motifs, and modern Indian fashions, which resulted in the creation of a mask that looks like the face of a spider! This mask is painted in the Thayam dance face painting style and his body is also decorated with Indian style spider motifs.

On top of that, there is *Hobart Brown*, the Spider-Man of the Marvel Earth - 138, whose world is based on the punk style of early London and who has a persona that loves freedom, toughness, violence, and stubbornness, as in his final showdown with that world's U.S. President *Norman Osborn*, the punk Spider-Man kills *Osborn* by striking the oppressing president with his electric guitar. *Hobie Brown* isn't just aesthetically punk Spider-Man, he's also punkish in spirit as he directly fights against the institutions that oppress people.

3.2 Narrative Design Elements in *My Three Bodies*

The sci-fi animation of *My Three Bodies* tells the story of a technological war between Earthlings and an alien civilisation, the Tritons, over the funding of the Earth. The overall picture of the animation is filled with a strong sense of science and technology, and the *MC (Minecraft)* building model is to produce a unique interstitial effect. In the animation, the narrative space of the story ranges from the Earth to the whole universe, showing the unique grand narrative of science fiction

animation.

In the animated narration of the Earth scene, the Radar peak as the main narrative location, the wide London Heathrow Airport, the spectacular Judgment Day ship, the Panama Canal in the climactic narrative, and the United Nations building in New York, the United States, which announces the Wall Face plan, are all created based on real life. Among them, the realistic and realistic Brook-Lin Bridge appears, but also the audience's familiarity is full, with the warm glow, giving people a sense of reality. With the follow-up of the narrative, the time of the second and third animations came to the crisis era, the vast magical world of science and technology suddenly appeared in front of the audience, and the grand universe appeared. When Luo Ji woke up, the Dadio Memorial Square under Beijing, the spaceship Zhang Beihai took for the first time, the Yellow River Station where the seminar was held, the space elevator connecting to the underground, the Solar System joint fleet, and the Mantis working in space are all fragmented components of the universe. After combining the fragmented inner space of the painting with the outer space formed by the audience's imagination, And built up the vast expanse of space..

As an art of animation that coexists with virtuality and hypotheticality, the characters will reveal themselves in the narrative space between inside and outside the painting, creating an active expressive power.

3.3 Practice and Innovation of Narrative Design Elements

3.3.1 Character Narrative Design Elements

Roland Barthes once put forward the ‘functional’(Dan and Liya, 2010) character concept, he thinks that the characters in the film are the main body of action, and the action of the characters is the motive of the change of the narrative plot; and due to the different roles played by the characters in the film, the characters also have different narrative functions. Therefore, the arrangement of characters has a direct connection with the narrative effect of the film.

Films usually increase the difficulty of the subject encountering difficulties in order to make the plot ups and downs. At this time, it is difficult to complete the goal only by the subject alone, so it is necessary to arrange other characters to help the subject to complete the goal, to promote the story structure further to the deep development. Setting up a helper to help the subject complete the task becomes a common method. For example, the character of *Raika* is a typical ‘functional’ character. In the beginning, her presence is only there to create a logical reason for *Nathan* to join the trio of guardians and to complete the values that the story is trying to promote.

The same goes for the rest of the characters, as there are times when character-to-character dialogue serves the purpose of the narrative and progresses the storyline step by step. For example, *Wang* once says to *Nathan* that peace

must require effort and sacrifice on someone's part, and *Wang's* ending in the end confirms that statement. The ambush is laid as early as the dialogue.

3.3.2 Environmental Narrative Design Elements

In this virtual technological universe I have created, although each planetary world has a different setting, they all share the common feature of technological capabilities at their core. The style is relatively uniform, but, different worlds have some not-so-different design elements, such as environment, natural landscape, culture, and even mythology.

'The uniqueness of science fiction as a genre has more to do with space than with time (history, past, future).'(Fredric , 2014)

Therefore, I created multiple layers of narrative space. For example, Planet P-09 where *Raika* lives, references the real city of Paris, which contains Parisian landmarks such as the Seine, the Eiffel Tower, and the Louvre, with a seasonal setting of autumn. On top of that, some improvement work was done, such as adding other sci-fi designs such as



Figure 6: AI reference for Planet P-09

cyberpunk style lights, drones, neon lights, and aerial buildings. I used the AI tool

Midjourney to create an image of the style I wanted as a reference for the design.

Nathan's planet E-89, is a reference to the real city of Egypt, with the seasonal background of summer, and E-89 has technological buildings similar to the Pyramids and Sphinx. Similarly, *Skylar's* planet J-74 has ancient Japanese



Figure 7: AI reference for Planet E-89

architecture and cherry blossom elements, and the seasonal background is winter; *Wang's* planet C-16 is a reference to an ancient Chinese garden, and has a huge statue of a scholar, neon lights flashing Chinese elements, and the seasonal background is spring. But everything is a fusion of the traditional and the futuristic, and a cyber collision of nature and technology. Figure 7,8,9 are AI reference images of E-89, J-74 and C-16 that I created using *Midjourney*.



Figure 8: AI reference for Planet J-74



Figure 9: AI reference for Planet C-16

In addition to incorporating real-world elements such as national humanities, natural environments, and distinctive architecture, I also added some elements from civilisations that don't exist.

For example, *Viperia* comes from a mysterious planet Y-0. The setting of the Y-0 Empire world references *Atlantis*, a world that was originally technologically ahead of the rest of the planets by a cliff, but the Y-0 genetically engineered soldiers and invented the Magneto Oolite, which absorbs sunlight and transforms cosmic energy into energy, allowing their armies to travel the rest of the worlds on their own and invade them. The Guardians of the Galaxy came together to stop this, destroying the Magneto Oolite and sinking the world right to the bottom of the ocean. *Viperia* escaped to the rest of the world at the time and was spared.

However, *Viperia* secretly created a weapon, the Mechanical Gargoyle, through mechanical sorcery in an attempt to revive the civilisation of the Y-0 Empire and attempted to disrupt the peace of



Figure 10: AI reference for Planet Y-0

the Beta-Tech galaxy. The Guardians of the galaxy work together again to duel *Viperia* on different planets. On the right, Figure 9 are two underwater images of the

Y-0 world generated by the AI tool *Stable Diffusion*.

For science fiction films, as a kind of popular cultural product, to be recognised and enjoyed by the public it must first satisfy the needs of the public. Creation that is detached from life and public demand is 'water without a source, wood without a root', and no matter what kind of concepts and cultures are embedded in the film, it will lose its meaning if it lacks public recognition.

In terms of the intrinsic attributes of the state, the state is externalised from the national system, and the state and the international social structure are not entirely constructed from each other. Simply put, the individuality of the state is constructed by the internal structure of society, and the state in turn manifests its identity and interests in its interactions with other states. Specifically, in the medium of science fiction film, the image of the state itself is constructed by the internal social structure of the state, and the state can thereby increase its international communicative power by disseminating the image of the state constructed in the film through the medium product of science fiction film.

As an all-ages science fiction animated film, it should be guided by viewing expectations that some of the images of real countries constructed in the film's story are what the public needs and what they want to see in the film. This is not only the internal public's recognition of the knowledge, concepts and cultural

environment they have and live in, but also the recognition of improving the film's international communication power.

4 Genre, politics, culture and society

In the Technological Universe, a Guardian of the Galaxy is born for each technological planet. In the Beta Galaxy, each tech planet will also give birth to a different tech energy stone, which will be based on the quality of the galaxy guardian. Currently, there are Stones of Courage, Stones of Love, and Stones of Wisdom.

Viperia's Mechanical Dragon, the villain of the story, needs powerful Technological Energy Stones to gain the ability to fight, and the more Energy Stones you get, the stronger the Mechanical Dragon will be. Once 3 complete Energy Stones are obtained, the consequences are unimaginable: it was the three Galactic Guardians who used the Energy Stones to sink the civilisation of Planet Y-0 right to the bottom of the sea, so *Viperia* will surely use the Energy Stones to revive the Y-0 civilisation and invade the rest of the planets with her Mechanical Gargoyles.

The politics of these planets are self-governed within the planets, however, they cannot violate the galactic peace treaty, planets and planets, galaxies and galaxies are not allowed to start a war no matter how big the difference in technology level is, those who start a war, the planet they are on will be reported to the galactic court by

the galactic guardian, closed for processing, or even the civilisation will be extinguished. Planets and galaxies should all coexist peacefully with each other, friendly exchanges.

5 Narrative Structure

Simply put, the plotting of a film is a reconstruction of the story by the creators through careful design. The audience is attracted to a film essentially by its storyline. Therefore, the discussion of plotting can help to understand the internal structure of the work.

In Chapter 7 of Aristotle's *Poetics*, he mentions a specific overview of narrative integrity, arguing that a thing can only be considered complete if it has a head, a body, and an end. In addition to this, he gives a more rational and scientific account of the relevance and role played by the three subjects of the head, body and tail respectively. He repeatedly emphasised that in narratology, causal logic and linear form are the two core concepts. In animation creation, due to this unique way of pure linear narrative creation, it can create a good sense of immersion, so that the audience can not help but enter the author's creative world, and the author for heart to heart communication and interaction.

To create the narrative structure, I will use the famous American screenwriter *Syd Field's* 'three-act structure'. The first part, a beginning, accounts for 25% of the

capacity; the second part, a middle, accounts for 50% of the capacity; and the third part, an ending, accounts for 25% of the capacity. The 'three-act structure' is usually set up with two plot points, which are located at 21%-23% of the total length of the first act, and at 71%-75% of the total length of the second act. These two plot points are mostly one event, after which the plot will turn to another direction, thus advancing the story.

5.1 The 'three-act structure' in the sci-fi film *The Wandering Earth*

Taking the Chinese science fiction film *The Wandering Earth* as an example, at the beginning of the film, Jupiter's gravitational changes lead to the malfunctioning of the planetary engine block on the surface, and the carriers driven by *Liu Qi*, *Han Duoduo*, and Grandpa are urgently requisitioned to join the rescue. In the middle of the film, *Liu Qi* and the others follow Lieutenant *Wang Lei* to carry out a rescue plan to restart the planetary engine, which ultimately fails to restart the engine, and the rescuers from various countries give up, while *Han Duoduo* calls for not giving up hope and asks for support and help in the global broadcast. In the ending part, *Liu Qi* and others implement the final rescue plan, modify the planetary engine procedure ignition success but because the ignition distance is not enough to face failure, the critical moment *Liu Peiqiang* driving a part of the space station to ignite Jupiter and success, the Earth was pushed away from Jupiter, the human race can be preserved, the rescue operation is successful.

The length of these three acts of *The Wandering Earth* roughly conforms to the allocation criteria of the three-act theory, and the plotting of each act is well-organised and heart-wrenching. Two of the film's plot points occur in Part I and Part II. In the first part, the opening first half of the film begins with an introduction of the reason why *Liu Qi's* family lives in the dungeon and the basic living conditions in the dungeon. The first plot point follows: *Liu Qi* destroys the analogue electronic screen in the dungeon and takes *Han Duoduo* from the classroom. Things start to go in another direction when *Liu Qi* takes Han Duo Duo to the ground to play. During their stay on the ground, *Liu Qi's* family experiences an unforeseen incident of a planetary engine shutdown, and is forced to join the rescue operation after being commandeered in an emergency during their escape.

The film then moves into the middle section of the second act. There are several dramatic conflicts in the second act, one in which Grandma's Grandpa's sacrifice creates a heated conflict between *Liu Qi* and Lieutenant *Wang Lei*, and one triggered by *Zhou Qian* breaking a flint when Lieutenant *Wang Lei* insists on advancing towards the destroyed Hangzhou Dungeon. Faced with the situation of the rescue team disbanding, *Liu Qi* says that there are still flints in the car and the rescue needs to continue. As they continue on to Sulawesi, the rescue plan to restart the engine fails, and *Liu Qi* proposes a plan to use the engine to ignite Jupiter's atmosphere, which is the second plot point of the film. This is the second plot point of the film. Taking the second plot point as the node, the rescue

plan changes from restarting the planetary engine to using the engine to ignite Jupiter's atmosphere.

The successful ignition of the planetary engines opens the third act, the finale. In the third act, the short-lived joy brought by the successful ignition is not yet fully expressed, because the ignition distance is not enough to face failure. In the end, *Liu Peiqiang*, *Liu Qi's* father, who is in the space station, sacrifices himself to ignite Jupiter's atmosphere so that the Earth can escape from Jupiter's gravitational pull, completing the Earth rescue operation.

Wandering the Earth' uses a three-act plot arrangement narrative method, focusing the entire storytelling on the process of rescue operations after encountering a crisis, and focusing on setting up a number of dramatic conflicts and plot points in the rescue plot. The core of the film is to express Chinese people's longing for home and attachment to their homeland, and to show the strong sense of family and country in Chinese culture, due to the conflict arising from the inability to abandon their families and homeland, and the conflict caused by the rebellious mentality due to the inability to satisfy the family's emotions.

The three-act structure is the most commonly used technique in film plotting, which helps the plot to progress step by step, and focuses on the dramatic conflict and cultural connotation of the film. The narrative structure of the science fiction film

Beta Galaxy also adopts the three-act structure for plot arrangement, using dramatic conflicts and plot twists to firmly grasp the audience's attraction, bringing the audience into the cultural atmosphere created by the film story, and using the film plot to clarify the spirit of love and anti-individual heroism that the film wants to express, as well as the core of the story of The film's plot illustrates the spirit of love and anti-individual heroism, as well as the core of the story, which is the hope that there is no war in the world.

5.2 Narrative structure of the science fiction story *Beta Galaxy* from the perspective of 'three-act structure'

5.2.1 Act I

In the first half of the first act, *Nathan's* skateboard is broken by his classmates who are bullying him in school, and *Raika* comes to Planet E-89 to hunt down *Viperia*. *Raika* helps *Nathan* to teach those classmates a lesson, and fixes his skateboard and upgrades it into a speed skateboard. *Raika* tells *Nathan* to be brave next time to face those people, and gives him a glowing pyramid ornament. *Raika* talks to *Nathan* about being brave next time and gives *Nathan* a glowing pyramid ornament. This is the first plot twist. The pyramid shakes violently one day, and just as *Nathan* picks it up, he is transported to the planet J-74, where *Skylar*, *Wang*, and the baddie *Viperia* are battling, and *Wang*, thinking that *Nathan* is a Guardian of the Galaxy, tells him to draw fire, which he does by using his speed skateboard, and when he thinks that he is going to succeed, *Skylar's* Love Stone is still taken. is still

snatched.

In a plot twist for Act 1, after the end of the battle, *Nathan* doesn't want to join the Guardians of the Galaxy, he just wants to go home. But *Wang* says that the person who gave *Nathan* the pyramid chose him because it contains the energy stone that *Raika* protects: the Stone of Courage. *Nathan* hesitates, but refuses, but something inside him fluctuates. When *Nathan* leaves at last, *Wang* says to *Nathan*, 'You'll definitely come back to us'.

5.2.2 Act II

A few days later, *Nathan's* pyramid senses that the Guardians of the Galaxy are fighting again and need support. *Nathan* tells himself to just pretend he didn't see it. But then he remembers what *Wang* said the other day: 'Peace requires effort and sacrifice', and what *Raika* said about 'courage', and goes to *Wang's* planet C-16 to join the battle. However, the Stone of Wisdom is still taken, and *Viperia*, in control of the dragon, tells *Nathan* that he'll see him next time.

Nathan said that he did his best, and that he would not care about the next time, but *Wang* told him that *Viperia* knew that he had the Courage Stone that *Raika* had hidden, and *Nathan* tried to give it back to *Wang*, but couldn't, and *Wang* told *Nathan* that the Courage Stone had recognised you as its new owner, and that you would have to deal with the next battles. Since then, *Nathan*, *Wang* and *Skylar*

have formed a team of three. The three of them train together and develop a friendship until *Viperia* and her mechanical dragon reappear (Figure 11).

Act 2: The three of them are still outmatched by the mechanical dragon, but *Skylar* discovers that the dragon's weak point is at the top of its head, and yells at *Nathan* to tell him that he can't get close enough; *Wang* calculates that there's only

one way to win the fight, and after some hesitation, *Wang* decides to sacrifice himself.

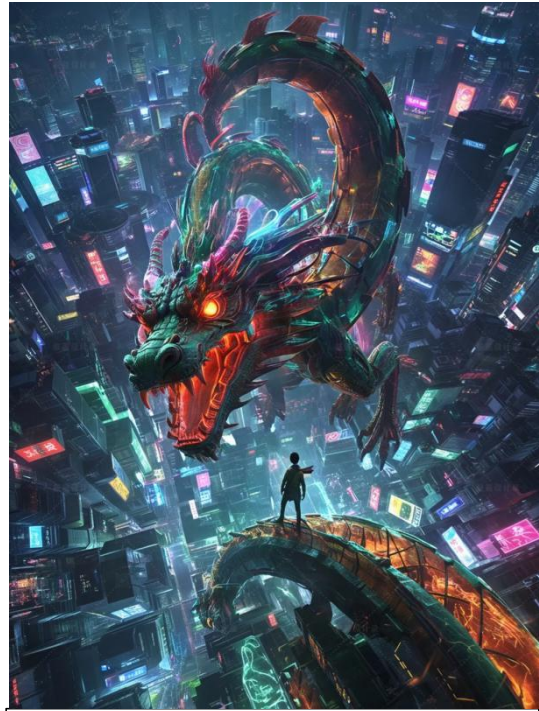


Figure 11: AI reference for mechanical dragon

5.2.3 Act III

Powerlessness is a form of psychological death. For example, if you see a comrade dying from a bullet, but you are pinned down by fire, if you see a train coming, but you are tied to the railway tracks, if you have been to all the hospitals and your child is still in critical condition, there is no greater sorrow than death, and impotence can instantly intensify the audience's expectations, and the audience can be certain that there is nothing left for the character to retreat from.

Therefore, near the end of the story, the protagonist can be set up a breaking point, to promote the story to reach the climax: *Wang* sacrificed himself, *Wang's* death let *Nathan* completely explode, *Nathan* did all he could, retrieve the pyramid containing the stone of courage, the execution of the mechanical dragon, the evil *Viperia* lost all the technological energy source, and the dragon and the dragon together with the demise of the.

The story ends with *Nathan* joining the Guardians of the Galaxy and, along with *Skylar*, continuing to silently guard the Beta Galaxy in place of *Wang* and *Raika*.

6 Conclusion

The study of narrative is really the study of storytelling, and as such, it focuses primarily on the text of the animated film itself, rather than on other peripheral categories. In the past decade, researchers in the art of animation have analysed and examined the technical, aesthetic, and other aspects of production, but the study of narrative is a way for people to understand animated cinema from a different perspective, and to understand cinema in its own 'discourse'.

Narrative research is to analyse animated films from the story level, and content is the root of all narrative activities, only when the story is done well, can it really attract the audience.

After the study of narrative principles, the creation of a detailed virtual story world narrative, we can find that there are many elements that affect the story narrative. From identifying the core concepts and themes of the story, to creating the basic framework of the world, such as the world's topography, climate, stages of technological development, major historical events, cultural or social conditions such as politics and economics, class and politics. These elements can be referenced to existing elements of modern times, or a virtual world can be constructed that is completely different from reality, but they cannot be separated from the narrative logic, as all narrative elements, are created to aid the narrative. Narrative structure, on the other hand, is responsible for linking characters, plot, conflict and purpose with narrative logic, and to set up suspense or anticipation

during the narrative process, control the rhythm and emotional ups and downs of the story, guide the audience in the direction of the story's development, and create episodes that will be remembered by the audience. Narrative structure is not only a tool for storytelling, but also a bridge for scriptwriters to convey emotions and thoughts.

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