

# A Study on the Spatial Narrative of Film Fusion of Game—Taking *A Writer's Odyssey* as an Example

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**Abstract:** Film is a comprehensive art which combines time art and space art. In the past, the film academic circle often focused on the time narrative of films. While in recent years, some domestic scholars have gradually turned their focuses to the spatial narrative of films. As a representative work of domestic film incorporated with game style, *A Writer's Odyssey* has an extraordinary significance in Chinese film history. Based on the nested narrative structure of cyberspace and realistic space, *A Writer's Odyssey* presents some Eastern aesthetic frames, and the ingenious spatial narrative made the audience indulge in the film. This article will take the film *A Writer's Odyssey* as an example, combining spatial narrative theory to interpret the material space, social space, and spiritual space of the film, in order to explore new possibilities for the fusion of film and game in spatial narrative.

**Keywords:** Film-game fusion films, Spatial narrative, *A Writer's Odyssey*

## 1. Introduction

Compared with other forms of art, film art is the most flexible and inclusive in its handling of time and space. Due to the use of montage in film, the medium of film can break the conventional time and space limitations in the narrative, discontinuous time direction and diversified spatial structure has long been widely used in the film art, the film for the art of time and space to grasp the scale of the art is difficult to reach other forms of art. Here I take the two arts with high narrative value as examples to illustrate the advantages of film's use of space-time narrative compared with other art forms. Performance and presentation" is an important element of both theatre art and film art, but for the interpretation of narrative text, theatre is not able to achieve rapid switching and shifting of time and space in the expression of narrative text due to the limitation of the material space of the "stage", which is limited by the "stage", and the time-space narrative is limited by the "stage's" limitation. Most scholars believe that compared with theatre, novels are closer to cinema in the treatment of narrative text, and the two have a higher degree of compatibility in the narrative mechanism - they are both able to Through the creator's intention to carry out a large span of space-time transformation, but unlike novels, films are more intuitive to the display of space-time narratives, and when carrying out a large span of space-time transformation, film creators often use iconic symbols to remind the audience, so that the audience can quickly enter into a new scenario, while novels, on the other hand, do not, although the writers will be through the textual explanations to give readers some space-time Although the writer will give the readers some spatial and temporal information through textual explanation, it does not enable the readers to enter into the new spatial and temporal clues established by the writer quickly. Based on the characteristics of its expression form, film art can better manage the use of space and time in the expression of narrative text, and has a natural advantage in space-time narrative.

For a long time, narrative studies have paid much more attention to the art of time than to the art of space. However, after the mid-twentieth century, many Western scholars noticed the exposure of the spatial problem and the lack of spatial research, and they turned their attention to the study of spatial problems. The "spatial turn" began in the fields of philosophy and spirituality, and was gradually extended to the humanities and social sciences at the end of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the birth of cinema, the spatial theory research in the field of culture has already created a good atmosphere for it; at the same time, the birth of cinema has expanded the scope of spatial narrative, and the use of spatial elements in cinema is inherent. David Bordwell used the Gestalt school's perfect mental mechanism and the theory of "perspective school" to classify the film space in "*Varieties of Film Space*"; in "*Film Art: Form and Style*", he integrated the film narrative system with space, and the content of his research laid the foundation for the development of film space narrative. The enthusiasm

of domestic academia for film space narrative began at the beginning of the 21st century, and many scholars have carried out innovative explorations of film space narrative research. With the development of digital technology and the extensive application of film production has brought about the comprehensive upgrading of film narrative means, film narrative from the constraints of traditional technology, a variety of virtual space construction has been widely appeared in all kinds of films, the audience's imagination and the viewing horizons have been a breakthrough, the importance of spatial narrative to the film narrative has been greatly enhanced, and as a narrative means for film narrative innovation opens up a new path, which is the basis for the development of spatial narrative. The importance of spatial narrative to film narrative has been greatly enhanced, and as a narrative means, it opens up a new way for the innovation of film narrative, and the versatility and diversification of space in the film has played a strong role in promoting the flexible film narrative. As a film type loved by the "net generation", the cinema-game fusion film presents more obvious stylised features in the space narrative, and the nested structure of the space narrative is the symbol of this kind of film, and the surrealist design of virtual space can fit the imagination consumption of the young generation to a large extent, and the construction of multiple spaces brings a complex narrative to the cinema-game fusion film. The construction of multiple spaces brings more possibilities for the complex narrative of the film. *A Writer's Odyssey*, as a typical domestic film-game fusion film, is based on the nested narrative structure of cross-narrative between the magical world and the real world, forming a material space where reality meets reality, a social space where commonality and individuality coexist, and a spiritual space that is rich in metaphorical expressions and the author's thoughts. This paper will analyse the three dimensions of space in the film *A Writer's Odyssey* on the basis of spatial narratology, in order to explore new ideas for the creation of spatial narratives in domestic cinema-game fusion films.

## 2. Material space

### 2.1 Real geographical space

The construction of "manifold levels of world" under the composite narrative structure is one of the key symbols of gamification narrative in film-game fusion films. The construction of multiple levels of world is often manifested as a nested structure in film-game fusion films. Real space has the characteristic of pure geographical landscape in its visual presentation, which is in keeping with people's understanding of the real world. Valid space not only plays a role in providing a scene for the story to take place in such films, but also serves the overall narrative of the film and provides support for the construction of character images. The description of the real world in *A Writer's Odyssey* predates the magical world of the imperial capital, and it can be said that Liangjiang City, as the tangible geographical world, is the starting point for the film to unfold all spatial narratives. It takes Chongqing as its main scenic spot. As a city built on cliffs, Chongqing has very special geographical characteristics. The modern urban architecture and winding old city area complement each other, and its "science fiction elements" and "cyberpunk" attributes could smoothly integrate real space and virtual space during the transformation, avoiding the sense of separation that may occur in multiple spatial narratives from the perspective of visual landscape<sup>[6]</sup>.

The application of real geographical spatial features can affect the construction of character images, and the main characters in *A Writer's Odyssey* are constructed in a highly congruent manner with the characteristics of real geographical space. As the protagonist of the movie, a small character on the edge of society, Guan Ning's main task in Liangjiang City is to assassinate a frustrated internet novelist, Lu Kongwen, while the negative capitalist boss, Li Mu, belongs to the upper class in the real world. When Guan Ning and Lu Kongwen appeared in Liangjiang City, the backgrounds presented were mostly dilapidated ramps, with a hazy tone. Through the geographical background of the characters' appearance, the audience could feel the oppressive and obscure feeling of the marginal characters in the real world, while Li Mu often appeared in a high-rise building with a sense of modernity and technology, which created an image of a powerful and ruthless figure for Li Mu. Director Lu Yang takes Chongqing this "magical" city, as the main filming location for the real geographical space, and artistically depicts it based on the overall narrative style of the film, using the urban landscape to strengthen the dramatic narrative of the real space, thereby laying a solid foundation for the character image construction of the film.

### 2.2 Magic virtual space

The virtual space intervention in film-game fusion films often manifests as the protagonist

activating certain triggering mechanisms and entering a new world with captivating colors. The events and elements that occur in the virtual world are to a certain extent reflections and feedback of the real world. The virtual space in the film-game fusion has a precise mirror relationship with the real space, and the virtual space to a certain extent contains the protagonist's expectations for the real world. The virtual space can be viewed as the "utopian world" in the protagonist's heart. The cross narrative between virtual space and real space complements each other in the film, enriching the narrative hierarchy of the film and achieving the complete presentation of the final film. The hierarchical relationship and concept of narrative space have always been a classic issue in films incorporated with game style. When constructing multiple spaces, creators must focus on grasping the hierarchical relationship of narrative space, and build and improve the "mirror world" on the basis of consolidating the construction of the basic world system, clarifying the overall narrative structure of the film, and forming spatial narrative relationships that can form causal relationships and mutual influence.

*A Writer's Odyssey*, as a fantasy blockbuster that incorporates film with game style, deeply integrates Chinese classical elements and magical aesthetic colors in the presentation of magical virtual spaces. The virtual space of the stately capital Yunzhong City in the movie mainly refers to the Wei, Jin and the Northern and Southern Dynasties period in China in terms of style shaping and urban landscape. Due to its elevated world design not limited by time and space factors, it even incorporates some typical elements from the Tang and Han dynasties. Director Lu Yang used a lot of virtual special effects to create a magical virtual space, and incorporated a large number of Chinese classical elements into the graphic design, striving for the realism and charm of the screen. The upgrade of the film's audio-visual language and visual wonders has been achieved, allowing the audience to immerse themselves in the visual feast of Eastern aesthetics while experiencing the surrealist style of wonders and delicately balancing the subtle relationship between reality and emptiness. In the interweaving narrative of real space and virtual space, the film adopts three levels of settings: Tu Ling asks Guan Ning to assassinate the novelist Lu Kongwen, thus creating a connection between the two spaces in front of the audience. Lu Kongwen makes Guan Ning a character into the novel, carrying a foreshadowing of the following text and the closed loop of the entire story. The awakening of Guan Ning's consciousness makes himself take over from Lu Kongwen to start writing novels<sup>[4]</sup>. The red cavalry of the further world fights against the Red Hair Demon, and the two spaces are completely connected, forming a closed-loop of the entire story logic. The spatial narrative construction of *A Writer's Odyssey* in the simulated world enriches the three-dimensional system of the entire assassination of the novelist universe, and is an experimental exploration of spatial narrative innovation in domestic films incorporated with game style.

### 3. Social space

#### 3.1 Social relations and class conflicts

Compared with material space, social space emphasizes more on the social relationships that exist among people as social groups. It can be stated that "social space" is the corresponding entity that describes social relationships. As the subject in shared space, humans have a close connection with social space. There are countless examples in films where the construction of social space is utilized to shape character images, character groups, and character relationships. The construction of shared space in movies has referential significance for character portrayal.

In the construction of the real world in *A Writer's Odyssey*, the director weakens the social groups that have universality in expression, and presents a clear phenomenon of social stratification in the shaping of character groups, deliberately highlighting the differences and contradictions between marginalized figures and upper class members of the reactionary society. The principal characters can be divided into the following two categories: marginalized social figures represented by Lu Kongwen and Guan Ning, as well as successful social figures represented by Li Mu. In the real world, Guan Ning is a killer who has been looking for his daughter for many years without success, while Lu Kongwen is an internet novelist who has achieved nothing, the two of them have the typical identity of marginal figures. As a ruthless and upper class figure, capitalist boss Li Mu abuses his power to attain his goals, which is a typical image of a villain. The status relationship between these two social groups varies greatly in the real world, but due to the task of *A Writer's Odyssey*, these two social groups have a dramatic intersection in the real world of the movie.

The presentation of communal space in films incorporated with game style can provide viewers with a path to observe and understand game mechanisms. The villain Li Mu, as the ruler and oppressor,

is the ultimate boss in the game. He identified Li Mu's conspiracy and completed the novel writing can be viewed as the ultimate mission of the protagonists, namely Guan Ning and Lu Kongwen, in the game. The series of obstacles Li Mu sends to complete this mission can be regarded as NPC characters in the game world, and Yang Mi's role as the Turing Spirit belongs to auxiliary status. The audience can establish a preliminary understanding of the game mechanism of the film through the presentation of character groups and relationships in shared space.

### 3.2 Mirror space to mirror characters

Space construction can affect the shaping of movie personalities, and spatial transformation is the foundation for character switching. In film-game fusion films, there is generally a construction of multiple spaces, and the nested structures often present a mirror relationship. The mirror effect of spatial construction can drive the shaping of the personality's mirror identity. The image of mirrored characters in mirrored space often reflects the "ideal self" of the protagonist in the real world. [1]A scholar named Li Xuejian, summarized the real identity and mirror identity of the protagonist in film-game fusion films as the relationship between the protagonist and the avatar, and organized them into two identity models: "growth and redemption" and "replacement and assimilation". The focal character portrayal in the film *A Writer's Odyssey* covers these two identity models. Guan Ning's role is shaped in the mode of "replacement and assimilation": the hero is generally equivalent to an avatar. In Liangjiang City, his identity is a killer hired by the villain Li Mu to accomplish the task of "assassinating a novelist". In Yunzhong City, the imperial capital, his image identity is a red armored cavalry serving the red haired ghost, but no matter what identity is set, the core goal is to identify his daughter, Xiaoju. The identity shaping of novelist Lu Kongwen leans more towards the identity model of "growth and redemption". In the simulated world, he corresponds to the role of Kongwen, and the author endows Kongwen with a powerful black armor parasitic relationship, providing assistance for Kongwen to overcome difficulties and complete the process of God killing. The ability of meaningless text to have a symbiotic relationship with black cavalry far surpasses that of novelists who achieve nothing in the real world. Compared to red cavalry, this identity is more in line with the ideal self state of the protagonist in the real space, deepening the dramatic nature of the core task of "little characters completing the killing of gods" in the virtual world[5].

*A Writer's Odyssey* inspires the audience's imagination and yearning through the construction of the spectacular scenery of the majestic capital Yunzhong City, and establishes a two-way communication with the new generation of audience through the diverse identities of the main characters in the film. The audience can achieve a transformation from the viewer to the game player through their understanding of the protagonist's mirror identity. The design of virtual space mirror identity in films incorporated with game style can not only provide supplementary and support for the film's spatial narrative, but also greatly meet the demands of the online generation audience for the dual identity of players and audiences, deepening the audience's identity identification with the narrative subject.

## 4. Spiritual Space

### 4.1 Metaphorical fables and realistic re-fractions

Scholar Chen Xuguang once utilized five key words "window, mirror, dream, ceremony, fable" as the starting point for understanding movies.[2]"The allegorical nature of movies is manifested as a characteristic of having words in words and meaning, which is not true on the surface, illogical, or even exaggerated and absurd, but has a unique meaning and is thought-provoking." Excellent fable presentation can give deeper meaning to the theme and connotation of movies. As a metaphorically rich Chinese industrial science fiction film, *A Writer's Odyssey* extensively utilizes subjective imagery to construct the inner spiritual space of the film, reflecting the problems and contradictions in the real world through the heavenly space. The director once stated in an interview that *A Writer's Odyssey* sets an elevated world, which can be seen as the narrative of the film being able to break free from the limitations and constraints of the realistic context to a certain extent. [7]This provides creators with broader imagination and creative space, but is not to say that the elimination of realism in the film. He hopes that the audience can closely connect this film with reality, so most of the metaphors in the film can be found in actual society.

Each of the principal characters in the film is deeply immersed in their own spiritual torment. Guan Ning has always been immersed in the guilt of losing his daughter, which led to the misfortune of his

family. Lu Kongwen was almost thirty years old and lived in poverty, relying on his parent to make a living. His obsession with the novel industry did not show any improvement, and the collision between dreams and reality plunged him into a profound contradiction. Owing to the kindness of being adopted by the antagonist Li Mu, Tu Ling has long engaged in illegal activities for Li Mu and is willing to become his puppet. However, he is deeply conscious of Li Mu's personalities and struggles between kindness and gratitude. Each protagonist is unexpectedly and involuntarily involved in this dispute, and their spiritual will presents a clear and dark sense of chaos. This is further the sense of crisis that Lu Yang, as a new generation director, possesses. Through the oppression of society and the chaos of spirit, he reflects the commonality of ordinary individuals in genuine society, as well as the self anxiety and spiritual crisis of modern people. As a movie with gorgeous metaphorical connotations, the balance between dreams and reality, the conflict between individuals and society, the revelry of hooligans, and the relationship between technology and human being are all included in the contemporary issues. A large number of metaphors reflect social reality, which is part of the important factors contributing to the achievement of *A Writer's Odyssey*.

#### 4.2 Ideological expression and director's pursuit

<sup>[3]</sup>As a writer within the socialist system, young director Lu Yang is one of the typical representative figures of "new blood" directors. He insists on placing equal emphasis on industrial presentation and emotional expression in his works and creations. His works not only have a strong personal artistic style, but also have an eclectic approach to popular art. As a director with an academic background, he integrates ordinary people into grand contemporary issues and shoulders the responsibility and mission of a young director in the new era. If the inner psychic space constructed by the film through metaphor and character spirit is to reflect reality, then the external spiritual space composed of the ideas and values that the director wants to convey is even more grand. It not only contains the core ideas of the film, but also reflects the director's personal pursuit.

The focal theme of "A mortal dares to kill a god" in *A Writer's Odyssey* allows us to glimpse the rebellious and passionate atmosphere of Director Lu Yang, which is similar to the chivalrous spirit expressed in his director's Brotherhood of Blades series. The theme of "mortal killing a god" is more dramatic in the film's different worlds. The sobriety of Kongwen in the film when facing the worship of Red Hair Demon by the imperial capital represents the awakening of the Awakened One's resistance to authority. Kongwen, as a small figure, dares to resist in front of the absolute ruler Red Hair Demon and ultimately achieves victory, implying the director's beautiful expectations for small figures to confront fate and rewrite life under the representation of dark reality. The strong idealistic atmosphere and romantic color presentation are typical features of Director Lu Yang's works. As a young director who has witnessed the achievements of China's reform and opening up, Lu Yang closely combines industrial exploration with the promotion of Chinese classical aesthetics in his film production. In *A Writer's Odyssey*, the construction of a different world showcases the stately capital Yunzhong City, which is rich in Chinese aesthetic conception, in front of the audience. This is Lu Yang's exploration of the balance between art and market as a contemporary force director. It is also a preliminary attempt by the creative group to integrate the industrialization of Chinese films with traditional Chinese culture.

#### 5. Conclusion

The film *A Writer's Odyssey*, as a masterpiece of domestic film incorporated with game style, has stood out among a series of "family reunion" films during the Spring Festival. Excellent spatial narrative is an important consideration in the success of the film. The film strengthens the audio-visual enjoyment of films incorporated with game style by constructing spatial wonders, and has made definite practical explorations for the spatial narrative of Chinese films incorporated with game style. This article combines the three spatial dimensions of visible space, social space, and spiritual space in the film to analyze the spatial narrative, hoping to provide reference for the spatial narrative creation of domestic films incorporated with game style in the future.

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