

# Application of Fragmented Narrative in MG Music Animation—Taking Incognito as An Example

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**Abstract:** Fragmented narrative has the characteristics of postmodernism: no center, no depth, entertaining, and deconstructionist-center. It intersperses with the shots of text and pictures to change from montage to collage, which subverts the traditional audiovisual language with a strong personality. However, although the music animation video has a lot to express, the short length limits the expression's completeness. Therefore, it is necessary to express the key points through a fragmented narrative, while the combination of fragmented information can engage the audience. Music animation, more conducive to publicity, combines short music videos and animations. It supplements the content that music cannot express with images. Incognito is an MG music animation produced around cyber-violence, which drives the picture narrative fragmentation with that of the music narrative by organizing the pictures around the music. Meanwhile, the animation produced in MG format adopts MG animation's flexibility, bringing new audiovisual enjoyment to the audience.

**Keywords:** fragmented narrative; MG animation; music animation

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## Introduction

Sponsored by “Chenguang Program” supported by Shanghai Education Development Foundation and Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. For one thing, the Internet has accelerated the development of fast-food culture, while the "short video" industry makes people prefer innovation to a single linear narrative. Therefore, uniqueness is important to attract people. The fragmented narrative has various forms, inheriting the characteristics of postmodern narrative: uncertainty, non-linear narrative, different space, and deconstruction eliminates the center. Splitting the story into fragments to tell alternately has a strong personality and appreciation[1].

For another, as a new form of media

communication, MG animation, or Motion Graphics, is used widely for its flexibility, a large amount of information, and low cost. Through the study of narrative forms, the short animated film Incognito adopted music animation to combine fragmented narrative with Motion Graphics. The fragmented characteristics of music narration maximized the characteristics of Motion Graphics. Meanwhile, emotionally, music maximized the emotional expression of characters with the new visual experience. As for content, the animation produced on the popular topic of "cyber-violence" told the heroes and heroines' different behaviors in the face of cyber-violence. It called on everyone to protect their rights with the law and broke the gossip rather than depressed when encountering cyber-violence.

### Reasons for Fragmented Narrative

The accelerated pace of life has increased people's spiritual needs, which cannot be met by a single linear narrative. However, the fragmented narrative has Postmodernism characteristics: no center, no depth, entertainment, and deconstructionist-center, which made it widely used in film, animation, games, and music. Besides, a single form of a film cannot satisfy people's spiritual needs. Postmodernism's above characteristics make the postmodern context appear a new "fragmented" narrative with deconstructionist-center, time and space disorder, and nonlinearity.

It interspersed with shots of text, and pictures to change from montage to collage, which subverted the traditional audiovisual language with a strong personality. Deconstructing the center of the story into fragments to be dispersed at various points will disrupt the whole story, which can be entirely reintegrated by thinking [2]. Wong Kar-wai's film *The Grandmaster* is a classic of fragmented narrative, which disassembled the story of Ip Man and Miss Gong Er into fragments. Every shot that adopted text and collage to express emotions was exquisite and worthy of scrutiny. Due to the limited audience, fragmented narratives are difficult to be accepted, so they are mostly used for games and short films rather than movies. In the games, players collect scattered pieces of information to integrate into a complete timeline to experience the story. While short films are easy to narrate with small size, fragmented narratives can quickly fuse large information, allowing people to analyze.

For example, in a narrative MV that tells stories with songs, the narrative is fragmented for the songs' fragmented characteristics [3]. Due to the short duration of the animated short, the story cannot be expressed in the timeline. Therefore, some animations choose fragmented narratives to remove the middle description to show the critical content.

Nowadays, short videos are more popular, while fragmented information is flooding every corner of life. People are seeking a fast food-style visual experience, so the form is essential. They are not satisfied with a single visual experience but try new forms of expression with innovation. However, postmodernism is more comfortable to innovate films to express individuality and new things. Therefore, choosing collage, textual expression, and other visual forms is more visually expressive and emotional.

### Narrative Techniques of Fragmented Narrative in Music Animation

This work took the MG music animation short *Incognito* to analyze the fragmented narrative in character creation, story narration, and emotional expression.

As the contradiction of social development needs promotes social development, the contradiction of characters in the work will promote plot development [4]. Once there is no relationship and contradiction between the characters, the lack of sparks will cause the plot to be flat.

In this animation, the characters are placed in two space-time to show their identity and situation with different environments. As for character setting: the hero is a hider, whose appearance makes people feel depression with lower saturation and vividness (See Figure 1-1). Reversely, the heroine is set mainly in yellow and green, representing purity and vitality (See Figure 1-2). Then, gender and colors are used to express the opposite of the characters' personality settings. The hero yearns for the right life in the dark, while the heroine is in the bright spot, being easy to make mistakes in judgment with a fragile heart.



Figure 1-1

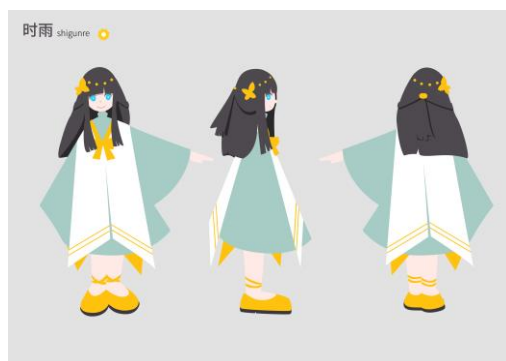


Figure 1-2

Music animation mostly uses pop music, which is more popular. Therefore, to make the public accept the content and its significance, the character set should be socially representative. In the network-dependent environment, cyber-violence is a hot topic. Therefore, real cases' introduction allows people to participate in the discussion, with positive energy transmitted to everyone [5].

Some people wear hats and masks, representing the masses following the trend, while the epaulets' colors represent different Internet classes. The speeches of influential people are exaggerated and implemented by the followers, which leads to a poor atmosphere such as impetuosity, trend, and sensational anger (See Figure 1-3). This animation adopts screen masks as clues to tell stories around social cyber-violence. The two protagonists represent two characters facing cyber-violence in reality, one is Cui Xueli, who commits suicide; the other was Reiza, who is unyielding. Reorganizing and setting real cases in reality into stories arouse people's resonance and thinking.



Figure 1-3

### Narrative Style of Incognito

The narrative form of music MV is different from ordinary film because it is too short to be expressed. Therefore, it can only insert part of the important plot and space-time in a fragmented form to express by associating some fragments. The characteristics of fragmented narratives, such as non-linearity, jumping, and different space-time, can only tell the whole story in two spaces alternately [6].

The story is displayed in fragments, requiring viewers to gather intelligence to form a complete story. However, each shot's information is large, and events are displayed in a progressive relationship, which makes fragmented narratives challenging to understand. Therefore, the details related to the front and rear shots are put into the picture. For example, the latter scene is put into the previous to imply the development of plots with the person's sight and orientation. Masks run through the entire animation, and their existence and breaking represent the development process, which was conducive to understanding the incident.

In the beginning, the two perform activities according to their own settings in their respective time without intersecting. As a hider, the hero is with the masses and wanted to change as he has seen something novel (See Figure 2-1), while the heroine is in a sterile environment without contacting the dark world (See Figure 2-2). The first incident's intersection does not occur until the two met the

victim on the road, which has different effects on both sides (See Figure 2-3).

After disassembling the story of the two in this animation, the scene is expressed in the image by adding a text lens. The heroine chooses to face negatively after being attacked by the network, while the hero seeks the truth and solutions. The contrast expresses the primary purpose of not surrendering in the face of cyber-violence. The emotions expressed by narrative fragments are also fragmented. The splicing of emotional fragments portrays the characters more entirely by amplifying the emotions[7].



Figure 2-1

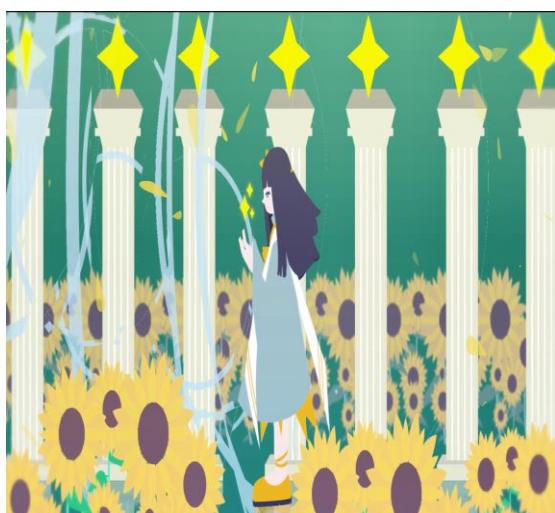


Figure 2-2



Figure 2-3

Incognito selects Japanese-style original music, whose emotional expression is more intense and sad, with cheerful songs expressing sad emotions. The feelings of the hero and heroine contained in each fragment are sublimates with images. When the heroine is attacked to fall to the bottom of the sea, the images of fish represent abusive language (See Figure 2-4). Besides, the hero's tool of truth turns into stars to break the masks (the stars represent guidance and forward) (See Figure 2-5). These fragmented scenes reflect the hero and heroine's different attitudes, the concatenation of which linked the changes in the environment and mood.

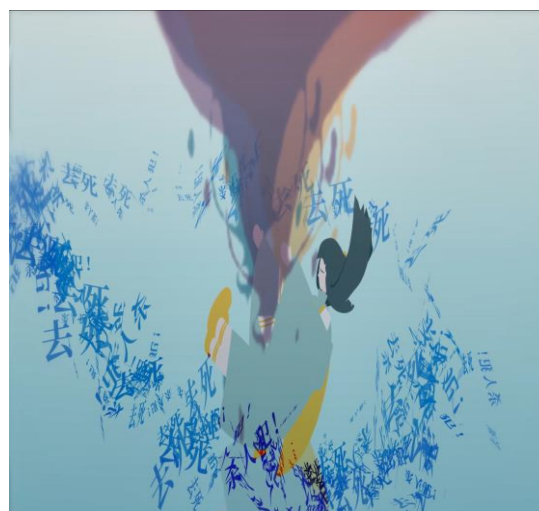


Figure 2-4



Figure 2-5

### Visual Design Combining Fragmented Narrative and Music Animation

The fragmented narrative can be embodied in content and visual, including audiovisual language and picture composition. The fragmented information scattered on the screen refers to the game's fragmentation, reflecting the fragmentation of the narrative in the whole and the details.

Incognito adopts a relatively stable lens rather than a very moving range. The application of flat animation considers the mutual movement between graphics, rather than excessive movement changes. Mid-range and close-range are used to show the changes in the protagonists' actions and emotions: part of the panorama shows the changes in the overall world's masses.

The fragmented narrative leads to fragmented footage. The scene is not connected with the narrative content, while the camera movement is not necessarily connected, which changes based on the rhythm and lyrics of the music.

The fragmentation of music videos causes leaps between content, so shots are needed to link different scenes. To ensure that the fragmented narratives are naturally connected, the narrative and the screen of relevant scene shots should be correlated simultaneously. Therefore, the following transition methods of related scenes

are summarized.

(1) In the previous sub-shot, the next shot's relevant elements or the original content are added for the transition. For example, they turn the shot of the heroine walking to the perspective of the victim in the corner, while the two shots with different hues are not related. Meanwhile, the victim's shot is added to the shot of the heroine's walking as the background screen, which makes the second scene enlarged to achieve the transitions with the camera (See Figure 3-1).

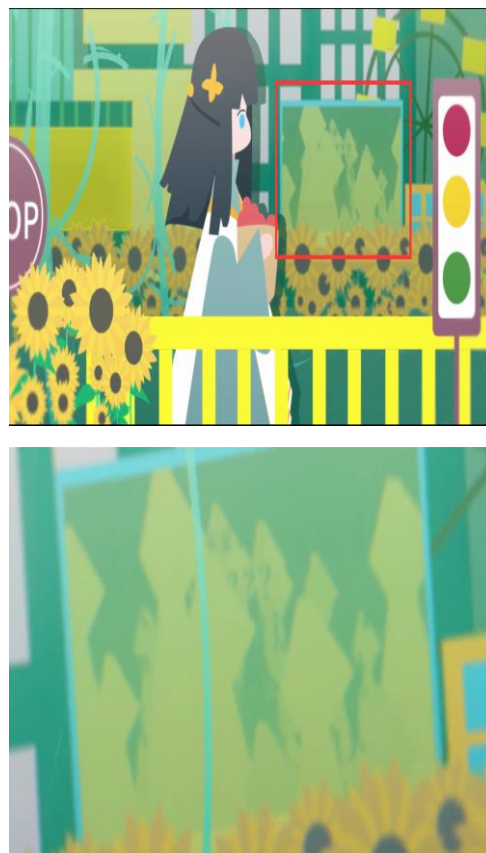


Figure 3-1

(2) A plain-text lens is used to cut straight to achieve a transition effect. The storyboard directly switches the shots with text-only to express emotional bursts or stills, or uses lyrics subtitles to achieve an excellent visual and auditory conversion. For example, when the hero sees a sunflower, he has a desire to face the sun. The two shots from blue to yellow in the scene are made with plain text and lyrics accompanied by series songs (See Figure 3-2).



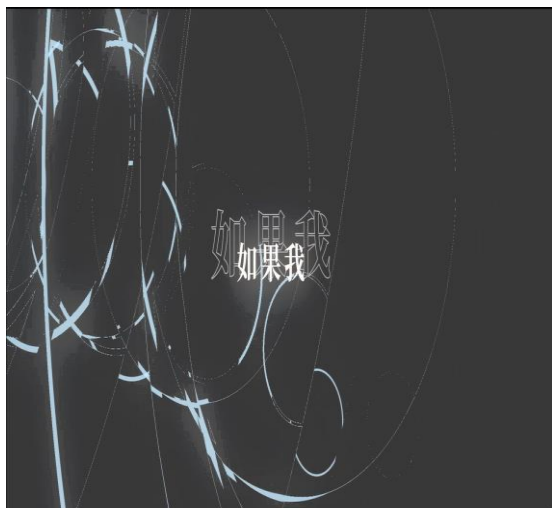


Figure 3-2

(3) The transition has regular special effects, which softens the transition. Although the shot is not related to the content, the special effects and the music rhythm give people audiovisual enjoyment.

The application of colors is essential. Different colors stand for different content, which gives people different feelings and emotions. Since the fragmented use represents two stories, there is a color distinction. In the short film, opposing colors are used to represent the hero and the heroine. The former is blue (See Figure 3-3), while the latter is yellow-green (See Figure 3-4). Besides, each scene adopts contrasting colors, e.g., adding red to blue tones, blue to yellow-green tones, whose mutual combination connects the clips better. However, when they discovered the victim, space, and color were relatively the same.



Figure 3-3

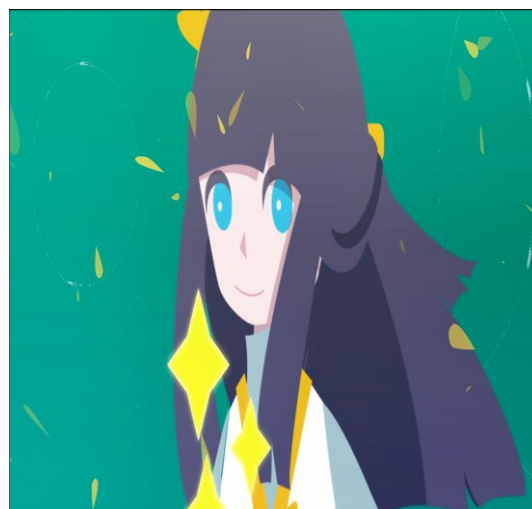


Figure 3-4

The short film adopts a flat style with abstract, concise, symbolic characteristics, which turns static illustrations into dynamic <sup>[8]</sup> by abandoning the effects of texture, light, and shadow. The graphics' dynamic processing makes the characters have no cumbersome details, but the shape transformation's content expresses what they want. The changing abstract graphics are used for transitions and rhythmic steps to make the picture richer.

In a short film, to quickly express trivial information, it is necessary to put the fragmented critical information into a specific place to enrich the content of the short film. Details in the picture represent the content: On the architectural background, the current state is expressed in the words of road signs (See

Figure 3-5). The screen mask is used to display the information, showing the characters' mental activities and daily dialogues (See Figure 3-6). The words are display on the objects, such as the bullet screen on the lantern, showing people's evaluation of the matter (See Figure 3-7).

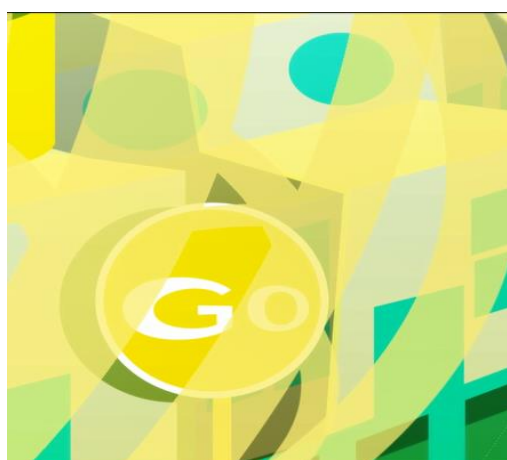
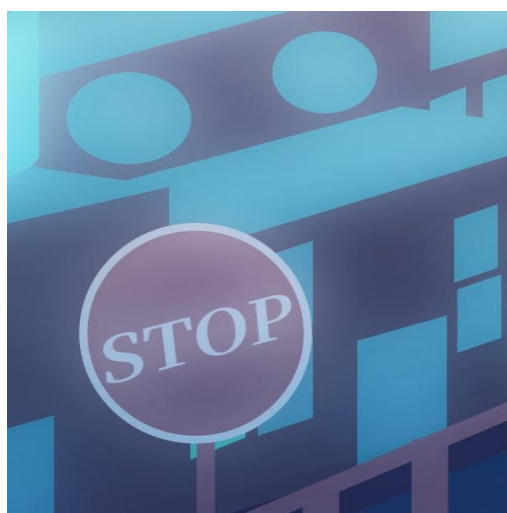


Figure 3-5

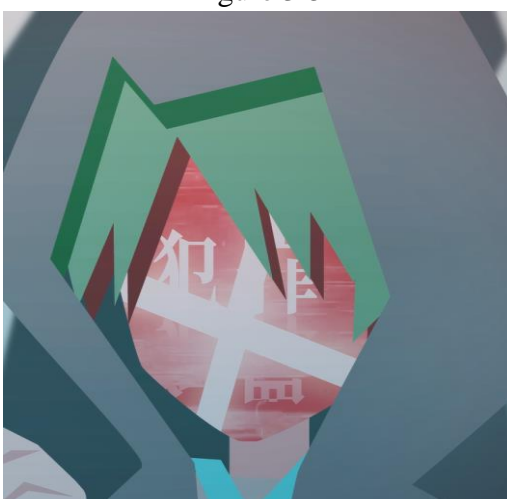


Figure 3-6



Figure 3-7

The short film is about cyber violence, so people's speech is essential. Simple pictures are less powerful than words used to describe the first victim's victimization (See Figure 3-8). When the hero is attacked, words are put together with the blade, representing words are as sharp as a sharp blade (See Figure 3-9). The short film adds straight-cut text as a separately extracted speech, inserted into the lens independently. It expresses inner activities or certain speeches (See Figure 3-10).



Figure 3-8



Figure 3-9



Figure 3-10

### New Application Combining Fragmented Narrative and MG Music Animation

With the development of network media, traditional media that cannot meet people's spiritual needs requires innovation. In the form, from the research in animation, there are few excellent cases of combining MG animation with MV, which can be used for innovative attempts. Besides, as a new type of media, fusion media has changed the status quo by realizing "resource accommodation, content, propagandas, and benefits integration" [9].

In the current media environment, MG animation stands out to be accepted by the public because of its concise form, large information tolerance, and diverse forms [10].

For example, Apple's MG animation Designed by Apple in California-Intention, released with IOS7 in 2013, conveys Apple company's concept in a concise form with guiding significance until now. Advertisements like to use MG animation to promote promotion because it is low-cost, low requirements on equipment, and easier to express the production concept.

As a graphic animation, MG animation has great variability, including transitions and graphic conversions, which cannot be represented by real shooting. MG animation is free, unconstrained graphic movement, whose agility and variability give people new visual experience. The rich form changes, and smooth dynamics give people different feelings, which mobilizes people's moods. Similarly, MG animation is abstract, expressing specific content by abstract graphics to cover more information.

The narrative of fragmented music is also fragmented. The plot of pop songs is told through lyrics, the information conveyed by which is essential. Each sentence of lyrics tells different things, and all the lyrics are connected to form a song. Meanwhile, the expression of a sentence of lyrics is not apparent, but the idea of writing lyrics can be understood by putting together the fragments of the lyrics in series. The collision of the two fragmented forms is more explanatory in audiovisual, music, and pictures, having a harmonious fusion. We can also give full play to the screen's creativity, maximizing the film's creativity by a new composition and opening method instead of the usual animation form. The MG music animation Incognito made with AE, and PR software incorporates a fragmented narrative. The hero and heroine's story is broken into pieces in the animation through cyber-violence. The transitions of graphic animation and special-effects are linked to music lyrics to connect the fragments into a new story.

The fragmented narrative has defects in



understanding the story supplemented by the details of pictures, which is more in line with modern people's viewing habits. It can quickly deliver much information to achieve the combination of music and pictures, bringing new visual experience by attracting the eyes. Indeed, this impressive fragmented narrative is suitable for the new big media environment.

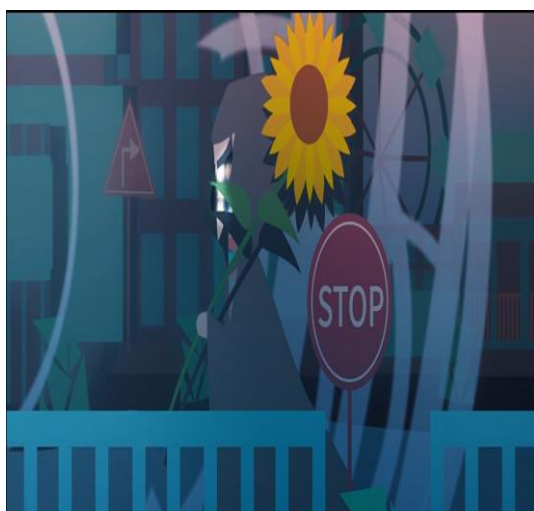


Figure 4

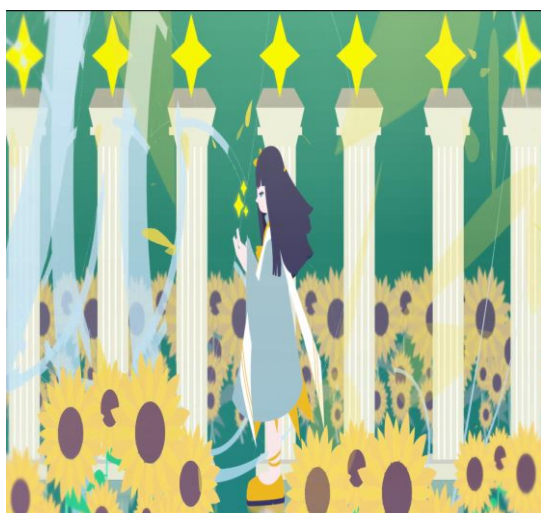


Figure 5

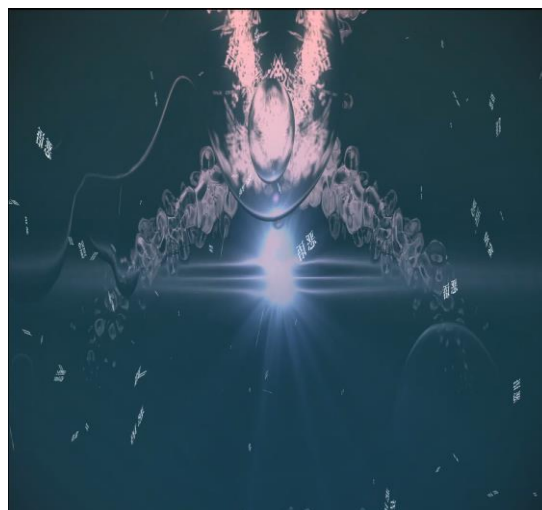


Figure 6

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