



Explanation

The arrows represent “techniques families” and NOT direct designer influence (although it does sometimes apply). Designer influences which were primarily aesthetic rather than techniques-based are not depicted at all – e.g. Legends of Alyria on Universalis, HeroQuest on Nine Worlds. The Y-axis has no quantitative value and arrows’ lengths are only chosen to deal with space constraint.

The dotted line indicates coherent Narrativist focus. All of the games above that line strongly support catharsis, distributed authorship, distributed narration (not the same thing), and classic rising-action/climax story structure. There’s a strong vertical tendency toward formalized scene and conflict procedures, rather than merely actions within conflicts. All of them make extensive use of random elements as “springboard” constraint rather than as a closing/finishing step of resolution.

Left hand superfamily concentrates mainly on passionate protagonist conflict, well-suited to Bang play, well-suited toward “take a stand in a gray world” themes and punchy story arcs. Strong person-to-character relationship and ownership, strong centralized adversity role on the part of a single person. Emphasis on rising action and catharsis, less on overall structure. Dust Devils branch develops narration distribution more strongly. Organization of overall play tends toward scene/conflict, but not universally formalized in this group.

Right hand superfamily concentrates instead on whole-group overview, automatically distributed narration (often the starting point), more “top-down” committee approach toward scene composition and story structure. Play as a whole is often organized by “turns” in the board-game or card-game sense. Task/action resolution is wholly subordinated to conflict resolution, to the extent that actions are often not even announced, merely used to Color later. Adversity is far less centralized in a single participant, and in many cases no centralized person is evident at all, or plays a fairly limited role. Character ownership varies widely, especially toward the right.