

# Analysis on the Narrative Structure of the Puzzle Film "Deep in the Heart"

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## ABSTRACT

"Deep in the Heart" takes the claim of an unnamed charred body as its core story. With the rigorous story structure and the multi-threaded nonlinear narrative, it reveals the true human nature of selfishness and full of lies, reflects the contradictions of Chinese rural people in the social upheaval, and shows the human care and concern of Xin Yukun's puzzle film. This paper makes a detailed analysis on the narrative structure of "Deep in the Heart". The first is to analyze the puzzle setting of the film; the second is to analyze the narrative structure of the film through multi-threaded nonlinear narrative and ring-like narrative; the third is to analyze the omniscient viewpoint and multiple internal focalization of the film; and the fourth is to analyze the contradictory opposites of the plot. Through the above four aspects, people's spiritual dilemma and the true human nature of selfishness and full of lies in the social upheaval are revealed.

**Keywords:** "Deep in the Heart", puzzle film, nonlinear structure, human nature, omniscient viewpoint

## I. INTRODUCTION

"Deep in the Heart" (2015) is the first feature film of Xin Yukun, the director and scriptwriter. With an investment of only 1.7 million yuan, the film earned 10.656 million yuan at the box office and won eight awards at 17 international film festivals, such as Venice Film Festival and Hong Kong International Film Festival. The double success of "Deep in the Heart" in word-of-mouth and box office is also known as the successful breakthrough of low-cost film. With the control of nonlinear narration and stylized expression, Xin Yukun is praised as the Chinese "Nolan" and "Coen brothers"<sup>1</sup>.

"Deep in the Heart" tells a tall story on an unnamed scorched corpse in Chinese rural region. Due to cost constraints, the director did not use star actors. All the actors in "Deep in the Heart" are from the local troupe of Henan Province, and none of them has ever made a film. The crude film and television art, hand-held photography and natural light shooting make the film have certain defects. However, the discussions on the realistic topics in the film, such as family affection, extramarital affairs, domestic violence, local tyrants, class discrimination, left-behind rural labor force, left-behind family emotional connection, reveal the truth in the social transformation period of China.

## II. PUZZLE SETTING OF "DEEP IN THE HEART"

It is David Bordwell, an American film scholar, who first proposed the concept of "puzzle films". In his book "Hollywood's narrative method", he believes that "complex narration" is an extension of Aristotle's plot theory based on Hollywood's classical narrative tradition. The rise of independent films in the 1990s is the most important art movement in the United States.

Warren Buckland thinks that films involving nonlinear ring-like time and fragmented space-time are puzzle films, and its essence is a kind of mind games. He believes that the narrative characteristics of puzzle films are good at using the structure of cracks, deception and labyrinth, uncertain meaning and open coincidence, and blurring the edge of reality and virtuality. In his opinions, most of the characters in this kind of films are schizophrenic, frustrated, unreliable narrators, the dead that the audience does not know, or the narrators full of deception<sup>2</sup>. It can be said that puzzle films operate on the two levels of story and narrative, emphasizing the narrative mode of the story.

As a matter of fact, among the discussions on puzzle films, film scholars tend to study it in a very broad scope, and equate it with complex narrative films. Generally, they hold a suspense attitude about whether

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.sohu.com/a/56600275\\_115496](https://www.sohu.com/a/56600275_115496), Qinghai News Network. "Xin Yukun and other young directors signed a contract with "Bingchi Lab"

<sup>2</sup> Wiley-Blackwell. "Puzzle film: complex storytelling in contemporary cinema", 2009.

the puzzle film is a film type, and they tend to think that it is a creation trend.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the puzzle films recognized by scholars and fans, it is obvious that the so-called puzzle films have a lingering "noir" shadow, so many puzzle films will also be considered as "neo film noir".

In "Deep in the Heart", the audience already knew who the dead was soon after the film began, but did not know how the dead became the charred body. What happened to the corpse? Who did it? Why was the charred body identified many times? How many people are dead? These questions led the audience into the narrative world step by step, and constructed the narrative puzzle of "Deep in the Heart" from multiple narrative perspectives and compact narrative points.

### III. MULTI-THREADED AND NONLINEAR NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

#### A. Nonlinear narrative

With the use of nonlinear parallel structure and omniscient viewpoint, viewers are very clear about the behavior, motivation, social relations and space-time state of the characters in the film, and know that these four main lines are all related to human life. On the core story "who the charred body is", the film unfolds four narrative lines: Xiao Zongyao, Xiao Weiguo (village head), Liqin and Bai Hu brothers. First of all, the narrative line of Liqin did not intersect with the other three narrative lines. Secondly, except for the crossing between Xiao Weiguo and Baihu brothers, the other three narrative lines do not intersect with each other.

The first main line was the story of Xiao Zongyao. Xiao Zongyao (son) was eager to go to the large city to make a living, but Xiao Weiguo (father), the village head, wanted his son to stay with parents and arranged a stable and secure job for him in the nearby county. He hoped that Xiao Zongyao would find a girl in the county to marry, but Xiao Zongyao concealed his family that he was in love with Huang Huan (a girl in the same village). Huang Huan cheated him into being pregnant in order to marry him, which worried him very much. However, this scene was seen by Bai Hu who came back to the village. He took advantage of the opportunity to blackmail, and Xiao Zongyao accidentally killed him. In a panic, Xiao Zongyao and Huang Huan fled to the county. Huang Huan lost contact with her family when her mobile phone was out of power. Xiao Zongyao borrowed money everywhere and planned to flee to Guangzhou.

The second main line was the story of Xiao Weiguo, the village head. On the way home, the village head

Xiao Weiguo witnessed his son's murder. In order to cover up the crime, he fired Bai Hu's body and made it look like he was killed by the burning on a mountain. When he woke up in the morning, he found that the dead body was mistaken for Huang Huan. Huang Huan's family believed that Wang Baoshan was the murderer, and the love between Wang Baoshan and Liqin was exposed. Because of an ID card, Liqin took over the burnt corpse without saying a word.

The third main line was the story of Liqin. When Liqin and Wang Baoshan were young, they were lovers. However, Wang's parents objected to the marriage, Liqin had no choice but to marry Chen Zili, the lame man. Wang Baoshan had an extramarital affair with Liqin again because his wife was pregnant. In the face of Liqin, who has suffered domestic violence for a long time, Wang Baoshan put forward the idea of killing Chen Zili and creating fake scenes. At the same time, the shopkeeper Dazhuang was deeply in love with Liqin. On the way to help Liqin purchase funeral supplies, Dazhuang met Chen Zili who wanted to go home. In order to be with Liqin, Dazhuang wanted to kill Chen Zili. Later, Chen Zili went to the cliff to go to the toilet. However, he fell off the cliff and died after receiving a call from the village head. When Liqin got a ride of Dazhuang to claim the corpse, she found Chen Zili's crutch, mistakenly believing that Dazhuang killed her husband. After returning the charred corpse in silence, she buried the crutches and refused Dazhuang's courtship.

The fourth main line was the story of Bai Hu brothers. Bai Hu had not been in good health, had nothing to do for a long time, was addicted to gambling, and beared a lot of debts. His brother Bai Guoqing and pregnant sister-in-law were extremely poor, and they were also facing the threat of paying off the debts by Bai Hu.

After several twists and turns, the name of the charred body was beyond expectation. Xiao Weiguo decided to hide the charred body in the sty. However, Bai Guoqing, who was forced by creditors, asked the village head to borrow the corpse to evade the debt. At the same time, Xiao Zongyao is persuaded by Huang Huan and went back to the village to confess his crime. On his way home, he met the funeral procession of Bai Hu. Unexpectedly, Bai Guoqing, who cheated his creditors and evaded the debts successfully, threw the charred corpse into the wilderness that the charred body was not Bai Hu after all. Finally, Xiao Zongyao and his father Xiao Weiguo met each other in front of the unclaimed corpse. Their meeting was speechless, which was the only time in the film that they faced each eyes to eyes. Huang Huan, who looked at this in the distance, buried the medal in the soil and buried everything in the wilderness.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Elsaesser. "The Mind-Game Film", translated by Yin Le and Chen Jianqing, "Contemporary Cinema", Issue 1, 2017, p. 29.

Throughout the film, this story line of Xiao Zongyao connected the whole film. The film started with his return to the village and ended with his return to the village again. And the village head controlled the whereabouts of the charred corpse many times from the beginning to the end of the event. The stories of Liqin and Bai Hu brothers seemed to be separated from the main lines of Zongyao and the village head, but in fact, they were closely connected with it, and a complex plot was constructed.

### B. Ring-like narrative

The director uses the flashback technique to set up four narrative blind areas and fissures: Bai Hu's burning, Chen Zili's death, Huang Huan's false pregnancy, and the whereabouts of Xiao Weiguo's medal. The latter narrative scene is the answer to the narrative riddle that was not explained clearly in the previous narrative scene. Obviously, the film adopts the "Mobius Ring", in which the beginning and the end are linked together, and there is the causal relationship among the plots.

Scholar Li Xianjie thinks that even if it is the same story, it will have a completely different aesthetic style and artistic effect due to the different construction of narrative time.<sup>4</sup>

Puzzle films make good use of the technique of time warping in narrative time to omit or expand the original story time. "Deep in the Heart" uses flashback, flashforward, retrogression and repetition to tell the later events in advance. For example, the film tells the story of Bai Hu's death after seeing Huang Huan data with Xiao Zongyao at night, and then tells the story of Bai Hu gambling and stealing. Finally, it returns to the beginning of the story. This narrative mode, which uses the change of viewpoints, allows the audience to see more information and can trigger the audience to think about the tragic fate of the characters.

At the same time, in order to complicate the narration, "Deep in the Heart" uses a lot of montage shooting techniques such as zoom lens to realize the cutting and reorganization of time. The events at such time points can have a vertical relationship with the characters in space. Also, these events can easily promote the audience's further thinking and are conducive to grasp the relationship between the characters and the environment.

From the perspective of impression, the whole story of the film originated from Huang Huan, who wanted to be married with Xiao Zongyao by using false pregnancy, making Xiao Zongyao and Xiao Weiguo suspected of committing crimes. At the same time,

when Xiao Zongyao planned to escape to Guangzhou, Huang Huan hid the village head's medal because she was unwilling to leave his parents, and forced Xiao Zongyao to confess his crime by using Xiao Zongyao's filial piety. Huang Huan can be said to be the initiator of evil of these events. At the end of the film, the idea of the false pregnancy is also revealed, that is, the way to "be married with" Xiao Zongyao is to be pregnant falsely, which is inspired by the plot of the TV drama. A perfect ring-like narrative is formed from the beginning to the end. Huang Huan's image is completely related to lies and deception. And these two words are the core of the film.

The characters in the film, such as the village head Xiao Weiguo, and even everyone in the country, have lies and deception under their own appearances. Chen Zili worked outside and supported his mistress, while his wife, Liqin, stayed at home and had intercourse with others. Liqin mistakenly thought that Chen Zili was killed by Dazhuang, but chose to bury "evidence" crutches to shield Dazhuang. The village head carefully designed the scene where the dead died of the burning on the mountains to help his son escape from guilt. Bai Guoqing also claimed the charred body and held a "false" funeral ceremony in order to avoid debts. In this way, the dead has become a charred body that has no one to claim and no place to place because of the different lies of different people and different purposes.

<sup>4</sup> Li Xianjie. "Film Narratology: Theory and Examples", China Film Publishing House, 2000.

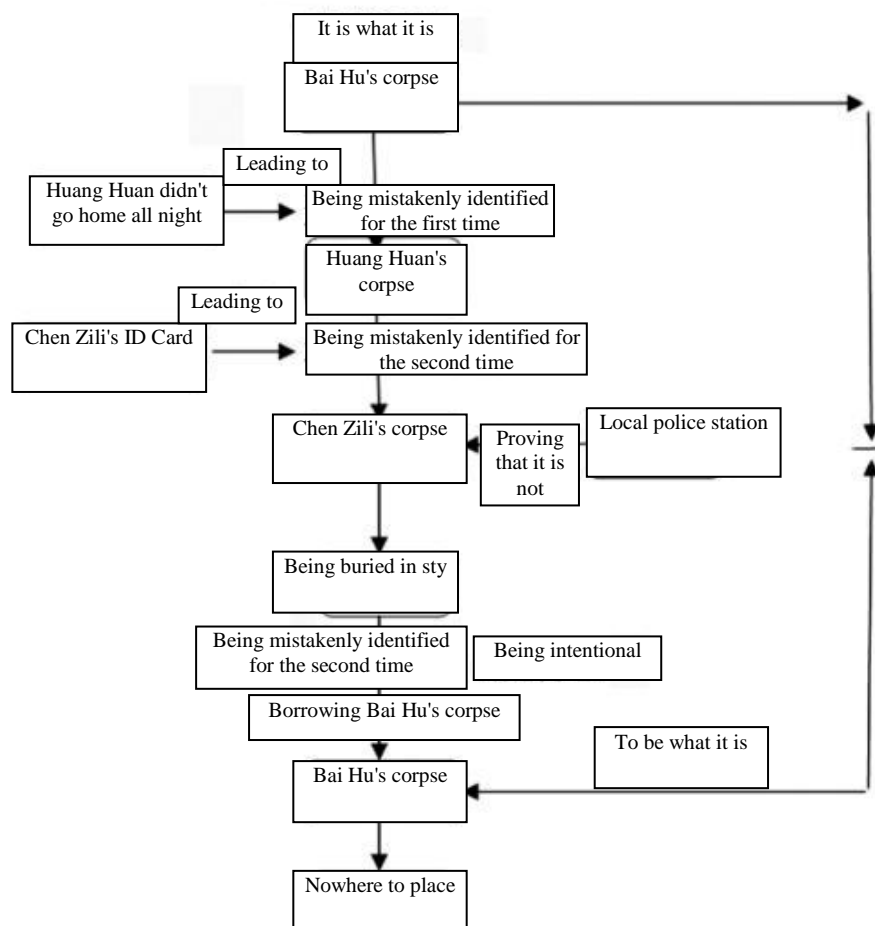


Fig. 1. The changes of the title of the charred body.

#### IV. OMNISCIENT VIEWPOINT AND MULTIPLE INTERNAL FOCALIZATION NARRATION

From the perspective of the narrators observing the characters, Gérard Genette puts forward three narrative perspectives, namely, the internal focalization narrative (internal perspective) that the narrator knows as much as a certain character, the external focalization narrative (external perspective) that the narrator who tells less than the character knows, and the zero focalization narrative (God's perspective) that the narrator knows more than anyone else.<sup>5</sup>

"Deep in the Heart" depicts the murder in the village from multiple characters, clues and perspectives. This multiple internal focalization narration directly and coldly examines the two aspects of life and human nature. "Deep in the Heart" involves nine characters' narration, which is sorted out in detail as follows:

Xiao Zongyao went back to the village to meet Huang Huan, an undisclosed lover. And Huang Huan said that she had something important to discuss with Xiao Zongyao. Xiao Zongyao met Huang Huan at the funeral banquet of Sun, but said nothing. He received the jade from his mother and knew his father's idea that he wanted him to marry the girl from the county. He dated with Huang Huan in the grove at night. And then, he was blackmailed by Bai Hu. He killed Bai Hu by mistake, fled back to the county and borrowed money everywhere to escape to Guangzhou. He found his father's medal missing, went back to the grove. However, he found nothing. He saw the meeting of Huang Huan and Wang Baoshan in the county. With Huang Huan's persuasion, he decided to confess his own crime and saw Bai Hu's funeral in the village. He stood with his father beside Bai Hu's body without saying a word.

Xiao Weiguo made a speech at the funeral of Sun to dissuade the villagers from burning the mountain. He also had the drinking and chatting with the villagers after the funeral. On his way home, he saw his son

<sup>5</sup> Gérard Genette. "Narrative Discourse", Renmin University of China Press, 2013.

killing Bai Hu. At night, he burned Bai Hu's body, and designed the false appearance of Bai Hu being killed by the burning on the mountains. In the morning, he was told that the charred body was mistaken for Huang Huan. Then, the charred body was identified again. He contacted Chen Zili for many times. After the charred body became an ownerless body, he stolen Bai Hu's body and buried it in a sty. Bai Guoqing wanted to borrow the corpse. Xiao Weiguo resigned and met his son beside Bai Hu's body without saying a word.

After talking to friends on the phone, Huang Huan asked Xiao Zongyao to go home to discuss something. She quarreled with Wang Baoshan at the funeral of Sun. At night, she dated with Xiao Zongyao in the grove, deceived Zongyao into getting pregnant, and witnessed Bai Hu's death. She fled to the county with Zongyao, and her mobile phone was out of power. She ran into Wang Baoshan when she bought sanitary napkins and knew that her parents were looking for herself. When she made the bed and found the medal of Zongyao's father, she hid it. Because she didn't want to leave the home, she persuaded Zongyao to confess his crime, she buried the medal.

Liqin helped at the funeral of Sun, and had intercourse with Wang Baoshan at home in the evening. After receiving a call from Chen Zili, she talked with Wang Baoshan to kill Chen Zili because she can't bear the domestic violence. She refused to testify for Wang Baoshan, who was mistakenly believed to be the murderer, and denied the intercourse. She was told by the villagers that Chen Zili was dead, and she prepared for the first funeral of Chen Zili. When the funeral was carried out, she had to go to identify the charred body, and then she carried the body back to the village committee. On the way to buy funeral supplies, she saw the crutches in Dazhuang's car and thought that Dazhuang was the murderer. She buried the crutches and refused Dazhuang's courtship.

Wang Baoshan flirted with Liqin at the funeral of Sun, and threatened Huang Huan. At night, he went to Liqin's house. Huang Huan's parents, who were eager to find the daughter, believed that Wang Baoshan was the killer of their daughter. Wang Baoshan told them that he had intercourse with Liqin, but Liqin denied it. The extramarital affair was known by his pregnant wife and was eager to make up for the relationship between husband and wife. He met Huang Huan when he went to the county to get the examination results. He told Huang Huan that her parents were crazy about looking for her. After her mother-in-law persuaded her, his wife made up with her.

Chen Zili called his wife Liqin and said that he planned to go home. He met Bai Hu when he had dinner with the lover. He had intercourse with the lover. Then, he met Dazhuang, got a ride home, and died of

falling off a cliff when he answered the phone while going to the toilet.

Dazhuang saw Wang Baoshan and Huang Huan going out at night. He identified Wang Baoshan as the murderer of Huang Huan. Then, he encountered Chen Zili on the way. Because he secretly loved Liqin and wanted to kill Chen Zili, Dazhuang carried Liqin to buy funeral supplies. In the end, he was refused by Liqin.

Bai Hu prayed for Buddha's blessing. He gambled and borrowed money in the county. Then, he met Chen Zili and his mistress, and stole the wallet. At night, he ran into Zongyao and Huang Huan in the grove, and fell to the ground and died in the blackmail process.

Bai Guoqing's family was poor and his wife was pregnant. His younger brother was idle all day long. Bai Hu's creditors came to his house. He was forced to go to the village head's house to discuss borrowing the corpse. He held the false funeral to get rid of creditors. However, he believed that the charred body was not Bai Hu. He refused to bury the charred body in the ancestral graves.

The omniscient viewpoint of "Deep in the Heart" solves the problem of incoherent story development caused by multiple internal focalization. In the film, in order to be able to marry Zongyao that had stable job in the county, Huang Huan pretended to be pregnant. For the sake of his son's future, the village head did not hesitate to burn the dead and forge a scene. In order to be with Liqin, Dazhuang tried to kill Chen Zili. In order to get rid of domestic violence, Liqin did not care about the real cause of her husband's death, and even took the initiative to cover up the "murderer". In order to evade debts, Bai Guoqing tried to make the "living" brother die. The behavior motivation of these characters shows the selfishness and greed of human beings incisively and vividly. They all thought things from their own interests and positions, regardless of the dignity of life and the truth of the facts. The ugly human beings who are unscrupulous in order to achieve their goals are displayed straightforwardly.

In fact, the story of the film took place in five days and four nights, and the director used a disorderly linear narrative method to disrupt the time sequence. The real time is as follows:

On the day zero, Bai Hu borrowed money to gamble and had a nosebleed. He met Chen Zili and his mistress on the road. During this period, he looked Chen Zili's wallet, and then followed Chen Zili to steal it. Chen Zili lost his ID card in his wallet and needed to go home and apply for it. After stealing the money, Bai Hu went to the temple to burn incense for blessing, and donated a lot of money. When Bai Hu left, he met Zongyao's mother, who was seeking jade for her son, and Huang Huan's friend, who was on the phone with Huang Huan. The phone that friend cared about the love of Huang

and Xiao and the plot of TV drama induced Huang Huan to come up with the method of false pregnancy to force Zongyao to marry with her.

On the first day, Zongyao returned to the village for the first time to attend the funeral of Sun. After dinner, he went home to chat with his mother, took the jade his mother asked for, and stole the medal of the father. After receiving the call, Zongyao went to the grove to date Huang Huan. Huang Huan passed by Dazhuang's shop on the way to the appointment. At this time, Wang Baoshan bought cigarettes and was ready to go to the Liqin's house to have a love affair stealthily. When Wang Baoshan and Liqin had the love affair stealthily, Chen Zili called to say that he planned to go home in two days. Facing the long-term domestic violence, Wang Baoshan proposed to kill Chen Zili and forged the death of the burning on the mountains. At the same time, the conversation between Zongyao and Huang Huan was overheard by Bai Hu. In the blackmail process, Zongyao killed Bai Hu. Zongyao and Huang Huan fled to the county in panic. After drinking wine, the village head witnessed all the process and helped his son deal with the scene. At this time, the village head saw Wang Baoshan going back from Liqin's house.

On the second day, the villagers found the dead. However, the charred body was mistaken for Huang Huan by Huang Huan's parents. They hit Wang Baoshan. The village head found that things did not go as he expected. In order to get rid of the suspicion, Wang Baoshan said his affair with Liqin, otherwise, Liqin denied the facts in last night. The village head knew that the corpse was Bai Hu. And he went to Bai Guoqing's house to learn about the situation and witnessed the creditor to ask for money. The person selling the coffin judged that the dead man was male from the skeleton of the body, and found the ID card, believing that the body was Chen Zili. Li Qin, who had just returned home, was called back to the village committee. Wang Baoshan went to the house of mother-in-law to find his wife. Unexpectedly, the extramarital affair had spread. His wife requested for an explanation, so he chose to break off the relationship with Liqin and asked her not to call again. Dazhuang, who had always been in love with Liqin, expressed his courtship. Liqin secretly had the mind to accept Dazhuang and made an appointment to go to the town to buy funeral supplies on the next day. The village head didn't want the charred body to be mistaken again, so he called Chen Zili for the first time, but Chen Zili and his mistress were having an affair and hung up the strange call.

On the third day, Wang Baoshan was in the city to collect his wife's physical examination report, he ran into Huang Huan, who went to the supermarket to buy sanitary napkins due to her menstruation. Wang

Baoshan told Huang Huan that her parents were very anxious, which strengthened her determination not to flee to Guangzhou. She chose to hide the medal that Zong Yao thought was missing. On the way back to the village from the town, Dazhuang met Chen Zili for a free ride. Seeing Chen Zili asleep in the car, Dazhuang had the idea to kill Chen Zili, but he hesitated and didn't take the actions. At this time, Chen Zili woke up and proposed to go to the toilet, and the car just stopped beside the slope. When Chen Zili was going to the toilet, the village head called him for the second time in the mourning hall, but when Liqin called him, the phone was hung up again. The village head was depressed because he couldn't prove that the body was not Chen Zili, so he went to Dazhuang's store to buy cigarettes. At that time, Dazhuang didn't talk about Chen Zili's death clearly and chose to hide it. The village head decided to steal the charred body from the village committee in the middle of the night and prepared to deal with it the next day.

On the fourth day, as soon as Liqin was about to go to the funeral, she received a call from the town police, asking to identify the corpse, and then, the funeral suspended. The wife of the village head who attended the funeral came home and saw that the village head was repairing the sty. The village head's wife dialed his son Zong Yao's phone to chat with him. Thinking of Huang Huan's persuasion and his father's reputation, Zongyao decided to return to the village to confess the crime. Liqin saw Chen Zili's crutch on the way back to the village in Dazhuang's car. She mistakenly believed that Dazhuang killed Chen Zili. She was in a rather complicated mood. She finally buried the crutch, refused Dazhuang and chose to cover up the murderer. Bai Hu's sister-in-law witnessed the process of Liqin returning the charred body. At that time, Bai Hu's creditors were looking for trouble at home and threatened to burn down Bai Guoqing's house next time. So he came up with the idea of using the corpse to get rid of the creditors. Bai Guoqing went to the village head's house and offered to borrow the body. However, as the village head had buried the charred body in the sty, he asked Bai Guoqing to carry the charred body away tomorrow.

On the fifth day, Zongyao and Huang Huan went back from the county. On the way, he put down Huang Huan, while he continued to ride home. On the way, Zongyao saw Bai Guoqing holding a funeral ceremony for the "dead Bai Hu, and the creditors left with swearing. Wang Baoshan and his wife went back to the village, and Dazhuang sit at the gate of the shop, full of thoughts. The village head found that Baihu's coffin had not been buried, so he went to Bai Guoqing's house to find out the situation. Bai Guoqing thought that the charred body was not Bai Hu, could not be buried in ancestral graves. The village head was full of words and did not know how to talk about it. He quietly walked

back to the coffin. Zongyao went home and learned that his father resigned, and also went to the coffin. Father and son looked at each other beside the coffin, speechless. Huang Huan looked at this scene afar and buried the medal in the soil at the foot of the mountains.

The director clearly said that, in order to make the dull story complicated and confused, the nonlinear narrative technique of disrupting the original time sequence is not only handled in editing, but is designed in the script writing, and the film is the complete shooting of the script. It can be said that both as a scriptwriter and a director, Xin Yukun has a mature grasp of narrative techniques.

## **V. CONSTRUCTING THE CONTRADICTORY OPPOSITION OF THE PLOTS**

In "Deep in the Heart", the three groups of contradictory opposites of the plots are the opposition between the village head and Bai Hu, Chen Zili, the opposition between Zong Yao and the father, and the opposition between Liqin and the village head. The core of the three groups of oppositions is the village represented by the village head. It is necessary to pay special attention to the fact that there is no regional symbol in this village. The depiction of the scene in the film makes it easy to feel that the whole link is stagnant and constant.

In fact, the three groups of contradictions and oppositions in constructing the plot can be divided into surface opposition and deep-seated opposition. The superficial contradiction is the opposition between the village head, Bai Hu and Chen Zili. Actually, the village head represents the collective consciousness and patriarchal system and maintains the inherent balance of the village. Bai Hu is a jobless vagrant and gambler, living in the county for a long time. Chen Zili not only hits his wife, but also raises the lover in the county where he works. Bai Hu and Chen Zili are both morally corrupt. Their behaviors obviously violate the traditional Chinese value of measuring things by moral standards. They are rejected by the countryside, and finally die on the way home. On the way home, Bai Hu first died in the hands of Xiao Zongyao, and then was burned by the village head. Dazhuang tried to murder Chen Zili on his way home, however, he didn't take actions. Nevertheless, Dazhuang still made a coincidence of time and place for Chen Zili's death.

Chen Zili finally fell off the cliff and died after receiving the call from the village head. This seemingly accidental plot design actually indicates the natural nature of the village represented by the village head repelling dissidents.

The deep-seated contradiction of this film can also be divided into internal contradiction and external contradiction. The internal contradiction is manifested by the opposition between Zongyao and the father. Different from the stubborn and conservative of the father, Xiao Zongyao represents the young generation who yearns for large cities. However, the left-behind forces are very strong, and he fails to escape. Whether the father used power and authority, or Huang Huan, a girl in the same village, kidnapped morally by love and lies, there is the implication that the village keeps the inner individual and maintains the balance. At the end of the film, the funeral procession met two real pregnant women, indicating that the life to be born corresponds to the number of people who have lost their lives in the film, and there are cracks in the village power after this, but the real balance has not been broken.

The deep-seated external contradiction is expressed by the opposition between Liqin and the village head. First of all, Li Qin lived in the village with other characters, but the geographical location of her house and inner situation were extremely isolated. Liqin is the symbol of "outcomer". She came to this village because she married Chen Zili. She is in a strong contrast with the native born "people" represented by the village head. The love affair between Liqin and Wang Baoshan is not legal. Apart from the moral factors, her legal marriage relationship with her husband became her only connection with the countryside. After Chen Zili's death, Dazhuang, who really loved Liqin, became the only hope. However, due to a strange combination of circumstances, Liqin refused Dazhuang and finally became a gray figure that is safe and free from the rural system but cannot escape.

The three groups of antagonistic relations are all centered on the village head, connecting the contradictory topology of the whole plot and forming a network of opposites. From this, the symbol matrix of "Deep in the Heart" can be obtained (as shown in "Fig. 2").

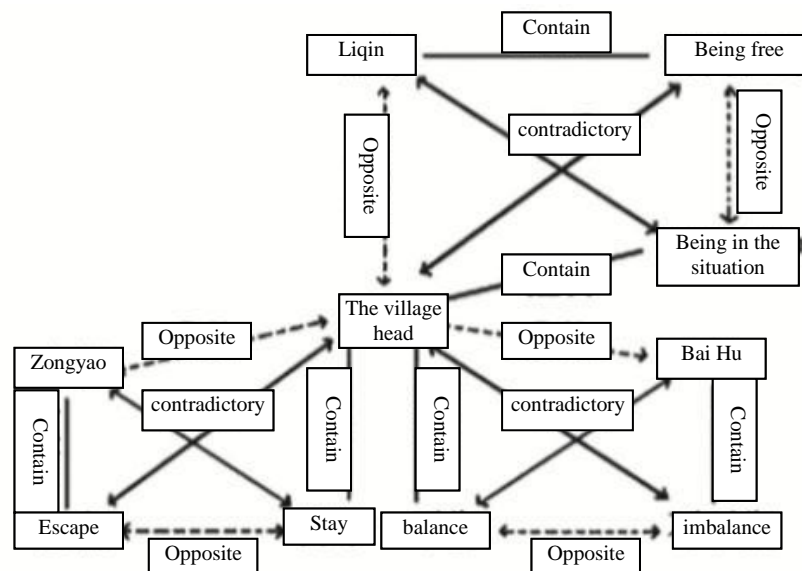


Fig. 2. Three groups of contradictions in "Deep in the Heart".

## VI. CONCLUSION

"Deep in the Heart" reveals the mental state of the Chinese people, especially the rural villagers, with a seemingly absurd but universal evil story. It is one of the few puzzle films focusing on the countryside in China at present. The narrative structure of the film is exquisite and complex, and the logic is meticulous. Xin Yukun presents the audience with double challenges of vision and emotion with the nonlinear ring-like narrative. When watching the story, the constant problem-solving also reflects the charm of the puzzle film, which is the core foundation for the success of the film.

As discussed above, director and scriptwriter Xin Yukun portrays characters accurately, and each character's behavior motivation conforms to the common sense and identity. He makes full use of the nonlinear ring-like narrative structure in film and television presentation, and makes omniscient viewpoint and multiple internal focalization complement each other. Viewing from the type, the film belongs to the suspense film. However, the film does not stay at the commercial level, but discusses more about the human nature under the homicide case. From the perspective of film form, it does not blindly play with the structure, but pays attention to the ending process of riddles. In the film, the director has been guiding and banishing at the same time, so that the audience has a sense of participation. From the main point of view, the film explores the indescribable gray area in the heart of Chinese people, which is cold and direct.

Obviously, the final name "Deep in the Heart" is closer to the theme than the original name "Maze". Because of the selfishness, people are easily lost in their own maze. Human selfishness is the focus of the film. By placing the maze of human nature in a narrative structure that is also as tortuous as a maze, it accurately exposes the self-interest in everyone's heart. As shown in the film, people's heart is like an iceberg in the sea, and what people see is just the tip of the iceberg.

The director's weakening of the story area aims to reveal that this kind of Chinese rural reality and selfish human nature is not only a problem in a certain region, but also a social problem in the whole China. The game between lies and truth behind the story, the disintegration of paternity, the dilemma of identity and spirit, and the lack of faith, etc. are worthy of more attention.

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