



An Analysis of the Communication of Non-Linear Narratives of Cinema on Hot Social Issues--A Review of the Film "Lost in the Stars"

Feifan Chen^{1,*}

¹Xiamen No.1 Middle School Of Fujian,Xiamen,361027,China

**Corresponding author. Email: 2413046889@qq.com*

Abstract. The movie "Lost in the Stars" sparked public debate on the internet after it was released on June 22, 2023 online. This paper explores the narrative structure of the movie Lost in the Stars through narrative analysis to find the connection between non-linear narratives and the communication of hot social issues. Expanding on the structure of non-linear narratives through the study of the ontological threads of cinema, Lost in the Stars uses a non-linear narrative structure to overthrow and reconstruct the characters and then overthrow and reconstruct them again, which brings the audience an impact that deepens the audience's impression of the content and deepens the expression of the movie's theme. To enable the social issues conveyed therein to arouse wider discussion and to draw the attention of the public to the problems existing in the current society.

Keywords: Non-linear narrative, Narrative structure, Narrative analysis, Film, Lost in the Stars

1 Introduction

The movie Lost in the Stars has had ups and downs and generated buzz online since its launch on June 22, 2023, with the movie grossing a whopping 3.523 billion and a cat-eye rating of 9.2.[1] This movie tells the story of He Fei, who is addicted to

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gambling and accidentally learns that Li Muzi's family is well-off, and starts planning to fall in love with Li Muzi. When He Fei reneges on his promise and continues to gamble, Li Muzi begins to refuse to pay his debts, and He Fei gradually becomes murderous. He devises a trip to ask Li Muzi to go to the bottom of the sea to see the stars, only to lock her in a cage at the bottom of the sea forever. The wife's best friend realizes that she can't get in touch with Li Muzi and brings the troupe to look for Li Muzi. In desperation, He Fei finds Shen Man, who is pretending to be the lawyer Chen Mai, to seek help and walks into the trap set by Shen Man. He Fei ends up in a fake mental institution and tells the truth under the threat of Chen Mai.

The non-linear narrative mode of *Lost in the Stars* has brought impact to the audience, deepened the audience's impression of the film content, and deepened the film's expression of the theme. To make the social issues conveyed therein more widely discussed in an attempt to reflect on them. The movie *Lost in the Stars* has a lot of plots from related hot social topics, such as "Thailand pregnant woman falling off the cliff", and "Indonesia couple murder case", as well as a lot of related urban legends, such as "Freak show", "Ga Yao Zi" and so on, echoing the real social news from a rare point of view.[2] How does the non-linear narrative surrounding *Lost in the Stars* unfold? What are the topical social issues discussed in *Lost in the Stars*? What is the relationship between non-linear narratives and the presentation of topical social issues?

There are two opposite narrative modes about the narrative mode of the film, namely linear narrative and non-linear narrative. Thomas Elsaesser has stated that "references to linear films are typically films with a continuous time course that advance the story and character centrality toward its purpose." [3] Ken Dancyger suggests that "non-linear narratives in movies are frequently the opposite of linear narratives: they do not unfold in chronological order, the main characters have an unclear purpose or lack of purpose, and there is a strong presence of narrative fragments (which may not be about the central character)." [4] Domestic-related research has paid greater attention to the non-linear narrative of the movie, and the discussion of the non-linear genre has a wide variety. Xie Xintong then mentions five types of non-linear narratives, "four-ringed nested structure", "interwoven contrast structure", "plate structure", "stream-of-consciousness structure", and "ring structure" [5]. Wu Siyu [6] has shown a "Möbius ring type" of movie narrative, through the time and space reversal and narrative loop to achieve the "multiple focus" of the movie. As for the development history of non-linear narrative, many scholars also have different

studies on it, analyzing the narrativity of the film with a single film as a case study. There are relatively few discussions on the relationship between the non-linear narratives of movies and hot topics in society.

2 Narrative Analysis of the Movie Lost in the Stars

2.1 He Fei Realizes that Li Muzi is Missing and Anxiously Calls the Police.

He Fei and Li Muzi are a loving couple who plan a trip, but Li Muzi strangely disappears during the trip. He Fei calls the police to look for Li Muzi, who has been missing for half a month, and the police refuse to file a case when He Fei's visa expires with only 5 days left. When He Fei is on the verge of a breakdown and tears down Li Muzi's missing person notice, a Chinese police officer reaches out to him.

He Fei's visa expiration is 5 days left still looking for, setting up a deep love persona. Setting the stage for the freak show incident, which is introduced later in the text, lays the groundwork for the subsequent expiration of the visa to establish a persona of infatuation. The fact that he did not report to the police until his visa was about to expire implies that his desperation to find his wife has yet to be proven, and the fact that the Chinese police officer never appeared inside the police station suggests that his identity may have been inaccurate.

2.2 Fake Li Muzi Appears, No One Believes He Fei

He Fei couldn't find Li Muzi and got drunk in the hotel. Early one morning, He Fei wakes up to find a strange woman claiming to be Li Muzi lying beside him. He tries every possible way to confirm to the Chinese police that this woman is not his wife, but this woman knows all kinds of details about He Fei and Li Muzi, and all the signs convey to the police that this strange woman is Li Muzi. He Fei completely breaks down and tries to take out the medicine and take it, but is held back by the Chinese police. The fake Li Muzi claimed that He Fei suffered from mental illness and would often do uncontrollable things and that the Chinese police said they would no longer help He Fei.

After He Fei got up from the bed, he did not see the face of the woman beside him before asking "Who are you?" It proved that he subconsciously thought Li Muzi couldn't possibly come back. Here he sets the stage for his murder of Li Muzi later on. The Chinese police officer does not show He Fei the police department's file,

ostensibly because the file belongs to the police department's confidentiality, but in fact, it is to lay the groundwork for the fact that the identity of the police officer is a forgery.

2.3 He Fei Seeks Chen Mai's Help and Learns About the Freak Show, but Chen Mai Refuses to Help.

When He Fei's wallet is snatched by a group of noisy kids, a lawyer named Chen Mai rides a motorcycle to help him retrieve it. He asked Chen Mai for help. He Fei makes up a story about "his friend" to Chen Mai, who tells him about a freak show in Thailand. A couple traveled to Thailand, but the wife disappeared in a fitting room, and the husband has been trying to find it but to no avail. It wasn't until years later that the husband saw a freak show at a nightclub where the girl who had her limbs chopped off was actually his wife. Horrified, He Fei once again pleads for Chen Mai's help. Chen Mai recognizes He Fei's words and says that she will not take on a client who does not believe in her.

2.4 Chen Mai Promised to Help but Was Hunted Down in the Process of Investigation.

The next day, He Fei finds Chen Mai's law firm, confesses that his wife has been missing for half a month and that his visa expiration is only three days away, and pleads for her help. Chen Mai agrees to help. He Fei tells Chen Mai about his romance with Li Muzi, who almost had an accident while diving in a diving hall. He Fei saved her from the water and fell in love with Li Mu Zi at first sight. And the two fell in love. Li Muzi and He Fei have very different financial strengths. Li Muzi is the daughter of a wealthy businessman who lost her parents in a car accident and inherited all the family's assets. She has a best friend, Shen Man, who is a director and does not support He Fei and Li Muzi's relationship. He Fei has never seen Shen Man, only knowing that she has a tattoo on her chest and has pulled his WeChat black. Chen Mai thinks it might be done by a local criminal gang. They began investigating the fake Li Muzi but were tracked down by criminal gangs. Fake Li Muzi has dinner with He Fei and induces him to go crazy, indicating that she plans to put him in a mental hospital and take away all his possessions. By counter-tracking, Chen Mai and He Fei infiltrate the criminal gang's base, but the killer finds them.

He Fei has never seen Shen Man, which has established the foundation for Shen Man to pretend to be a lawyer. He never realizes it also implies his feelings for Li Muzi are not as genuine as they appear. He Fei took advantage of the suspension bridge effect and decided to get married after the two people's car accident.

2.5 He Fei's Identity as a Gambler is Discovered, and Witnesses and Evidence Proving Li Muzi's Identity are Found.

After they escape, Chen Mai asks about the photos in the base and realizes that He Fei concealed himself as a gambler. Chen Mai suggests that Li Muzi orchestrated the disappearance herself, but He Fei shows that Li Muzi knew about his previous gambling and he had repented. The criminal gang discovers the duo's investigation. All evidence is against He Fei, He pleads Chen Mai that she must help find Li Muzi. Chen Mai chose to trust him one last time, She and He Fei found the photographer who had taken pictures of He Fei and Li Mu Zi before, offered to ask for the negatives, and asked the photographer to be a witness.

He Fei's identity as a gambler is discovered and his characterization image changes. When He Fei denied that it was Li Muzi's self-direction, Chen Mai couldn't control her red eyes because she knew that Li Muzi's life was already in danger, laying the groundwork for the later revelation of the truth that she was Shen Man.

2.6 Chen Mai and He Fei has a Conflict, He Fei is Put in a Mental Hospital.

The owner of the wetsuit rental store recognized Li Muzi in the photo and asked the crowd when the woman would return the wetsuit. He Fei immediately says that the boss is mistaken, and Chen Mai is skeptical. On the way to the police station, Chen Mai kept asking He Fei if he was hiding something, but He Fei refused to admit it. The criminal gang takes the opportunity to find them. The killer kills the photographer, and He Fei falls into the waterfall. He escapes from the water and rushes back to the hotel, looking for his passport, and wants to return home safely. The fake Li Muzi and others are in the hotel to prevent He Fei from returning to China and keep stimulating him to make him lose control of his emotions, when the Chinese police arrive. After being locked up in a psychiatric hospital by the police, He Fei discovers that the Chinese police are also part of a criminal gang that is preparing to perform brain surgery on him to take all of his money.

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2.7 Chen Mai Sneaks into the Operating Room to Save He Fei, Who Reveals the Truth that He Killed Li Muzi.

As the countdown to the surgery begins, Chen Mai sneaks into the operating room to show that there is no turning back and has learned that He Fei wants to use Li Muzi to get all the money to continue gambling. Chen Mai pressed He Fei about Li Muzi's situation. He Fei tells the whole truth. Inadvertently learning that the one he saved was the daughter of a tycoon, he engineered the relationship to pay his gambling debts. When He Fei asks for money to pay off his debt again, Li Muzi firmly rejects him, so He Fei devises the disappearance bureau, pretending to be remorseful to take his wife on a trip, trying to lock her up at the bottom of the sea forever to get her entire family fortune. Chen Mai rushed out the door after hearing that.

2.8 Chen Mai is Played by Shen Man. Everything is a scene played by Shen Man in order to find Li Muzi.

As the countdown ends, He Fei breaks free and walks out of the operating room, realizing that everything is nothing more than a setup set up by Shen Man to find Li Muzi. Li Muzi saved Shen Man's life when she was studying overseas. When Shen Man finished receiving her award abroad, she couldn't contact Li Muzi and immediately rushed to the country where Li Muzi and He Fei were vacationing to look for her. At the door of the police station, Shen Man found a missing person notice

posted by He Fei. She immediately realizes that something has happened to Li Muzi and urgently calls her troupe to stage the play. When He Fei saw Shen Man's tattoo, he realized that it was a trap, so he rushed to Shen Man with a scalpel. The police quickly arrived and stopped him. Finally, the police found Li Muzi's body in the sea and the B-ultrasound sheet in her hand. He Fei was brought to justice.

2.9 Shen Man came to the prison to show He Fei Li Mu Zi's true heart, and finally left in disappointment.

Shen Man visits He Fei in prison, but he still believes that he saved Li Muzi's life and that letting her drown again is giving her back the ending she deserves. He Fei swears not to gamble but doesn't keep his promise, Li Muzi chooses to forgive. When He Fei decides to kill her and makes an offer for a trip, Li Muzi wants to show him the baby's ultrasound photo and tell him that she's willing to trust him again. Li Muzi had wanted to surprise He Fei at the bottom of the sea, so instead of a communication method that could be used to save her life, her waterproof bag contained the baby's b ultrasound. But He Fei, who didn't even turn his head, killed the one who loved him the most with his own hands. When Shen Man shows He Fei the ultrasound photo, he regrets missing out on a convenient way to pay off his debt - using the baby to tie Li Muzi to help him pay off his debt. He only regrets that he missed a good opportunity, Couldn't feel the slightest hint of apology from him.

Equilibrium is broken: The balance between the beginning and the end of the film is broken. The image of a loving couple portrayed at the beginning is constantly shattered throughout the movie, and the ending reveals the evil side of the gambler, who personally leaves his wife in a cage under the stars. The anxious, helpless emotion created at the beginning of the movie is shattered, and replaced with endless pathos and irony. At first, Li Mu Zi's hope for love is dashed. In its place is a cage that cannot be opened and the despair of having her oxygen tube removed. What begins with Shen Man's joy at winning an award ends with the extreme sadness of losing a close friend.

Motivation: He Fei loses money at the casino and his heart is full of calculations about money. Li Muzi's purity and angularity-free kindness in her relationship make her a target of reckoning. Li Muzi redeemed Shen Man's broken life and became Shen Man's best friend. The best friend who saved her life shattered in front of her to

enable the bureau to come into being, which is what makes this broken again and again.

3 Discussion

3.1 Narrative Structure: Overthrowing and Reconstructing and Overthrowing and Reconstructing Again.

The movie *Lost in the Stars* utilizes a non-linear narrative structure to overthrow and reconstruct its characters and then overthrow and reconstruct them again. Take the image of He Fei as an example: He Fei initially appeared in the public eye with the persona of an infatuated husband. After escaping from the chase, He Fei's image of a bitter husband is shattered and the image of a gambler is established. But because of the sincere apologies, Reinventing the persona of repentance through love. And then He Fei's behavior of escaping back to the hotel and desperately wanting to go back to his country breaks his previous image of being eager to save his wife. In the hospital, He Fei's image of a repentant gambler is once again shattered, and the image of an evil murderer who would approach a rich businessman's daughter and kill her at the bottom of the sea for a gambling debt is reimagined. As he rushes towards Shen Man (Chen Mai) with a scalpel, He Fei's image as a gambler who killed his wife deteriorates once more, and the image of a volatile murderer is reinvented. In prison, the gambler's identity as the angry wife murderer deteriorates again, and the image of the phoenix male who does not know to repent is reshaped on him again, refreshing the lower limit of the character image of evil again and again.

3.2 The role of the Main Line Structure on Social hot issues.

The impact of this narrative structure on the audience deepens the audience's impression of the film's content and deepens the film's expression of the theme. The social issues conveyed in it can cause more extensive discussion so that society can pay more attention to potential problems. For example, the gradual deepening of the image portrayed in the text of Li Muzi's romantic brain, due to its kind personality to He Fei's various behaviors repeatedly backed down, and finally led to the tragedy.

3.3 Discussion of Social hot issues.

The movie inspired women to discuss social issues of the self-protection genre and gender issues for both men and women. It did not focus on the unfair ending for women in the broader discussion of the movie. That's where the unfairness of society lies. Although the female role is independent, the power is still weak. Giving women more equal status and more equal results for female roles has become an issue that should be improved and upgraded in the future. Female characters in the movie such as Li Muzi and Shen Man are not only endowed with weak and passive characteristics, but also their behavior and destiny choices are limited by the male-dominated social nature. Shen Man belongs to the image of "hero" in the text, but when this "hero" learns that her friend has been murdered, she can only hold her tongue and secretly set up a big game. At all costs, all she gets in the end is the death of her best friend. The criminal remains unrepentant. He Fei's choice led to the identity and needs of Li Muzi being concerned or not. At the end of this film, although He Fei's crime is revealed, it does not give Li Muzi and Shen Man real fair treatment.

4 Conclusion

Since the film 'Lost in the Stars' was launched on June 22, 2023, the plot has had ups and downs and has caused a heated debate online. The impact of the film's non-linear narrative structure of overthrowing reconstruction and then overthrowing reconstruction on the audience has deepened the audience's impression of the film's content and the film's expression of the theme. So that the social issues conveyed therein can lead to wider discussion, and the public tries to reflect on them and pay attention to the underlying social problems. This film brings a shock to young people about the values of love and marriage. It does not blindly promote the sweetness of marriage. Rather, it breaks the romantic brain and warns people not to easily gamble on human nature. It is not to warn us to stay away from people, do not trust anyone, but have the ability to distinguish. This film has stimulated great discussion and even put a lot of public social issues on the surface. Not only itself, social issues outside the film, such as the discussion of 'Phoenix Man', return to the field of vision. At the same time, through in-depth study, the disadvantages of being hidden under the heat of the movie are also found. According to the data of the Cat's Eye film, this film

has become the 12th place in the inland film box office list over the years. [1] It also means that this non-linear film narrative method is gradually reappearing in the public view and stimulating the consumer's desire to consume. This non-linear film narrative may be an innovative return to this fast-paced era.

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