

# *Narratological Interpretation of the Film My Dear Liar*

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**Abstract:** “My Dear Liar” is the director of the Shen Ao for the first film, his film won The 33rd China Golden Rooster Film Awards for best director debut. Lead actress Liu Yan won the best actress award at the 11th Macau International Film Festival for My Dear Liar, but the film itself failed to achieve the expected box office and public praise, scoring only 6.6 points on Douban review, with more than half of users scoring three stars. The film's production ability, scene and performance of the actors have been recognized in the industry, but the narrative is unsatisfactory, and the box office is difficult to break 100 million. Whether the narrative structure, role setting and narrative rhythm of “My Dear Liar” have room to be discussed, this paper will further interpret the film.

## 1. Introduction

The film My Dear Liar received mixed reviews after its release. On the basis of repeatedly watching and analyzing the film, the author further studied the literature about narratology and film by combining literature research method. On CNKI, a total of 17 articles were searched on the theme of the film My Dear Liar, and 21,300 articles were searched on the theme of narratology. Among them, narratology interpretation specifically for the film My Dear Liar is very limited, so it can be seen that there is still a large research space in this direction. In this paper, the author chooses the essence of the above two to analyze the film My Dear Liar from the direction of narratology.

In the film, in order to save his son suffering from asthma, the male host Wuhai gets to know the network anchorwoman Yue Miaomiao under the arrangement of his “friend” Zhong Zhenjiang, and they secretly plan a marriage scam of murder and fortune. On the one hand, although Wu Hai implements Zhong Zhenjiang's elaborate plan of killing people for insurance fraud step by step, there are also a lot of changes, and the plot contains a black humor that makes people ironic. On the other hand, Wu Hai's affection for Yue Miaomiao is gradually influenced by Yue Miaomiao's sincerity. In the time dimension, the two narrative threads are interwoven, presenting the beginning and end of the story.

## 2. The Narrative Structure of the Film My Dear Liar

The multi-line narrative of the plot can present the progress of the story of multiple characters. This way of telling the story not only shows the development of the plot, but also shows the organizational relationship of the plot in the background of the whole story. In this film, there are two narrative threads, the first is Zhong and Wu's line of fraud; The second is the love line between

Wu and Yue. Both clues unfold simultaneously in a chain structure, showing the progress of the story which based on time and cause and effect, and in keeping with the film's tagline: I really lie to you and I really love you.

The mock interrogation footage is the opening scene of the film, which successfully draws the audience's attention to the cliffhanger. At the beginning of the simulated interrogation scene, the audience was brought into the scene of two people's insurance fraud, which made the audience understand the story framework of insurance fraud, and also left a suspense for whether the two people could cheat insurance successfully. While the two men were in the simulated interrogation, a sentence of "look like" turned the tense atmosphere of the "interrogation" into a humorous one, which laid the tone of humor and tension for the film.

In the chained structure of the narrative, the progress of the event is linked by a logical relationship. Wu Hai is the key role of the two clues intertwined, his motivation for the crime is crucial. Wu Hai has not promised to cheat the insurance event, until Zhong Zhenjiang through the smoke caused Wu Hai's son Wu You admitted to hospital, Wu Hai did not agree to the matter. Compared with Zhong Zhenjiang who was determined to cheat insurance, Wu Hai's motivation was not sufficient. Wu's concerns about his son's health can be solved just by an air purifier or renting an apartment, while Zhong faces an imminent investigation for embezzlement of huge amounts of public funds and a series of suicides among his associates. The situation is very different. Because of the son's reason, Wu Hai joined the fraud action turned into the topic is very far-fetched, which Wu Hai still have other choice in place of insurance fraud. The process which the plot leads to the main theme is not sufficiently cause-and-effect, and there is no deeper logical support. The narrative structure should have a stronger cause-and-effect relationship, so as to be reasonable in narrative logic, which convinced audience of something.

At the end of the story, Wu Hai returned to the internet bar after he was released from prison, but the internet bar was demolished and he had no home. Just like the beginning of the story, he has no wife, unable to take care of his son, no money, while Wu Hai has nothing change around for years. The chain structure of the narrative appears the elements of the circular structure, the beginning and the end of the event echo, the progress of everything in the world seems to be a reincarnation, Wu Hai back to the origin. Diamond Bay which let Yue Miaomiao yearn for reappeared in the audience's view again, Yue Miaomiao found a new job here, began a new life with Wu You. Whether Yue Miaomiao will accept Wu Hai again, the film set an open ending, every audience has their own answer.

### **3. The Casting of the Film My Dear Liar**

The biggest reason of this movie is so funny because of the mismatch between the characters and the roles. Zhong Zhenjiang was a ruthless, rigorous and flexible habitual criminal. Wu Hai is an indecisive, dare not face up to the problem of the Internet bar administrator. The marriage of Wu Hai and Yue Miaomiao brought about a series of plans to catch up with the problem of change, which Wu Hai cannot solve these unexpected circumstances, and need to rediscuss the next step with Zhong Zhenjiang. Wu Hai is not the right person to marry Yue Miaomiao in this plan, but Zhong Zhenjiang. Zhong Zhenjiang has watched the live broadcast of Yue Miao Miao for a long time, so he knows her better and his urgent request is to get a large sum of money in a short time to offset the embezzlement of public funds. The insurance fraud was also orchestrated by Zhong Zhenjiang, who also has a successful criminal record. If the division of labor is exchanged, Zhong Zhenjiang and Yue Miaomiao are arranged to get married, and Wu Hai is the assistant responsible for covering the public's eye, the narrative logic will be more reasonable, and the plot development will be completely different.

The construction of the character needs to fill in the basic outline of the character constantly, and the character of the role can not be fully understood by the audience at the first appearance. Characters' personalities need to be outlined repeatedly in order to deepen the audience's impression, and encourage the audience to further deepen their understanding of the roles in the progress of the plot.

The BMW owner of racketeer, the sanctimonious accountant Zhong, the Diamond Bay Clients who bought houses with stolen money, the scheming male who smoked Youyou, the homicidal the section chief Jiang, each of Zhong Zhenjiang's identity is telling about what is heinous. A character with such a well-defined character is the best person to commit a crime. If Zhong Zhenjiang is arranged to implement, the insurance fraud operation would have hit its target, and the plot will be more exciting. This distinction gives priority to the two threads, with murder as the main thread and emotional change as the secondary thread, which the plot can withstand scrutiny. The correlation between the male supporting role and Yue Miaomiao is relatively indirect, which can be used as the supplement and enrichment of the causal connection.

#### 4. The Narrative Rhythm of the Film *My Dear Liar*

When Yue Miaomiao signed the newlywed travel accident insurance, there were three changes. When Yue Miaomiao found out that the beneficiary of the insurance was Wu Hai, she blurted out: "The beneficiary is you. If I die, you will become rich." The quiet picture of browsing the insurance policy is suddenly broken, and the rhythm of creating suspense accelerates. However, Yue Miaomiao did not pay attention to what she had just said, and the scene that the audience expects did not happen. Yue Miaomiao began to sign, but found that the pen refill was out of water after she started writing. The plot once again led the audience to the direction of the failure of the plan, and they became nervous again. At the third time, the camera slowed down, the rhythm slowed down, Wu Hai and the audience's heart are tense up. A normal shot that only takes three or four seconds to complete, the writing of a half a character took 16 seconds and a total of 6 shots to complete the narrative by slowing down. The slowing down of the pace brings the tension to a climax. The important signing link has a crucial impact on the subsequent insurance fraud plan, and each signing arouses the emotions of the character of Wu Hai, slowing down the pace here is a very necessary arrangement. When the signing was about to be completed, a "dad" broke the plan and Youyou went home. When Yue Miaomiao asked Wu Hai, the narrative mode of slowing down the rhythm appeared again, which creates the atmosphere of "suffocating". At the moment, the narrative of the signature plot came to an end.

Blindly pursuing plot reversal, the use of rhythm to stay on the surface will be bound by the surface skills. The grasp of the rhythm of the film should serve for the narrative. Methods to regulate the rhythm such as omission, pause, slowing down and acceleration should be used alternately in combination with the needs of the narrative in order to unfold the narrative in a more comfortable manner. In this way, the audience can not only be overwhelmed by the rapid change of rhythm, but also avoid the visual fatigue caused by the single rhythm.

#### 5. Conclusion

Although *My Dear Liar* has received a lot of criticism and skepticism, this small budget film which is as a young director's debut, is a creative blend of realistic themes and dark humor, showing human beings from a bottom perspective rather than looking down or commiserating. What is commendable is that the film does not advocate specific values directly. Instead, it tells the story of ordinary people's struggles at the bottom of society through the words of its characters. The down-to-earth way of telling the story inspires the audience to treat every ordinary person with

tolerance and acceptance. The film has some shortcomings in logic and character setting, which are made up by camera movement and the performance of the actors. In addition, the display of segments of vehicle traveling data recorder is a very creative highlight, opening up a unique narrative perspective and cleverly connecting the story. The narrative of an excellent film and television work must stand up to doubt and deliberate before it can become a classic. However, Film and television works have the characteristic of linear transmission, which makes it difficult for the audience to stop and think through the uninterrupted directional broadcast. It is this shortcoming of linear communication that covers up the deficiencies in the narrative of *My Dear Liar*. Once the same story structure is transformed into a written work or a radio play without picture expression to tell the story, or it is presented through interpersonal communication which has a immediate feedback, the defects of its narrative will be obvious without the support of actors and languages of Film and Television.

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