

Cognitive and Semiotic Approach to Film Analysis Applied to the Wuxia Film Genre

Enfoque cognitivo y semiótico en el análisis fílmico aplicado al género cinematográfico wuxia

Kaiyue Wang. Universidad Complutense de Madrid (España)

PhD student in Audiovisual Communication, Advertising and Public Relations at UCM. She is currently working on her thesis focused on the filmic analysis of oriental martial arts cinema, under the direction of Dr. González Requena. Member of AE-IC (Spanish Association of Communication Research).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2303-3476>

Article received: 30/10/2023 – Accepted: 30/11/2023

Abstract:

The wuxia film genre was originated in China as a filmic transposition of a long previous cultural tradition. It is mainly known for its spectacular combat scenes and its marked aesthetic stamp. In order to facilitate the systematic understanding of wuxia genre films, and to achieve a reliable representation of their characteristic narratives, conventions and themes, a methodology with a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach is proposed. First, we set criteria for the delimitation and classification of wuxia films, thus facilitating a stratified sampling process, by period, popularity and/or territorial production. Next, we proceed to describe the film analysis process, following complementary cognitive and semiotic approaches. The variables proposed in the analysis protocol allow identifying the characteristic elements that contribute to the consolidation of the features the constitutive conventionalisms of this film genre.

Keywords:

film analysis; China; narratives; film system; wuxia.

Resumen:

El género cinematográfico wuxia nació en China como transposición fílmica de una larga tradición cultural previa. Es principalmente conocido por sus espectaculares escenas de combate y su marcado sello estético. Con el fin de facilitar el análisis fílmico de las obras del género wuxia, y alcanzar una representación fiable de sus narrativas, convencionalismos y tópicos característicos, se plantea una metodología

con enfoque mixto cuantitativo y cualitativo. En primer lugar, se proponen criterios de delimitación y clasificación de las películas wuxia facilitando así un proceso de muestreo estratificado, por periodo, popularidad y producción territorial. A continuación, se procede a describir el proceso de análisis de las películas, siguiendo enfoques complementarios, cognitivo y semiótico. Las variables propuestas en el protocolo de análisis permiten identificar los elementos característicos y que contribuyen a la consolidación de los rasgos y los convencionalismos constitutivos de este género cinematográfico.

Palabras clave:

análisis fílmico; China; narrativas; sistema fílmico, wuxia

1. Introduction

The wuxia genre, a hallmark of Chinese cinema, represents one of its earliest and most original forms. These films portray the adventures and valiant deeds of often solitary warriors, embarking on quests for justice, family honor, and the protection of their community or homeland. The narrative structure of these films typically revolves around a heroic figure, who employs martial arts to uphold justice. This often involves resorting to violence for noble causes, even when it goes beyond the constraints of conventional law (Teo, 2009; Wang, 2012).

It is crucial to acknowledge the significance of wuxia films in promoting and understanding Chinese culture internationally. The global recognition of this genre in the 21st century was greatly boosted by several highly acclaimed films, notably *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* directed by Ang Lee and *Hero* by Zhang Yimou (Cai, 2017; Planas, 2019).

In addition, wuxia films offer a rich area for analysis from various angles, particularly considering their adaptability and evolution over more than a century of sustained popularity. Deeply ingrained in Chinese cultural heritage, these films frequently incorporate intertextual references, creating a nuanced and often consistent underlying framework.

Indeed, wuxia narratives, along with their archetypal characters, initially prolific in literature, deeply rooted in ancient philosophies and spiritual beliefs linked to martial arts, before transitioning to cinema (Fung, 1948; Wang, 2005). This cultural and philosophical foundation is crucial for a nuanced understanding of these films, allowing viewers to appreciate them beyond the simplistic view of oriental exoticism.

Western academic interest in wuxia films has been on the rise. However, the predominant research focuses on case studies of landmark films directed by prominent filmmakers, each infusing a unique perspective into the genre. Directors such as Ang Lee with *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), Zhang Yimou with *Hero* (2002), and Hou Hsiao-hsien with *The Assassin* (2015) stand out. Their contributions to the wuxia genre have sparked extensive academic contributions, leading to numerous in-depth studies (Rawley and Rawsley, 2010; Zhou, 2017; Peng, 2019).

These studies concerning these films have not only popularized the genre but also ignited comprehensive debates. These discussions explore various interpretations of wuxia films, delving into narrative, aesthetic, social, and political themes.

However, the predominant methodological approach in wuxia film studies often emphasizes an analytical discourse centered on one particular case, considering the film's internal elements or the styles of the director. However, this focus might overlook or reduce the importance of understanding the genre itself.

Predominantly, these studies are grounded in a qualitative methodological framework. This is characterized by an ad hoc approach tailored specifically for each film. Such a strategy is quite fitting for collective monographs, where the objective is to explore a particular film or director from diverse analytical perspectives.

However, this approach lacks a systematic tool for analyzing a collection of wuxia films that span various directors and time periods. To bridge this gap in wuxia film research, this study proposes a systematic analysis framework. This framework leverages cognitive and semiotic theories to analyze specific traits and characteristics of the wuxia genre.

The purpose is to offer a methodological model that includes both a sampling method and an analysis protocol. This model is designed to support and enhance both qualitative and quantitative research of wuxia films, recognizing their unique genre-specific attributes.

Therefore, the objectives of this methodology are fourfold. The first objective is a justification for the combined application of cognitive and semiotic approaches for analyzing and interpreting film texts. This dual approach offers a comprehensive framework for understanding cinematic narratives. Secondly, a concern is the representativeness of the films selected for analysis and the criteria for choosing these samples. This raises fundamental questions about the nature of wuxia films, their developmental stages, geographical roots, and the methods used to select representative samples that accurately reflect the genre's status during a specific period.

Thirdly, the methodology addresses the cultural context in which these films originated and their subsequent global influence. This includes examining how these films are received and interpreted, particularly through an orientalist perspective. This aspect involves a critical analysis of how searching for the exotic Other can lead to a skewed understanding of the films, potentially neglecting the rich cultural heritage and deep meanings presented on screen. The proposed analytical categories aim to uncover and emphasize the underlying Chinese cultural elements that lend narrative coherence to the films.

Finally, the methodology seeks to delve into the combat scenes, which are often the narrative climax and a significant expression of the characters' values. These scenes are not only pivotal to the plot but also carry a profound semiotic significance.

2. State of the Art

2.1. What is wuxia?

In Chinese cinema, a particular film genre has distinguished itself since the inception of the Seventh Art in China, acclaimed for its widespread appeal and deep-seated alignment with local customs. This genre is 'wuxia,' portraying the escapades of itinerant warriors in the ancient empire and during the antiquity of the warring states.

Embedded in these narratives is a rich and venerable philosophical tapestry, drawn from diverse spiritual teachings, notably exemplified by the Shaolin monks. This philosophy profoundly influences both the plot and character development. Additionally, wuxia films frequently exhibit a range of intertextual elements. Their storylines and archetypal characters, long before gracing the silver screen, were propagated through an extensive and influential literary tradition, a facet clearly mirrored in their screenplays. Often, these tales weave in fantastical components, lending a unique aesthetic quality to the genre.

The concept of "wuxia," deriving from the Chinese terms *wu* (signifying war and martial arts) and *xia* (denoting a knight or swordsman), translates into English as 'knights of the martial arts'. These cinematic works, frequently referred to in English as swordplay films, are notable for their exhilarating sword-fighting sequences. They typically feature roving heroes who confront formidable adversaries. Predominantly set in an ancient or legendary era, these films often incorporate elements of the fantastical.

It is important to recognize that at various times in the 20th century, wuxia, a Chinese film genre, faced criticism in China. Critics argued that it perpetuated feudal ideologies and promoted superstitious beliefs. This criticism led to the genre's prohibition during two significant historical periods: first, at the conclusion of the Kuomintang's Nationalist Republic period (in the 1930s), and later, in the early years of the People's Republic under Mao Zedong (from the 1950s to the 1970s).

Due to these prohibitions, the epicenter of wuxia film production shifted from mainland China to other regions with significant Chinese linguistic and cultural presence, notably Hong Kong and Taiwan. However, by the late 20th century, wuxia saw a remarkable resurgence in mainland China.

Therefore, contemporarily, the primary production hubs for wuxia films, which corresponds to the main centers of Sinophone cinema, are mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

Wuxia, deeply ingrained in Chinese cultural and philosophical traditions, had a limited reach beyond the Sinophone world, or more broadly, outside the borders of Chinese cultural influence in Asia for much of the 20th century. The genre achieved international acclaim for the first time in 2000 with the release of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, produced in Taiwan. Since then, wuxia has carved out a unique niche in the global film industry, on the periphery of major Hollywood productions.

The Wuxia Trilogy by Zhang Yimou, comprising *Hero*" (2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (2004), and *Curse of the Golden Flower*" (2006), marks a significant milestone in the genre's global impact and has been widely praised for its exceptional visual style (Kinane, 2018). Similarly, *The Assassin* (2015), directed by Hou Hsiao-hsien of Taiwan, has garnered acclaim for its innovative reinterpretation of wuxia's aesthetic norms (Hsu, 2019).

In the West, the storytelling in wuxia films is often viewed through an orientalist perspective. This approach tends to overemphasize the exotic elements of these films' plots and characters, sometimes even interpreting them as political allegories (Bowman, 2019; Ding, 2022). Additionally, there is a degree of caution in Chinese critical circles regarding the international popularity of wuxia cinema. This caution is derived from

concerns about orientalist biases and the potential for cultural inaccuracies or anachronisms in the narrative fiction.

Zhang Yimou has repeatedly addressed these interpretative challenges in his work, navigating between different critical viewpoints (Rawnsley & Rawnsley, 2010; Zhou, 2017; Wang, 2023). While acknowledging some validity in these interpretations, they can be limiting as they often overlook deeper insights into the literary, aesthetic, and philosophical aspects rooted in Chinese culture and history, which may escape the attention of critics. Therefore, it is crucial to decode the narrative and semiotic elements that define this film genre.

Wuxia films, a genre richly explored in significant monographs (Bowman, 2019; Teo, 2009; Wang, 2005), possess several characteristics that define them broadly.

Narrative: These films are typically set in ancient China, often incorporating elements of legend. The narrative framework is built upon a unique logic, where characters navigate a world intermingled with both material and spiritual sources of power. This setup aligns with the foundational principles of traditional martial arts.

Characters: The protagonists are solitary warriors with combat skills associated with social, moral, and spiritual values. These swordsmen, often portrayed as lone fighters against tyranny, may operate outside the confines of human laws set by political entities. However, they remain true to a natural law, a code of honor that upholds justice, loyalty, and humanism.

Plot Nodes: Themes such as honor, revenge, community salvation, or national defense serve as psychological catalysts, driving characters towards pivotal moments. These themes inevitably lead to climactic combat scenes, where conflicts are resolved through acts of violence. In wuxia cinema, battles often transcend mere physical conflict, embodying a deeper, almost spiritual significance. These skirmishes are not just acts of violence; they symbolize the ultimate dispensation of justice. In this line, justice represents the enforcement of universal moral principles against the misdeeds of tyrants who exploit their earthly power. Wuxia films are particularly renowned for their breathtaking combat sequences, which are choreographed. These sequences are notable for a technique known as 'flight in combat,' where characters appear to defy gravity momentarily, adding an ethereal quality to the scenes.

Aesthetics: Wuxia films strive for a profound visual impact. This is not merely for the sake of spectacle; it is a visual representation of the genre's underlying values and philosophical foundations. The natural landscapes—mountains, forests, lakes—where these narratives unfold are chosen for their majestic beauty and spiritual resonance, reflecting the deep-rooted spiritual values of the genre.

Wuxia, as a cinematic tradition, has evolved over time, giving rise to various subgenres. Each subgenre accentuates specific characteristics or narrative elements. For instance, *nüxia* focuses on female warriors, adding a layer of gender dynamics to the traditional narrative. Additionally, wuxia has intermingled with other uniquely Chinese film genres such as *shenguai* (fantasy) and *guzhuang* (historical palace drama), creating a rich tapestry of hybrid styles. However, this study primarily focuses on the conventional form of wuxia, steering clear of its subgenres and hybrid forms.

2.2. Fundamentals of Ancient Chinese Philosophy and Thought

The narration and character development in Wuxia films are deeply rooted in two traditions, each playing a crucial role in shaping the mesmerizing combat sequences. Initially, these films draw upon the rich legacy of Chinese martial arts (Wushu).

Wuxia's etymology, sharing the character *wu* (武) with *wushu*, highlights a shared conceptual foundation in these cultural expressions. Wushu represents the physical and spiritual discipline of martial combat, whereas wuxia transposes this practice into a media form, often weaving in elements of myth and legend to enrich its narrative.

Secondly, the stylistic evolution of wuxia cinematography has been significantly influenced by Chinese opera, particularly its most renowned variant, the Beijing Opera. This ancient art form is a holistic theatrical experience, blending music, song, dance, poetry, and acrobatics into an interconnected spectacle of artistic expression (Li, 2010).

In Chinese opera, each artistic element is interdependent, creating a cohesive and meaningful whole. The performers undergo rigorous training from a very young age, mastering not only acting but also singing and acrobatics, to bring this complex art form to life.

In Chinese cinematic tradition, particularly in the Wuxia genre, acrobatics have been a standout feature since their inception in silent films. This aspect of the performance has significantly contributed to audience excitement and engagement (Bao, 2005). The combat movements in these films extend beyond mere physical functionality; they are imbued with poetic expression, encapsulating the fighters' internal harmony. This harmony reflects a synchronization of emotional and spiritual states with the core values guiding the swordsmen's actions, rooted in their code of honor.

A key ideal in these portrayals is perfection of the combatant, as inspired by the spiritual teachings of the Shaolin monks. This perfection is characterized by inner peace, mastery over one's strength, and the skill to redirect an adversary's aggression. In addition, the combatants' ability to seemingly defy gravity and move effortlessly through the air is a physical world of their spiritual principles, playing a pivotal role in combat scenes.

3. Application of Film Analysis Methodology with a Cognitive and Semiotic Approach

3.1. Film Analysis and the Cognitive Approach

Film analysis seeks to unravel the underlying meanings and both textual and formal elements across various stages of film production and reception. Considering the increasing significance of film narratives in shaping collective perceptions, depicting complex realities, and presenting diverse identities, this field of study is garnering more attention.

Understanding narrative structures and the mechanisms of representation in popular films is crucial for understanding the trends driving the cultural industry. Films, fundamentally, are displayed on a rectangular surface where reality, as captured by a camera, is depicted. The process of staging determines what is filmed, while editing and post-production shape the sequence of scenes and plot development.

Cinema, as González Requena (1995) notably highlights, is predominantly an experiential space. It is an experience mediated by semiotic elements presented on the screen. In

this space, the perspectives of the creator and viewer converge, engaging with the visible and audible signals that form the narrative's components.

The audience views what the director envisioned, sharing a perspective shaped by the medium itself, consistent in format and presentation. However, each viewer's unique subjectivities lend resonances to this experience. It is a replication of a sensory journey, structured in a formal system. Thus, the cinematic experience is characterized by both the recurrence of similar cognitive stimuli and the individual subjectivity in its reception and interpretation.

Cinema, with its inherent complexity and unique characteristics has inspired various methodological approaches for its study and interpretation (Carmono, 1991; Andrew, 1992; Bordwell & Carroll, 1996; Aumont, 2016). Notable among these are the cognitive and semiotic approaches which we highlight for their suitability for the systematic study of wuxia cinema.

The cognitive approach focuses on the formal and stylistic elements in films. It seeks to understand the cognitive impact that the combination of visuals and sound has on audience.

A significant proponent of this perspective is David Bordwell, whose work in post-structuralism and neoformalism (Bordwell & Carroll, 1996; Bordwell & Thompson, 2004) highlights the importance of examining how a film's technical and stylistic components affect viewer experience. In this context, a film is seen as a cultural artifact, a 'film form' emerging from the interaction between a formal narrative system and a stylistic system.

This formal system includes the entire productive and narrative framework: the means of production, the type of story being told, the pacing of the plot's presentation, the narrator's perspective, and the management of time and space.

The stylistic system in cinema includes the technical, creative, and aesthetic elements that shape the narrative of a film. This includes key components such as staging, direction of actors, editing, and sound design. Notably, staging plays a crucial role in defining a director's unique narrative style.

3.2. Application of the Semiotic Approach and Textual Analysis

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior, is particularly pertinent in analyzing films. This approach delves into deciphering symbols and expressive codes in a movie, which serve as indicators of deeper meanings (Metz, 1974).

This analytical perspective establishes a hierarchy between two types of realities in film: the overt and readily apparent, which relates to surface-level elements, and the covert and indirectly perceptible, which uncovers deeper structural meanings (Buckland, 1999).

In this framework, the audience's ability to perceive and subjectively interpret these cinematic elements through a structured network of signifiers is crucial. These signifiers adhere to specific semantic rules, forming logical relationships or 'codes' that facilitate the understanding of the film's message.

In the field of Spanish-language cinema studies, the work of González Requena (1996, 1996, 2007), is significant. His textual analysis, proposed as a 'deletrarear' process, focuses on unraveling the meanings embedded in the cinematic composition and how they align with the narrative structure. This analysis seeks to explicate what the film communicates and how its array of signs, codes, and techniques collectively construct its discourse.

The signifiers and codes in a film are akin to scattered puzzle pieces, each different yet complementary. Each basic segment carries both a textual and symbolic significance that is independent at the basic unit level. However, these segments coalesce into more complex structures of meaning through syntactic connections "that in turn imply a certain semanticity" (Carmona, 1991, p.81). This process provides the overarching cinematographic discourse with a cohesive quality. The analysis of these components allows us to dissect the film into defined units that interact and weave the narrative fabric. The spectrum of these meaning units spans from concrete elements such as specific camera angles or musical selections to more ethereal aspects such as themes, symbols, and metaphors that evolve throughout the film.

Each directorial decision, whether it be in lighting, shot composition, dialogue, or soundtrack, crafts a tapestry of signifiers. This intentional semantic construction coalesces into an integrated experience for the viewer, thus shaping their perception of the film. In turn, this cohesive ensemble of symbols and codes creates a space of subjective experiences. As Torres Hortelano (2010, p. 375) expressed, the cinematographic text, with its system of codes, serves as "a space of interrogation of the subject."

In semiotic textual analysis, we delve into understanding how various elements interact to create meaning. This approach starts by identifying the basic units of meaning and then explores the syntagmatic connections that link them into more complex, or macro, elements.

Take, for instance, the analysis of a film. Here, we recognize different functional units and segments that collectively form the visual elements on screen. Each complex unit or macro-element (i.e., a sequence), is essentially an integration of simpler segments (i.e., the shots). These simpler segments, rich in meaning, are themselves composed of even more basic units. These are structured using predefined codes, which emphasize certain signs, adding depth and intentionality. Additionally, there is a network of relationships between these basic segments and the overarching macro-elements, lending coherence to the entire artistic piece.

Thus, textual analysis in this context involves piecing together meaning from various units and segments across different levels. It is akin to "deciphering" the fundamental components of a film, ranging from the simplest to the most complex, to uncover the syntagmatic relationships binding them. Such a focused approach enables us to decipher the semiotic signifiers that constitute these scenes, shaping the viewer's experience. This perspective is informed by the works of González Requena (1995, 1996, 2007).

3.3. Sample Selection Criteria

From the early 20th century up to the present day, the Wuxia genre has seen a prolific production of films. To analyze this genre effectively, it is crucial to select a representative sample of films that align with the research objectives.

Below, we propose three criteria that can be applied to the selection of films in a sample: the period, the territory, and popularity. In terms of chronological development, scholars of Chinese cinema (Teo, 2009; Ding, 2022), identify three primary periods in the evolution of the Wuxia genre:

Jiu pai: This era marks the initial period of the Wuxia genre in Chinese cinema, spanning from its inception to the 1930s. This period ended when the production of these films was banned in mainland China.

Xin pai: This period witnessed the resurgence of Wuxia films, primarily in Hong Kong and other regions with significant Chinese cultural influence and diaspora, from the 1940s through the 1990s.

Xin wuxia: Representing a renaissance of the genre in mainland China and beyond, this recent phase extends from the late 20th century to the early 21st century. Films from this era are often characterized by high budgets, high-quality production values, and commercial success potential.

From a geographical perspective, the main centers of wuxia film production are mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, which are also the key regions in the broader context of Sinosphere cinema. In international film, the cinema of the Sinosphere holds a somewhat marginal yet increasingly significant position. This shift in recognition, particularly from Western critics and academia, has become more pronounced over the past two decades (Yue & Khoo, 2014). Central to this region are three key territories, each marked by a growing trend of collaborative efforts through co-productions. These collaborations have notably enhanced the overall quality of the films.

Finally, an important aspect in assessing the impact and reach of these films is their popularity, which can be measured using two main indicators: box office performance and awards received at film festivals. Box office success can be measured in two categories: domestic and international revenue. It is crucial to recognize that Hong Kong, despite its reintegration into the People's Republic of China post-decolonization, retains a unique administrative status. Therefore, economic transactions between Hong Kong and mainland China are considered international trade. It is also worth noting that mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan each use their different legal tender.

For domestic box office figures, revenues are calculated in the local currency of the respective territory. On the other hand, international box office revenues are typically reported in United States dollars. This conversion can lead to discrepancies due to fluctuating exchange rates. Therefore, the average exchange rate at the time of a film's release should be the standard for these calculations. Ranking movies based on box office revenue presents unique challenges, despite being a quantitative measure. Firstly, one issue is the scarcity of reliable box office data before 2000, particularly in mainland China.

Secondly, the data is often converted into different currencies without specifying the conversion date. To ensure accurate comparisons, researchers need to be mindful of the original data sources and any applied exchange rates. Film festival awards provide another method for ranking movies. This approach is qualitative and somewhat subjective, reflecting the varying prestige levels of different festivals.

The Sinosphere cinema, especially in its representation through wuxia films, has historically faced hurdles in gaining recognition in major international award circuits. Notably,

Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* won the Golden Bear for Best Feature Film at the 1988 Berlin Film Festival, a significant achievement for Chinese cinema. Similarly, Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1993, marking the first time a film from the region received such an accolade at a prestigious Western festival.

3.4. Analysis Protocol

From a cognitive perspective, the analysis considers both the formal and stylistic systems as described by Bordwell & Thompson (2004). This approach also considers the interaction between these two systems. Additionally, to enhance the understanding of films from a cognitive standpoint, we also consider the context of reception, recognizing it as an essential element. This leads us to introduce an additional set of variables, collectively referred to as 'Reception.' Accordingly, the proposed analytical framework comprises four variable groups, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Proposal for an analysis protocol

Variable Group	Variables
Formal System	Pre-production; Production; Budget; Script Sources; Script; Narrator; Timeline; Characters; Location; Set Design; Costumes
Stylistic System	Scenes; Shots; Lighting and Color Dominants; Sound and Soundtrack
Formal/Stylistic Interaction	Characterization of Main Characters; Characterization of Secondary Characters; Extras and Groups; Intertextual References; Representation of Women and Feminine Traits; Representation of Men and Masculine Traits; Representation of Historical Context; Representation of Social Context; Representation of Cultural Context; Moral Significance of the Outcome
Reception	Box Office Results; Film Festival Awards; National Critique; International Critique; Academic Impact; Influence on Popular Culture

Each variable can be characterized using qualitative and/or quantitative data. The extent of detail and precision will vary based on the specific objectives and scope of each research project. Upon completing a comprehensive analysis of a film's attributes through a cognitive lens, we shift the focus to a semiotic perspective. This involves identifying and interpreting the meaningful units in the most impactful and aesthetically significant combat scenes, particularly in the wuxia genre.

In these scenes, the climax of the action is interwoven with the portrayal of character-driven values. This correlation is largely due to the relationship between traditional Chinese philosophical concepts and the depiction of physical combat. For textual analysis and data extraction, we recommend employing the method developed by the ATAD research group (Audiovisual Text Segmentation Protocol) at the Complutense University of Madrid. This approach involves using the *Encuadres* software, as devised by González Requena (2018).

4. Discussion

The approach being proposed, which integrates the cognitive paradigm alongside the semiotic method, facilitates a comprehensive understanding of a cinematographic work. This understanding includes both the context of its emission and reception, whilst considering human experience and subjectivity.

This integrated method is particularly valuable in addressing a collection of films in the same genre. The wuxia genre, with its rich symbolism, intertextual references, and cultural codes integrated into its plot, characters, and aesthetic elements, is a prime example.

By applying this film analysis protocol, we can deeply understand the stories and characters in Wuxia movies. It also allows us to analyze, through the lens of cognitive and semiotic theories, the elements that define and uphold the unique traits of this cinematic genre.

This study navigates the complex formal elements and their cultural-symbolic layers, essential in effectively addressing the complexities inherent in the wuxia genre. Tackling this genre is challenging; it requires a careful balance to avoid oversimplification or undue emphasis on certain aspects, especially those viewed through an exotic or oriental lens.

The core of this research lies in presenting a methodological framework, grounded in a conceptual approach. This framework aims to offer robust guidelines for a consistent and systematic method in analyzing films, specifically those classified in the wuxia genre.

Therefore, this paper offers only broad guidelines for designing the variables in the analysis protocol. It deliberately avoids delving into details, as these should be customized to the unique characteristics of each individual research on the subject.

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Funding: the article does not receive funding.

Conflict of interest: the authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

English translation: provided by the authors.

HOW TO CITE (APA 7^a)

Wang, K. (2024). Cognitive and Semiotic Approach to Film Analysis Applied to the Wuxia Film Genre. *Comunicación & Métodos – Communication & Methods*, 5(2), 66-78. <https://doi.org/10.35951/v5i2.200>