



The Narrative Artistry of Broken Bridge in Wuxi Opera: A Pathway to Aesthetic Education*

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Abstract

Background and Aim: The Broken Bridge segment of The Legend of the White Snake in Wuxi Opera exemplifies the artistic depth of traditional Chinese opera through its structured narrative and dramatic intensity. As a vital cultural heritage and a pedagogical resource, it holds significant potential for integration into university aesthetic education. However, most of the research that has been done on it so far has focused on its performance style and cultural value, not on its story structure or dramatic conflict. Furthermore, its applicability in higher education remains insufficiently explored.

Materials and Methods: A mixed-methods approach was employed in this study, incorporating a literature review, script analysis of the opera, and expert interviews. Narratological frameworks and opera education studies establish the theoretical foundation. Textual analysis of the script, lyrics, and performance techniques identifies key narrative and conflict structures. Expert interviews with opera scholars and aesthetic education researchers further evaluate its pedagogical feasibility.

Results: Findings reveal that Wuxi Opera Broken Bridge uses traditional narrative, symbolic characters, and expressive techniques to enhance emotional depth and convey universal human experiences through a Chinese aesthetic lens. Experts reaffirm its educational value in fostering emotional connections, deepening appreciation for traditional opera, and stimulating interest in Chinese theatrical arts. They also suggest the use of digital tools and interactive strategies to ensure the continuity of the heritage and optimize the teaching process.

Conclusion: Integrating The Broken Bridge from Wuxi opera into aesthetic education enriches students' cultural understanding and emotional engagement, bridging traditional and contemporary educational practices. Through a combination of traditional performance techniques and modern technological tools, this approach enhances students' critical thinking and emotional literacy. The study emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural heritage while adapting to innovative teaching methods, ensuring that Chinese opera remains relevant and impactful in today's educational landscape.

Keywords: Wuxi Opera; Narratology; The Legend of the White Snake -Broken Bridge; Aesthetic Education

Introduction

Wuxi Opera, a distinguished regional theater form originating in Jiangsu Province, has evolved over two centuries from the folk tradition of Tanhuang into a sophisticated art form that integrates singing, recitation, acting, and martial arts (Li, 2019). Among many contents, The Broken Bridge from The Legend of the White Snake stands out due to its intricate narrative structure, heightened dramatic tension, and profound emotional depth (Wang, 2020). This iconic scene portrays the fateful reunion of Bai Suzhen, a white snake spirit, and Xu Xian, a mortal scholar, at the Broken Bridge in Hangzhou, following a series of misunderstandings and betrayals. Through expressive vocal performances and dynamic stage movements, the scene explores fundamental thematic conflicts, including love versus duty, loyalty versus betrayal, and fate versus personal choice (Chun, 2019).

Scholarly research on Wuxi Opera has primarily focused on its artistic characteristics and cultural significance, with particular emphasis on performance style, vocal techniques, and historical development (Ding, 2024). Despite these contributions, systematic analyses of its narrative structure and dramatic conflicts remain scarce (Shen, 2023). Additionally, traditional opera has a lot of educational value, but

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adding it to university courses in aesthetic education has not gotten much academic attention. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive examination of how Wuxi Opera can be effectively incorporated into higher education.

Aesthetic education plays a crucial role in fostering cultural literacy and artistic appreciation, offering an effective medium for introducing traditional opera to contemporary learners (Ding & Wu, 2024). Universities, as centers for cultural and artistic education, provide an optimal platform for the study and promotion of Wuxi Opera (Ding, 2024). According to Shen (2023), including opera in aesthetic education classes is a great way for students to learn about Chinese theater traditions, improve their storytelling skills, and gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical importance of traditional performing arts.

To address this research gap, this study adopts a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, integrating literature analysis, opera text analysis, and expert interviews. First, a systematic review of narratological theories and opera education research establishes the theoretical foundation. Second, an in-depth textual analysis of the Broken Bridge examines its script, lyrics, and narrative techniques to determine its artistic narrative value. Finally, expert interviews with opera scholars and aesthetic education researchers assess its pedagogical value and feasibility for university curricula.

This study systematically analyzed The Broken Bridge's narrative structure and artistic value, exploring its educational potential in university aesthetic education. It establishes a theoretical and practical framework for integrating Wuxi Opera, ensuring its relevance, appreciation, and preservation in contemporary higher education.

Objectives

1. To analyze the narratological and artistic value of The Legend of the White Snake – Broken Bridge in Wuxi Opera.
2. To evaluate its artistic impact and explore its pedagogical potential in university aesthetic education.

Literature review

1. Narratology and Chinese Opera

Narratology, originating from structuralism (Prince, 2019), provides analytical frameworks, such as Letwin's (2008) five-stage dramatic structure, for examining narrative progression and conflict in traditional opera (Figure 1).

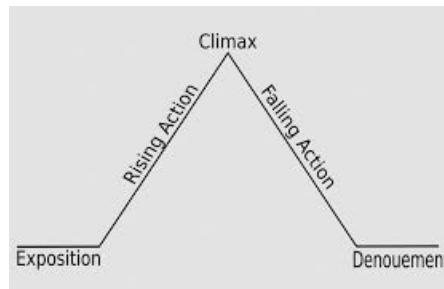


Figure 1 Five-Stage Plot Structure

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Narratology in Wuxi opera highlights symbolic storytelling, poetic diction, stylized performance, and multilayered temporal structures, distinct from Western drama's causal progression and psychological emphasis (Plaks, 1977; Shen, 2023).

2. Narrative Elements in Chinese Opera



Chinese opera utilizes an integrative narrative structure (Figure 2), which integrates visual, performative, and linguistic components to generate an immersive, multi-sensory storytelling experience (Plaks, 1977).

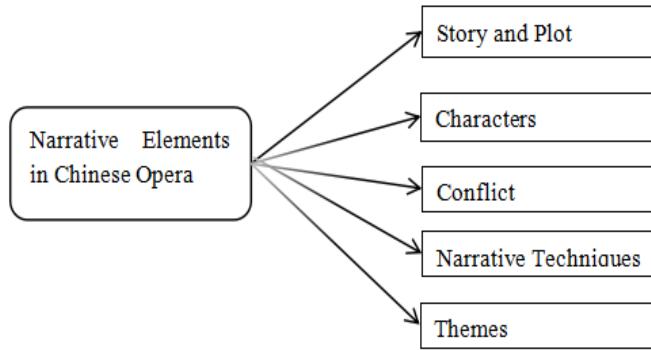


Figure 2 Narrative Elements in Chinese Opera

Note: Constructed by the researcher

2.1 Story and Plot

Unlike Aristotelian drama, traditional Wuxi Chinese opera employs nonlinear, episodic storytelling with interwoven subplots, poetic repetition, and symbolic staging (Letwin, 2008; Shen, 2023), prioritizing emotional depth and philosophical reflection over narrative resolution through techniques such as flashbacks, foreshadowing, and parallel narratives to cultivate multilayered audience engagement.

2.2 Characters

In Chinese opera, traditional roles are defined by distinct performance conventions reflecting age, status, and personality (Chen, 2017). Sheng (生) represents male characters and subdivides into Laosheng (老生), Xiaosheng (小生), and Wusheng (武生); Dan (旦), denoting female characters, includes Qingyi (青衣), Huadan (花旦), Laodan (老旦), and Wudan (武旦). Jing (净) roles embody assertive, dynamic male figures characterized by exaggerated makeup, intricate costumes, and powerful vocal styles, whereas Chou (丑) roles—classified as Wen Chou (文丑) and Wu Chou (武丑)—incorporate humor, wit, and martial skills through comedic dialogue and vigorous physical expression.

2.3 Conflict

Wuxi opera narratives create conflict through symbolic dualities, including human versus supernatural, duty versus desire, and tradition versus transformation (Letwin, 2008). Daoist and Confucian aesthetics suggest that resolutions are frequently open-ended, prioritizing philosophical reflection and harmonic balance over climactic closure (Plaks, 1977).

2.4 Narrative Techniques

Wuxi opera employs a variety of narrative techniques to enhance storytelling, including Arias, Narration, Dialogue and Monologue (Figure 3).

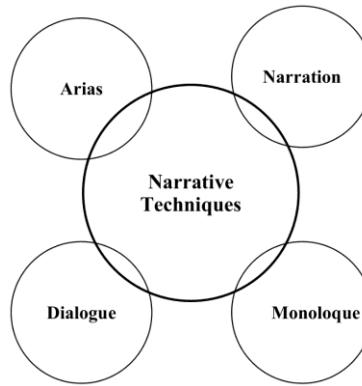


Figure 3 Wuxi Opera's Narrative Techniques

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Arias (唱词) serve as the primary means of character expression, utilizing lyrical poetry and melodic phrasing to convey complex themes and emotional depth (Ye et al., 2024). Complementing this, narration (旁白), whether delivered by characters themselves or external narrators, establishes context, clarifies character motivations, and directs audience interpretation (Plaks, 1977). Dialogue (对白), characterized by poetic and rhythmic exchanges rather than naturalistic speech, enhances stylistic elegance and thematic coherence (Mukhlas et al., 2023). Additionally, monologues (独白) provide intimate insights into characters' emotions and internal struggles, intensifying the drama and enriching the narrative depth (Adullah, 2023). Collectively, these narrative techniques enable opera to convey meaning through a sophisticated interplay of visual, auditory, and symbolic storytelling elements.

2.5 Themes

Letwin (2008) asserts that thematic exploration in opera transcends individual narratives, delving into universal moral and philosophical inquiries. Chinese opera frequently explores recurring motifs such as loyalty and betrayal, reflecting on trust, deception, and moral duty; love and sacrifice, highlighting selflessness, devotion, and personal struggles against fate; the supernatural and human experience, examining interactions between mortal and spiritual realms; and fate versus free will, questioning the extent to which individuals can shape their destiny or remain bound by cosmic forces. These themes are intricately woven into the music, staging, and poetic dialogue of Wuxi opera, creating a richly layered and interpretative narrative experience.

3. Chinese Opera and University Aesthetic Education

University aesthetic education plays a pivotal role in preserving cultural heritage, fostering artistic appreciation, and developing critical thinking skills. Chinese opera, as an interdisciplinary art form, merges literature, history, music, and performance, offering students a deeper understanding of traditional aesthetics and narrative structures (Shen, 2023). However, challenges in accessibility and declining engagement highlight the importance of selecting operatic works that possess strong dramatic tension, coherence, and emotional depth for effective pedagogy (Ye et al., 2024; Mukhlas et al., 2023).

To overcome these challenges, incorporating interactive platforms and multimedia resources enhances access to Chinese opera, enriching students' engagement with its techniques, narratives, and historical contexts (Plaks, 1977). By adopting innovative pedagogical strategies, the appreciation of Chinese opera is cultivated, ensuring its continued relevance in higher education while supporting both the preservation and modernization of traditional cultural practices (W. Ding & Wu, 2024).

Conceptual Framework

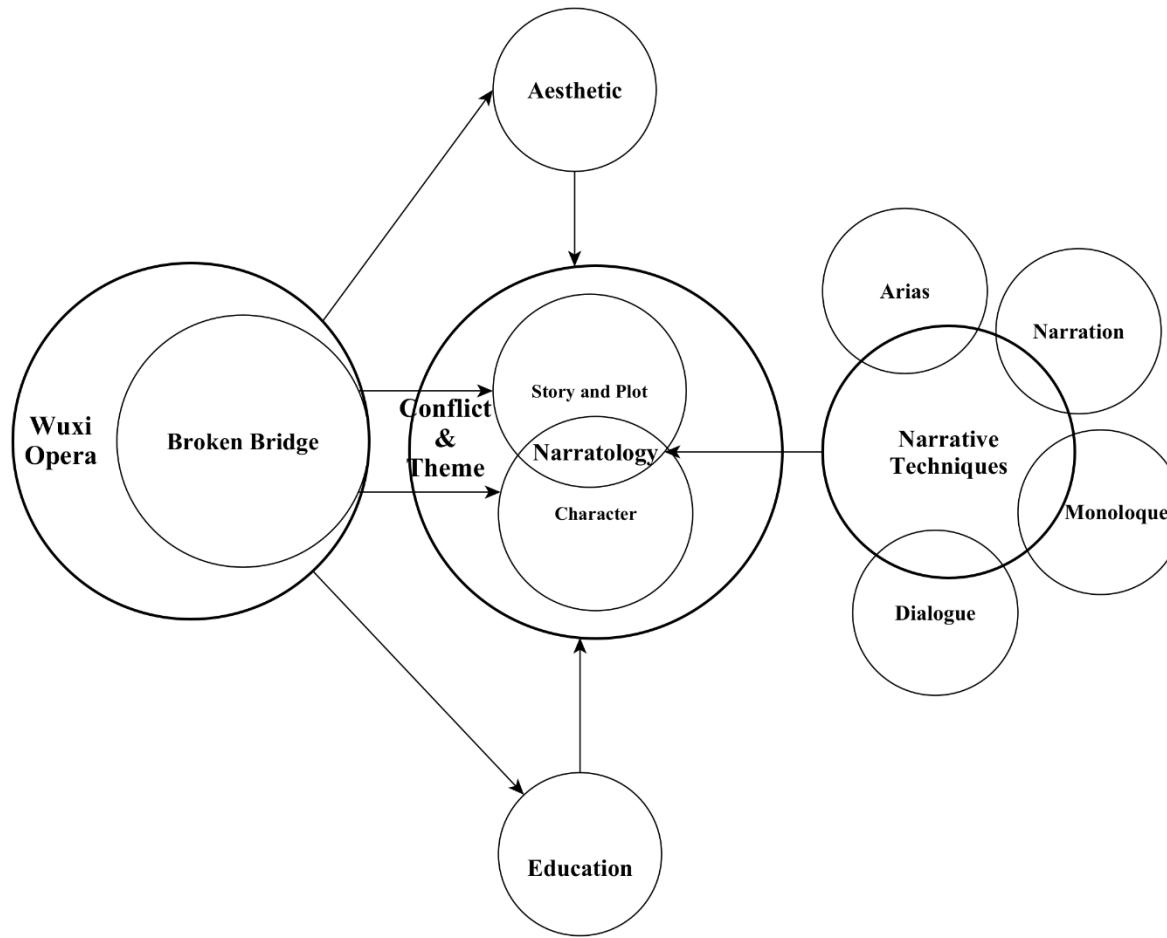


Figure 4 The Research Conceptual Framework

Note: Constructed by the researcher

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach combining literature analysis, operatic text analysis, and expert interviews to explore the following dimensions (Figure 4):

Narratology and Chinese Opera: Using narratological theory, the research delves into the unique structure of Chinese opera, contrasting it with Western narrative forms. Chinese opera often employs non-linear, episodic plots with symbolic and philosophical elements rooted in Daoist and Confucian aesthetics. The narrative techniques include arias, dialogue, narration, and monologues, each serving to enhance emotional depth and thematic complexity.

Narrative Techniques: The study applies a five-step narrative structure (inciting event, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution) to the plot of *The Broken Bridge*. This analysis highlights how the opera's episodic nature and dramatic conflicts build tension and emotional resonance, with a particular focus on the characters' evolving relationships and internal struggles.

Educational Integration: A key component of the research is the exploration of *The Broken Bridge* as a tool for aesthetic education in universities. The study emphasizes the importance of Chinese opera in fostering cultural literacy, critical thinking, and artistic appreciation. It also addresses the need for innovative pedagogical strategies, including the use of multimedia resources and interactive platforms, to engage students with the opera's rich narrative and historical context.



Character Analysis: Detailed character studies focus on Bai Suzhen (the female protagonist), Xu Xian (the male scholar), and Xiaoqing (the loyal companion), exploring their emotional transformations and symbolic roles. The character dynamics reflect themes of love, sacrifice, loyalty, and redemption, which drive the opera's narrative forward.

Conflict and Themes: The conflicts in *The Broken Bridge* embody dualities such as human vs. supernatural, love vs. duty, and fate vs. free will. These thematic elements are conveyed through the opera's music, staging, and poetic dialogue, making it a multi-sensory experience. The study also identifies the opera's exploration of universal moral and philosophical themes, such as loyalty, betrayal, love, and the supernatural.

Methodology

This study employed a comprehensive methodology to examine the narrative structure, dramatic conflicts, and pedagogical integration of *The Broken Bridge* in *The Legend of the White Snake* within higher education aesthetic programs. The research methodology consists of key components designed to provide a systematic analysis of the opera's artistic and educational value.

First, the literature review establishes a theoretical framework by systematically reviewing narratology, opera aesthetics, and university aesthetic education. This review analyzes the artistic value of traditional opera's narrative structure and its pedagogical integration, offering critical insights into the potential application of *The Broken Bridge* in higher education aesthetic curricula.

Next, the study conducts an opera text analysis focused on the narratological aspects of *The Broken Bridge* in Wuxi opera. This analysis examines the plot development, progression of dramatic conflicts, and climactic construction. Additionally, it explores character portrayal and emotional expression, assessing their contribution to enhancing audience engagement and the overall aesthetic value of traditional opera.

Finally, expert interviews were conducted with prominent Wuxi opera scholars and aesthetic education researchers. These interviews provided an in-depth examination of the narrative structure, artistic significance, and educational potential of *The Broken Bridge*. The discussions also focused on the role of technology in enhancing student engagement and improving learning outcomes in traditional opera education, alongside strategies for pedagogical integration and student reception.

The methodology used in this study was approved by Silpakorn University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) under REC 68.0205-023-1049, ensuring that all research processes adhered to ethical guidelines and upheld participant rights and well-being.

Results

1. Narrative and Aesthetic Analysis of *The Broken Bridge* in Wuxi Opera

1.1 Story and Plot

The researchers applied narratological theory to analyze the script of the Wuxi opera *Broken Bridge*, revealing how its plot structure follows the five-stage narrative framework outlined by Letwin (2008). The framework includes the stages of inciting action, rising conflict, climax, falling action, and resolution, each contributing to the overall flow and impact of the story. By adhering to this structured narrative model, the opera effectively enhances both the dramatic tension and the emotional depth of the performance.

The five-stage framework is instrumental in organizing the events of *Broken Bridge* in a way that builds suspense and maximizes emotional engagement. Each stage of the narrative progression serves a specific function, gradually leading the audience toward the climax and eventual resolution. This structure not only shapes the plot but also fosters a deeper connection between the audience and the characters.

For a detailed examination of this narrative structure, Table 1 presents a comprehensive analysis of the 20-minute script of *Broken Bridge*. This analysis highlights how the opera's plot unfolds within the framework, providing a clear overview of its dramatic construction and illustrating the effectiveness of the five-stage narrative in Wuxi opera.



Table 1 Analysis of the 20-minute script of Broken Bridge Wuxi opera

Stage	Description	Photo	Duration
Inciting Incident	Bai Suzhen's physical pain at Broken Bridge symbolizes emotional turmoil, foreshadowing inner conflict and paving the way for eventual reconciliation.		3 minutes
Rising Action	Xu Xian's arrival intensifies emotional conflict; Xiaoqing's confrontation amplifies narrative tension, highlighting fractured trust and escalating interpersonal drama.		5 minutes
Climax	Bai Suzhen's intervention marks the emotional climax, revealing profound sorrow and betrayal, and deepening the narrative's emotional complexity.		5 minutes
Falling Action	Xu Xian's sincere remorse initiates reconciliation, easing narrative tension and marking a pivotal shift toward emotional resolution and mutual understanding.		4 minutes
Resolution	The trio's reconciliation and journey to Hangzhou signify renewed harmony, emphasizing themes of forgiveness, unity, and love's transformative power.		3 minutes

1.2 Characters

The character dynamics in Broken Bridge significantly heighten dramatic tension, embodying themes of love, loyalty, and emotional transformation. Interactions and conflicts among characters vividly express these themes, deepening narrative emotionality, as analyzed in Figure 5 and Table 2.

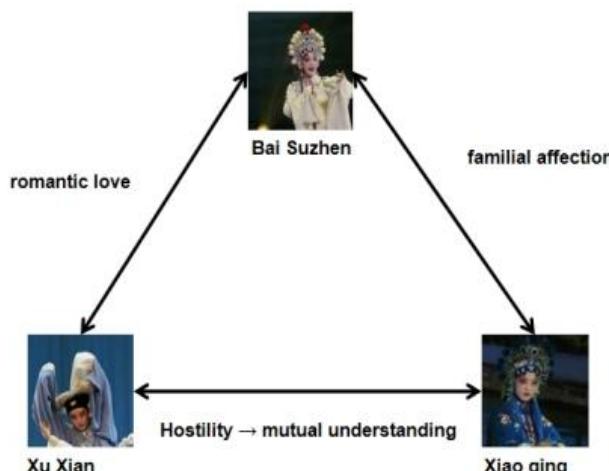


Figure 5 Character Relationships
 Note: Constructed by the researcher

The Broken Bridge reveals complex emotional dynamics, where love, loyalty, and internal conflict intricately shape narrative depth and dramatic tension (Chun, 2019).

Table 2 Detailed Analysis of Characters in the Story

Character	Photo	Role Function	Role Type	Character Changes and Development Analysis
Bai Suzhen		Bai Suzhen is the protagonist who drives the plot forward.	Qingyi (青衣) role.	Bai Suzhen exemplifies resilient devotion, embodying emotional fortitude and sacrificial love through adversity in The Broken Bridge, reinforcing core themes of perseverance and unwavering loyalty.
Xu Xian		Xu Xian plays a role in triggering and advancing the plot.	Xiaosheng (小生) role.	Xu Xian evolves from timidity to emotional maturity, embodying personal growth and adaptive resilience amid relational and psychological adversity.
Xiaoqing		Xiaoqing acts as a helper in the store	Wudan (武旦) role.	Xiaoqing embodies unwavering loyalty and courage, consistently confronting internal and external conflicts, reinforcing themes of resilience and steadfast emotional integrity.

1.3 Conflicts

The conflicts portrayed in Broken Bridge markedly heighten narrative tension, deeply exploring themes of love, identity, fate, and societal constraints, and closely align with the conflict categories in Table 3 to enrich narrative complexity.

Table 3 Conflicts in Broken Bridge

Conflict Type	Description	Thematic Significance
Character vs. Other Characters	Bai-Xu conflict peaks amid fear and identity rupture.	Highlights the tension between love and deception, emphasizing trust and acceptance in relationships.
Character vs. Self	Xu Xian experiences intense internal conflict, oscillating between profound affection for Bai Suzhen and apprehension regarding her authentic nature, embodying a crisis of trust, identity, and acceptance.	Explores psychological conflict and emotional contradictions, illustrating human fragility and existential uncertainty.
Character vs. Nature	Bai Suzhen's disclosure of her serpentine identity signifies the conflict between supernatural powers and natural forces, intensifying dramatic tension.	Represents the inevitable clash between human emotions and natural laws, reinforcing themes of fate and transformation.
Character vs. Society	Bai Suzhen and Xiaoqing's supernatural identities challenge conventional social ethics, symbolizing resistance to oppression through love and virtue.	Examines societal constraints and individual defiance, portraying the conflict between tradition and progressive ideals.

1.4 Narrative techniques

The narrative techniques employed in Broken Bridge, including arias (唱词), dialogues (对白), narration (旁白), and monologues (独白), enhance emotional depth, character development, and dramatic tension, thereby enriching the opera's aesthetic and narrative effects. Below is a detailed analysis of the typical narrative techniques in the Wuxi Opera Broken Bridge.

Arias (唱词) : The following Table 4 presents a typical case study of arias in the Wuxi Opera Broken Bridge.

Table 4 Character Analysis and Arias in Wuxi Opera Broken Bridge

Character	Selected Aria	Explanation	Effect
Bai Suzhen	我为他受尽千般苦	Bai Suzhen expresses the immense pain and sacrifice she endures for Xu Xian.	Conveying Character's Fate: Reveals Bai Suzhen's sacrifices and the twists of her fate in love. Conveying Character's Emotions: Demonstrates her deep affection and unwavering love for Xu Xian.
Xu Xian	寻娘子哪顾得崎岖难行	Xu Xian, in his quest to find Bai Suzhen, disregards the rugged and difficult path, showcasing his deep love and determination.	Conveying Character's Emotions: Xu Xian's relentless search for his wife highlights his profound love for Bai Suzhen. Fearless Spirit: Reflects his inner strength and courage.

Dialogue (对白): The following Figure 6 presents a typical dialogue in the Wuxi Opera Broken Bridge.

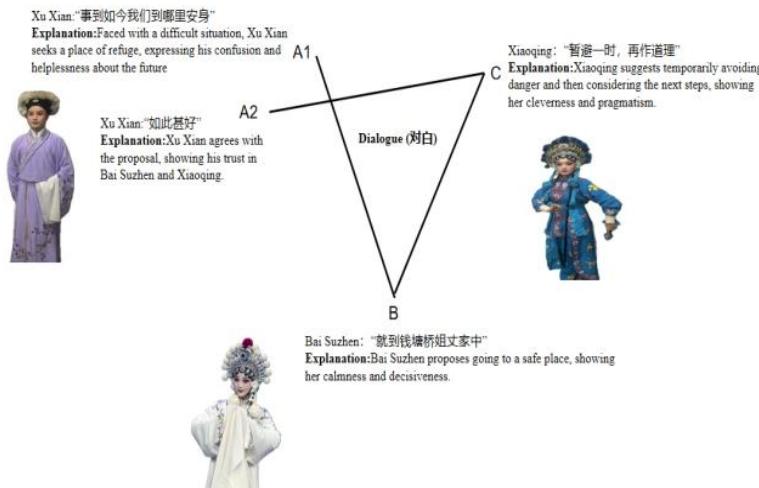


Figure 6 Analysis of Dialogue in Wuxi Opera "Broken Bridge"

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Narrations (旁白): Table 4 depicts a case analysis of Broken Bridge Wuxi Opera narration.

Table 4 Case Study of Narration in Wuxi Opera Broken Bridge

Narration	Explanation	Analysis
“金山战败恨难休”	“金山战败” refers to Bai Suzhen's defeat in the battle at Jinshan Temple against Fahai. This defeat leaves her feeling humiliated and in pain. “恨难休” expresses her unrelenting anger and determination for revenge.	Bai Suzhen's trauma from Jinshan Temple fuels inner turmoil and a desire for revenge, intensifying narrative tension and revealing her resilient strength.

Monologues (独白): Table 5 depicts a case analysis of the Broken Bridge Wuxi Opera monologue.



Table 5 Case Study of Monologues in Wuxi Opera Broken Bridge

Monologue	Explanation	Analysis
“忽听得背后唤人声，原来是我妻白素贞，慌忙前去叙别情”	This monologue describes Xu Xian's reaction upon hearing his wife, Bai Suzhen, calling out to him. “忽听得背后唤人声” expresses Xu Xian's surprise and relief at hearing a familiar voice during a moment of crisis. “原来是我妻白素贞” confirms that the caller is his wife, bringing him comfort. “慌忙前去叙别情” shows Xu Xian's eagerness to express his farewell emotions to Bai Suzhen.	Xu Xian's introspection and urgency reveal deep affection and emotional dependence, highlighting his inner turmoil and the narrative's emotional resonance.

1.5 Themes

In the Wuxi Opera "Broken Bridge," the themes include love and loyalty, sacrifice and redemption, and the complexity of human nature. The following Table 6 provides a detailed analysis of these themes.

Table 6 Detailed Analysis of Themes in Wuxi Opera "Broken Bridge"

Theme	Details	Examples
Love and Loyalty	Love and loyalty are central themes in Broken Bridge, exemplified through the relationship between Xu Xian and Bai Suzhen.	Xu Xian's aria: “从此不信僧和道，白头偕老永不分离。” This expresses his unwavering love for Bai Suzhen, indicating that no matter the difficulties and challenges, he remains steadfast and devoted.
Sacrifice and Redemption	Sacrifice and redemption are portrayed through Bai Suzhen's willingness to risk everything to obtain the magical herb for Xu Xian.	Bai Suzhen's aria: “我为你仙山盗草受尽颠连。” This showcases the immense sacrifices she makes for the sake of love.
Complexity of Human Nature	Xu Xian displays fear and confusion when confronted with Bai Suzhen's true identity.	Xu Xian's aria, “悔恨心情无底深，” reflects his inner struggle and self-reflection on his actions. However, his eventual decision to trust Bai Suzhen illustrates the contradictions and struggles inherent in human nature.

2. Pedagogical Value of The Broken Bridge in University Aesthetic Education

This section explores the educational potential of the Broken Bridge scene in Wuxi Opera within university aesthetic education courses. Expert interviews with Ms. Li Jia and Dr. Li Jiahuan, detailed in Table 7, provide a comprehensive analysis of the scene's cultural significance, its pedagogical value, and the integration of modern technology in opera education. Their insights underscore the relevance of Broken



Bridge in enhancing students' understanding of traditional opera while demonstrating the effectiveness of contemporary teaching methods in enriching the learning experience.

Table 7 Experts Specializing in Wuxi Opera Performance and Aesthetic Education

No.	Name	Photo	Expertise
1	Ms. Li Jia		Jiangsu Performing Arts Group, Wuxi Opera Performer
2	Dr. Li Jiahuan		Lecturer at Zhenjiang College, PhD in Art Education

2.1 Expert Consensus on the Role of Traditional Opera in Aesthetic Education

Both experts agree that traditional Chinese opera, particularly Wuxi Opera, offers significant educational value for university-level aesthetic programs. They highlight that integrating The Broken Bridge into the curriculum helps cultivate students' cultural identity while deepening their appreciation for traditional performing arts. The scene's structured narrative, emotional complexity, and distinctive artistic expression make it an effective tool for enhancing students' understanding of cultural heritage and the performing arts.

2.2 Teaching Effectiveness and Student Engagement

Dr. Li Jiahuan emphasizes that incorporating The Broken Bridge into teaching materials can ignite students' interest in Chinese opera, deepen their understanding of traditional culture, and enhance emotional engagement. The scene's dramatic conflicts, powerful performances, and poetic lyrics offer an immersive learning experience that fosters emotional resonance and encourages analytical thinking. Exposure to Wuxi Opera enables students to explore the aesthetics of Chinese theatrical arts, enriching their interdisciplinary cultural awareness.

2.3 Optimizing Opera Education with Modern Technological Innovations

To enhance the effectiveness of opera education, Dr. Li Jiahuan emphasizes the importance of integrating modern technological tools that can increase interactivity and student engagement. By incorporating innovative technologies, opera education can be transformed into a more dynamic and accessible experience. This approach not only improves learning outcomes but also makes the art form more appealing to contemporary students, who are accustomed to digital learning environments.

One strategy proposed by Dr. Li is the integration of robotics technology into opera education. By utilizing robots to simulate traditional opera gestures and stage movements, students can engage directly with the art form in a hands-on manner. This technology offers an exciting opportunity for students to practice and understand opera movements, enabling them to visualize and replicate the intricate gestures that define traditional performances. This interactive approach enhances the learning experience by bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Another suggested strategy involves the use of digital and augmented reality (AR) technologies to recreate traditional opera stages. By employing these technologies, students can experience opera scenes in a virtual, immersive environment. This digital visualization allows them to engage with the context, atmosphere, and historical elements of opera in ways that traditional methods cannot provide. Students can



explore opera stages in a more experiential and contextually rich way, deepening their understanding of the art form.

Lastly, the introduction of interactive learning platforms is another key strategy to enhance opera education. By incorporating digital teaching modules with interactive features, students can better grasp the techniques, vocal performances, and dramatic expressions essential to opera. These platforms provide students with a more flexible and engaging way to learn, as they can interact with the content and receive immediate feedback on their progress. This digital approach encourages active learning and supports the development of both practical and theoretical knowledge in opera.

Together, these technology-enhanced approaches are expected to modernize traditional opera teaching methods. They provide new opportunities for students to engage with and appreciate opera in ways that resonate with their digital fluency. By incorporating these technologies, opera education can become more accessible and appealing to contemporary learners, ensuring its continued relevance in the modern world.

2.4 Role-Playing and Immersive Learning Strategies

Opera performer Ms. Li Jia emphasizes the importance of integrating role-playing and vocal practice into experiential learning to enhance students' engagement with Chinese opera. By encouraging students to actively participate in character performances and explore different singing styles, they gain a more immersive and interactive learning experience. This hands-on approach allows students to better understand the complexities of opera, including its cultural context and historical significance. Ultimately, experiential learning fosters a deeper appreciation for Chinese opera, enriching students' understanding of this traditional art form.

2.5 Educational Impact

Dr. Li Jiahuan argues that incorporating *The Broken Bridge* into university aesthetic education courses can greatly enhance students' interest in opera and deepen their understanding of Chinese traditional culture. The scene's structured narrative, dramatic conflicts, and rich emotional expression play a key role in cultivating students' aesthetic sensibilities and emotional engagement. By integrating elements of opera into the curriculum, students can connect with China's traditional performing arts, fostering both artistic literacy and cultural awareness. This approach offers a valuable opportunity to bridge the gap between contemporary education and the cultural heritage of Chinese opera.

2.6 Teaching Recommendations

Opera performer Li Jia advocates incorporating role-playing exercises and vocal performance training into experiential learning to significantly enhance student engagement. Active character enactment and performance practice deepen emotional connections, promote better understanding, improve memory retention, and foster cultural appreciation of Wuxi Opera. Expert interviews emphasize integrating digital innovations and interactive teaching methods into aesthetic education curricula, enhancing accessibility and sustainability. Future research should further investigate technology-enhanced opera pedagogy on student participation and learning outcomes in higher education.

Discussion

The intersection of narratology and Chinese opera provides an insightful framework for examining traditional narratives and their cultural implications. Wuxi opera frequently employs episodic and symbolic storytelling structures, informed significantly by Daoist and Confucian philosophies, distinguishing it from Western dramatic conventions. Utilizing narratological theory, this study analyzes the episodic structure of *The Broken Bridge*, highlighting techniques such as arias, dialogues, and monologues that deepen emotional resonance and encourage audience engagement with philosophical and thematic complexities.

This research offers distinct advantages. By integrating narratological theory with traditional Chinese opera, it bridges Eastern and Western analytical perspectives, enriching the academic discourse on performance narratives. It also contributes to preserving intangible cultural heritage by elucidating the structural and thematic depth of Wuxi opera. However, limitations remain. The subjective interpretation of





symbolic and emotional elements may vary across audiences, potentially challenging the universality of the findings. Additionally, focusing on a single opera segment may limit the generalizability of the conclusions to broader operatic traditions. Nonetheless, this focused case study presents a compelling model for future interdisciplinary research in performance studies and cultural narration.

Additionally, integrating The Broken Bridge into university aesthetic education demonstrates significant pedagogical value, promoting cultural literacy and critical thinking. Incorporating Chinese opera into academic curricula enables students to appreciate embedded cultural, moral, and philosophical concepts. Furthermore, applying modern technological innovations, including digital visualization and interactive learning platforms, can enhance student engagement, making traditional performing arts more accessible and relevant to contemporary learners.

Conclusion

This study provides a narratological analysis of The Broken Bridge in Wuxi Opera, highlighting its structured plot, escalating dramatic tension, and emotional depth. Applying Letwin's five-stage plot structure, the research reveals how arias, dialogues, and monologues construct immersive narrative experiences and reinforce thematic motifs such as love, loyalty, and sacrifice.

Through expert interviews, the study confirms the opera's educational potential in higher education, particularly in aesthetic curricula. Experts emphasize the value of traditional opera as a cultural resource while advocating for its modernization through technological integration to meet the cognitive and emotional needs of contemporary learners.

The findings suggest that incorporating digital tools, such as robotics, AR, and interactive platforms, enhances student engagement and supports pedagogical innovation. The study recommends future interdisciplinary research on technology-mediated opera learning to preserve and revitalize Chinese opera education in university settings.

Recommendations

This study recommends future research to longitudinally assess the impact of integrating Wuxi opera, particularly The Broken Bridge, into university aesthetic curricula, focusing on cultural literacy and emotional engagement. Comparative analyses of regional opera forms and their pedagogical effects are encouraged. Further investigation into the application of robotics and AR in opera education is needed to evaluate implementation efficacy, engagement, and learning outcomes. Additionally, expanding narrative and emotional analysis within The Broken Bridge can deepen understanding of universal themes, enhancing cross-cultural dialogue and sustaining opera as a valuable educational medium.

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