INVITATION & PARTICIPATION

Building the Narrative Environment in Animated Film

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements."

Ying Liao .... *5th October 2016*

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

Invitation and Participation: Building the narrative environment in animated film

This thesis explores the methods of building a narrative environment in an animated film to strengthen the participation on the part of the spectator mainly based on the application of Hemingway's iceberg theory. It analyses Hemingway's method from different dimensions, discussing its connection to other theories related to eastern philosophies and poetic films. The practical outcome is a short animated film titled *Jingle Bells*.

Synopsis

This animated film is about a girl on a gloomy day when she experiences a redundancy event in her company. She attempts to contact her parents but always fails because of the telephone communication problem. At the end of the day, she finally receives a phone call from her family.

Introduction

In this project, I examined an implicit way of narrative using Hemingway's Iceberg theory through visual and audio elements. This research focuses on the construction of the non-narrative atmosphere and its combination with general narrative methods. The exegesis explains the contextual theories as well as related territories that underpin the project, and outlines the process of research practice based on a few methodologies.

The first chapter briefly introduces the reason why I chose this topic as my research project. I illustrate the changes of my interest towards film types, and present my viewpoint with regard to the relationship between spectators and filmmaking. I summarize my research purpose and question at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 2 offers a discussion of the critical theories and knowledge that contextualize and support my project. It also reflects my thinking process when considering what Hemingway's method really is. In this chapter, I analyse both western and eastern theories, and compare the similarities between literature and film languages. The concerned theoretical areas include Hemingway's Iceberg theory, Eliot's Objective correlatives theory, Taoist and Buddhist philosophy, and poetic films.

In chapter 3, I discuss the methodologies and related methods employed in the project, based on which I completed my research design. I also illustrate the process of constructing ideas as well as the achievement of my practice, together with the different stages of my understanding to Hemingway's method.

The fourth chapter discusses critical ideas in my project, including explanations about the structure of my film, the symbolic and metaphoric use of visual and audio elements, as well as the application of animation methods.

CHAPTER 1: Positioning of Research

This research originates from the thought of my impression on contemporary films and animations. The highly developed film industry has provided spectators more and more choices, and as a person who enjoys watching films, I gradually feel numb towards those movies composed by many special visual effects and convoluted plots, though they were once fresh and exciting to me in the beginning. Oppositely, I found myself attracted to more and more simple and unpretentious movies with little special effects, including some older movies and animations. Therefore, I started to think about why some movies feel deep and others feel shallow. In addition, why am I able to remember some films after years and others I just forget them immediately after watching? Moreover, why are some very commonplace images more impressive to me than those with flashy visual effects?

My deduction for the reason why some simpler films are so touching is that they usually leave the spectators enough room for imagination, thinking and perception, without telling them everything. In this way, the film extends the story outside of itself, so even when it is finished, the aftertaste remains. Therefore, I think telling a story is like building a house, it is necessary to leave some space, some proper narrative environment rather than narrative, and then invite the spectators to come in to think and perceive.

When thinking about leaving space in the story, Hemingway's iceberg theory came into my mind. Although it is a literature theory, it is a method of telling story, just like how a film does. Therefore, analysing and understanding Hemingway's method became a main part of my research, and I applied it into my animated film as a practice and test.

Below is my research purpose and question:

Research Purpose:
To examine the omitted and implicit way of narrative to strengthen the participation of the spectator in an animated film.

Research Question:
How to build a narrative environment in which the spectator can feel and think deeper than the surface of the narrative?

CHAPTER 2: Review of contextual theory and knowledge

Hemingway's Iceberg theory

The iceberg theory is a minimalistic and implicit way of writing, brought out by the American writer Earnest Hemingway. Once a journalist, Hemingway had to keep a short, precise and objective style in his newspaper reports. He retained this telegram style when he became a novelist, focusing on the surface elements of events rather than interpreting their inner ideas.

> "If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water."
>
> —Ernest Hemingway in *Death in the Afternoon* (1932, p. 192)

A large number of theorists have been discussing Hemingway's iceberg theory. In this section, I analysed this theory mainly referring to the views from Bates (1972), Cowley (1960), Baker (1972) and Loots (2010). The potential connection between iceberg theory and film is also discussed in this section, as well as its analogy with some eastern philosophies.

Analysing and understanding the iceberg theory is a significant part in my research, and I understand this theory in three dimensions: omission, suggestiveness and nothingness.

Omission

The iceberg theory is also known as the "theory of omission". Proficient in the art of omission, Hemingway deleted anything he regarded as useless and meaningless in fictions, such as judgment and comments to the character, or explanation and discussion to an event. He even avoided the use of adjectives wherever possible in his writing so the story in his readers' eyes is plain and true. Bates (1941) depicted Hemingway as "a men with an axe" (p. 168) in *The Modern Short Story a Critique Survey*. He said:

> "What Hemingway went for was that direct pictorial contact between eye and object, between object and reader. To get it he cut out a whole forest of verbosity. He got back to clean fundamental growth. " (p. 169)

This kind of writing without interpretation is actually very close to film language, which is achieved through showing more than telling. Such objective presentation gives the reader an immediate pictorial and sometimes even audio sense, and reminds me of the theory of 'objective correlative' proposed by T.S. Eliot[1], which I have used in my film and discussed in the next section.

I have compared such omission in the iceberg theory with the general narrative ellipsis in film. The narrative ellipsis is a basic method of film making and editing, the purpose of which is normally to get rid of the redundant, invalid and worthless elements in the narrative timeline, and only reserve the meaningful parts.[2] Although the film ellipsis is also a kind of omission, it is noticeable that Hemingway not only omitted the meaningless part, but also the meaningful part, sometimes even the core and theme of the whole story. Once the reader realizes what the omitted part is, his/her reading experience is strengthened. This meaningful but omitted part is what I discuss in the next section, the subtext.

Suggestiveness

To understand the iceberg theory from a deeper level, omission also involves a nature of suggestiveness. Baker (1972) regarded Hemingway as "a writer as artist" who used old, commonplace words to create his language and among which, the "magic suggestion" is at work everywhere. Beneath the common surface, the interior of those words "bear the imaginative supercharging which only the true artist can bring to them". (p. 72).

In another word, the "interior of those words" is actually the subtext that lies beneath the literal text. I would like to divide the subtext into two categories. One can be approached through a cognitive penetration, which includes "omitted details that could be taken for granted" (Cowley, 1960, p. 95), and the other one revealed by sensitive and emotional perception, called by Conrad [3] and cited by Baker as "communication through temperament"(1972, p.72).

This first category of subtext relies on the reader's general experience. A typical example is the dialogue between the two protagonists in Hemingway's short story *Hills Like White Elephants* (1927). When the man asked his girlfriend to do "a simple operation", the reader immediately gets the subtext among their talking that the man was actually convincing the girl to do an abortion. It is worth mentioning that the reader not only got the implicit message behind the surface words but also took it for granted that the talking should happen like this, because this is exactly how people

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[1] The term of 'objective correlative' was firstly used by American Painter Washington Allston. However, T.S. Eliot revived it and made it famous.
[2] Here I describe the general film ellipsis. However, the subtext strategy is also used in many films, within which the meaningful part is intentionally omitted.
[3] Joseph Conrad: Polish-British writer who is considered an early modernist and his works influenced many authors including Earnest Hemingway and T.S. Eliot.

talk in their real lives. Besides, such suggestion provides the reader a unique reading experience, a co-creation to fill gaps between writer and reader.

The second kind of subtext is the thought and emotion evoked by the atmosphere of the text. Baker defined this sensitive and emotional communication as "a kind of natural knowledge, nothing like the 'wisdom' of professional philosophers, but a knowledge available under the surface of their lives to all responsive human beings." (1972, p. 72) Another example of this from *Hills like White Elephants* is, when the man looked at their bags, "there are labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights." The simple description of the bags suggests both the past and the future, the expected change of the relationship between these two people. In the reader's sensitive eyes, they are not only normal bags and labels, but also covered by a kind of unusual atmosphere. Baker cited Conrad's words towards this "natural knowledge", as a primary instinct that deeply exists in the nature of human beings, which "is a gift and not an acquisition, and therefore more permanently enduring." (Ibid.)

Although I divided the subtext into two categories in order to make a clearer analysis, these two categories work together in Hemingway's stories most of the times. It also made me look into the application of subtext in films. Various in types, a subtext can be the truth under the mask of deception, a potential intention of a character, a hidden event that has happened, or a predictable event that will happen, and sometimes a subtext is a metaphor or symbols. It can be as tiny as a wish of a child; and it can be as serious as something related to humanity, society and politics. However, all those subtexts can be approached through either our cognitive or emotional perception or both. Sometimes those subtexts are revealed in the later stage of the story, but some of them are never mentioned until the last second of the whole story, just like Hemingway's style, which is like an extreme omission, and "the reader was expected to draw his own conclusions." (Cowley, 1960, p. 95) Therefore, according to the readers' participation with various life experience, ideas and emotional involvements, the story can be endowed with multiple meanings, themes and endings. Maybe this is the core idea of Hemingway's omission- an invitation that calls on the reader's participation. Of course, not all readers are expected to fully participate in the co-creation process, but at least the writer provides them a chance of reproducing a special interpretation, to ponder the thing left out from a deeper perspective, "the way it was". (Baker, 1972, p. 57)

Interestingly, the narrative rhythms in Hemingway's stories sometimes look quite slow, lengthy, even a bit boring. It seems to be a contradiction to the omitting style of his writing. For example, in *Big Two-Hearted River[4]*, Hemingway depicted nothing except for the process of his hero walking, camping and fishing at a river, with all his behaviors

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[4] One of the short story in "Nick Adams Stories", collected and published in 1972. It is about the growth experience of the protagonist Nick, from his childhood to when he becomes a father. It is said that this is actually a biography of Hemingway himself.

and the environment depicted in rich details. It seems like nothing really happens. Why did he describe such an ordinary scene? Associating these scenes with what happened to this hero, and relating them back to other short stories Hemingway wrote, it reminds us that this is a boy coming home from the war. Then we can make some sense of the unusual smell emitting out from those normal things[5]. Using those seemingly verbose and prosaic sentences, Hemingway was actually building a vivid and fluid narrative environment, a story space rather than a story, waiting for the reader's participation.

To a certain extent, this writing style is more like a mix of both narrative and non-narrative, a blending of prose and poetry. As Stewart stated that Hemingway's poetic blend helped break down the barriers between poetry and prose (2001, p. 18); his construction of the narrative environment, with imageries in subtle details, not only suggests the potential story, but also gives out an enigmatic and poetic nature.

Nothingness

As I discussed above, suggestiveness is undoubtedly the essence of Hemingway's iceberg theory, and many critics have devoted themselves to find out what the *thing* left out in Hemingway's story *ought to* be. Some suggestions in his fiction are easy to see, however, the environment built by some of his sentences is quite close to that built by poems. The scene itself involves rich meanings that I feel it unnecessary to attempt to excavate any other meanings from it, or link it with other parts of the story to make logical sense. Loots' statement validates my idea to some extent, that there is actually no secret and no centre in his story, so there is nothing to un-puzzle. (2010, p. 76)

Loots stated:
> The great effort of his style is less to make us feel the absence of some*thing* left out, than to bring the reader to that "boundary situation at the edge of thinking and the edge of all processes of locating things by naming and distinguishing." It brings us to the edge of no*thing*ness. It brings us to *ma*. (ibid.)

Loots distinguished his point from the common views towards Hemingway's method. He took Hemingway's short story *Indian Camp* as an example to explain the representation of *ma*. As many Hemingway's other stories, there is no direct description towards the theme[6]. Through the facts given by the author, nothing is actually communicated, and the reader has no idea about what is happening. No

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[5] A common understanding of *Big Two-Hearted River* is that Nick is remedying himself the trauma from the war through those careful, comforting actions. However, since Hemingway never told the true theme of his story, the reader has the freedom to endow it different meanings.

[6] In this story, Hemingway's young hero Nick and his father witness a suicide of an Indian man when his wife was giving birth to a baby. On the way back home, young Nick asks his father some questions about death.

positive or negative feelings are conveyed. However, the suggestion here seems indifferent to any specific interpretation. It gestures more to create a tension enabled by the interval (*ma*) between possibilities for interpretations, a tension that is its own meaning. (Loots, 2010, p. 80)

'*Ma*' in Japanese means *emptiness*, which reminds me the philosophy of Zen, a branch of Buddhist philosophy considering *emptiness* as its basic idea. It also reminds me of the combination of *void* and *actuality*, corresponding to *Yin* and *Yang*, which represent the fundamental elements of Taoist philosophy.

In fact, many Chinese literature critics have compared Hemingway's method to the method of 'leave blank' in Chinese ink painting. On the paper, the artist intentionally leaves some blank spaces, and only parts of the paper are filled with strokes. The *void* space, combined with the painted objects -the *actuality*, work together to construct the whole painting. Interestingly, it seems that the void part contributes more in strengthening the grandeur and taste of the painting. An example of such technique is illustrated in Figure2:1.

Figure 2:1 (Ma, L.) Chinese ink painting by artist Ma Ling in Song Dynasty using 'leave blank' technique. The poem was added in later by Emperor Song Li Zong.

Lao Zi, the initiator of Taoism, stated in *Tao Te Jing* that, "Clay is fashioned into vessels, but the hollowness is what its use depends on; Doors and windows are cut out from the walls to build a house, and the space in the building is what its use depends on. Thus, the actuality makes the thing to be a thing, while the void makes it useful." (Chap 11)[7] The method of Chinese ink painting with the application of both *void* and *actuality* is obviously based on the idea of Lao Zi, and analogous to the method of Hemingway. However, it is noticeable that the *void* here is not equal to the *emptiness (*or '*ma*') in Zen. Here the *void* is a concept of space created by the actuality, just as the narrative environment is built through the text, but it is not the *thing* that the reader or spectator is going to fill in the space, no matter if it is *ma* or something specific.

With my understanding, the combination of *void* and *actuality* is more like a metaphor

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[7] The original Chinese sentences: "埏埴以为器，当其无，有器之用；凿户牖以为室，当其无，有室之用；故有之以为利，无之以为用。" Translated by Ying Liao.

to the structure of the iceberg, and the *emptiness* in Zen directly points to its inner meaning. According to Zen philosophy, *nothingness* (or *emptiness*) does not mean that there is nothing existing or a void feeling. Oppositely, "*Emptiness* is the very nature of every phenomenon, and phenomenon is the representation of *emptiness*."[8] (Zangpo, 2013, p. 31) In *Diamond Sutra*, Shakyamuni also stated that, "Everything you see, you hear, you feel, is nothing more than an ephemeral fantasy."[9] In Zen thinking, nothing can really exist without any relationship to other things, so there is no individual "self-existence". In other words, everything only exists in its connections to others, so each phenomenon is the representation of all those connections. Since everything is changing at every moment, nothing remains static or fixed. Each phenomenon is ephemeral.

Relativity is another explanation of *emptiness*, in which the binary opposition is negated. One thing can be both big and small, beautiful and ugly, even alive and dead at the same time. In short, "things do not exist in the light of any label."[10] Since each phenomenon is observed through a filter, which is composed by the observer's own knowledge, experience, temper etc., nothing can be completely observed, and the real nature of things is blocked by that filter, too. (Khyentse, 2010, p. 23)

Generally speaking, *emptiness* in Zen represents an idea of eternal variation and uncertainty. If applying it in writing or filmmaking, it probably means creating a particular narrative environment, implying such eternal variation and uncertainty, a feeling of unpredictable vicissitude, no matter it is about the theme of the story, or about life, or everything. Such narrative environment emerges in some of Hemingway's stories, as well as in some films created by directors such as Miyasaki, Tarkovsky and Ozu. In this environment, the spectator is provided the chance of settling down to feel such *emptiness*, which is like something swimming out of the narrative, going beyond the story itself, as if it is always there. Feeling it of course does not mean being aware of it, as Loots argued, "Hemingway was writing blind spots in hopes his readers would *feel* them by ignoring them, not try and fill them in by focusing on them." (2010, p. 81) But this feeling reflects the appearance of 'aesthetic emotion', an emotional experience generated by the spectator in response to his/her own life experience, which might be the final purpose of any kind of art creation.

Qing Yuan, a master of Zen in Song Dynasty proposed three states of awareness: "In the beginning, you see the mountain as a mountain, and you see water as water; When you are aware of something, the mountain in your eyes is not a mountain, and the water is not water; When you are completely aware, the mountain is still a mountain, and the water is still water."[11]

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[8] Original sentence in Chinese: "空性是现象的根本性质，现象是空性的表达。" Translated by Ying Liao.
[9] In Chinese, it is: "一切有为法，如梦幻泡影。" Translated by Ying Liao. It considers phenomenon as unreal existence, but it doesn't mean such "non-existence" of phenomenon is the reality.
[10] Original sentence in Chinese: "事物并不是依你所标识的样子而存在。" Translated by Ying Liao.
[11] Original sentence in Chinese: "参禅之初，看山是山，看水是水；禅有悟时，看山不是山，看水不是水；禅中彻悟，看山仍是山，看水仍是水。" Translated by Ying Liao.

Qing Yuan's words work like a summary of my understanding to the three dimensions of iceberg theory. If connecting the iceberg with the idea of *emptiness*, what Baker said "the way it was" could be transformed to another state - "the way it is". Moreover, if we have to excavate a real theme deeply hidden in Hemingway's iceberg, a theme of themes, I think that might be something close to the very essence of life, because life itself is one of the grandest icebergs.

Objective correlative

Hemingway's method can be usually found among the dialogue of the characters in his fictions. Nevertheless, it also appears in scenes without any dialogue, such as *Big Two-Hearted River* and *The Old Man and The Sea*, within these stories there is only one character. Although Hemingway sometimes used monologues for his characters, he rendered rich details of their behaviors, the environment, the weather, and even the animals' behaviors to create the atmosphere. To explore these details is a significant part of my research work, since there is only one character in my film, in this research I tried to reach the extent of building a story environment without dialogue, a non-verbal communication. To achieve this, T.S. Eliot's 'objective correlatives' theory, which was adapted by Hemingway in his stories, seems like a good choice to me to adapt as well.

Eliot (ed. 1980, p. 45) believed:

> The only way of expressing in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

It is taken for granted that the art of film is an art of the combination of images and sound, since every single message we get when watching a film is from the concrete objects in the sequential shots. However, if the objects in every scene work only as tools of events, the level of the story would be very monotonous. As I discussed in the previous section, besides the event itself, is it possible to find aesthetics from ordinary things, which sometimes are not necessarily relevant to the narrative but still useful to convey the right emotion? Eliot brought out a feasible strategy which corresponds to Hemingway's idea of objective writing, also a practical reference for film making.

Baker considered 'objective correlatives' as an outer complex of motion and fact that produce the emotional reaction. He argued it would be one of Hemingway's tasks to reach a state of objective awareness, which connects the complex and mixed emotions in the observer's mind with the responsive emotions of others. (1972, p. 56) If consider

the emotional atmosphere as an outcome and purpose of the creator, the 'objective correlatives' is a tool to actualize it.

Converting the "objects, situations, events" to film language, they are images (shape, color, texture, lighting, composition), sound, music, motion (object movement, camera movement, character behavior) and the way they assemble together (montage, rhythm). Normally a meaningful emotion derives from not only one particular object or image or scene, but the combination of them. For it is hard to bestow a single object a specific emotional meaning. Its meaning only exists in the relationship with other objects, behaviors and events.

Eliot's theory has its own limitation that there is no concrete rule to ensure that the expressed emotion through the 'objective correlative' is the "right emotion". Thus the spectator may not feel exactly the same emotion as the creator feels. However, it is undeniable that a film using this method enables the spectator to participate more and make greater contribution than in a film that "only express sadness with tears and happiness with smile". The meaning of those objective symbols might be ambiguous, but if used properly, they usually feel truer than verbal-language and facial expression. Therefore, at the later stage of my literature review, I turned my focus onto those films within which the objective correlatives are widely used to evoke strong emotional experience, and to strengthen the story. These are generally defined as "poetic film".

Poetic film

Unlike poetry-film, which is generally a combination of images, music and sound with spoken word poetry, there is no specific definition on poetic film. I would consider it as a kind of film that borrows the form of poems.

The origin of poetic films might date back to the Poetic Realism movement in France from 1930 to 1945. Poetic Realism films were mostly based on the popular social circumstance focusing on the fate of working class people. Influenced by French Impressionism and Surrealism, the visual expression of those films trended to be more personal and stylistic, though their themes were very close to social realism. Techniques of creating poems were brought into film to emphasise a character's emotion and psychology, which endowed the film a romantic and poetic nature.

Poetic techniques are widely used in modern art film. Unlike general commercial films that tell a story directly, poetic film uses more suggestive and indirect ways in its expression. It is undeniable that poetic films usually require a higher aesthetic appreciation on the part of the spectator, which also separates it from commercial films. Normally the purpose of making a poetic film is not to entertain people, but to faithfully reflect the personal understanding and explanation of life from the perspective of the artist. To some extent, the poetic nature is departed from the outer

realism. It tends to the inner consciousness or even sub-consciousness, which is usually expressed through more implicit visual languages such as symbolism and metaphors.

In *The Cinema of Poetry*, Pasolini (1976) proposed that the world is expressed by different kinds of 'im-signs' (i.e. image-signs), including gestures, environment, dreams and memories which is proposed as irrational "instrumental" foundation of cinematic communication. (p. 1-2) Traditional cinema language is obviously analogous to the language of narrative prose, but Pasolini suggested it is only the exterior aspect of cinema because "it lacks one of the fundamental elements of the language of prose: the rational". As for as prose with standard grammatical structure, one sentence almost expresses only one specific meaning under a certain context, because we have intellectually formulated understanding to this literature language. This restriction and understandability makes prose rational. However, cinema communicates primarily through image sequences, which causes uncertainty and ambiguity within its expression. For there is no systematic integration of a standard visual dictionary using im-signs. Those systems of indicative signs and sign languages obviously cannot represent the whole of such language. From this perspective, the meaning of a series of im-signs might include unlimited possibilities of explanation. Thus, according to Pasolini, this linguistic instrument on which cinema is founded is "brutal, instinctive and of a pre-human order and thus of an irrational type", (p. 2) so the tendency of cinema language should be expressly subjective and lyrical that is fundamentally a ''language of poetry". (p. 4)

Although the language of cinema might be in its nature irrational, it does not mean that it is "anti-rational". On the one hand, the irrational nature exists in the techniques and strategies of expression, which fulfills the communication between creator and spectator based on emotion and perception rather than on informative illustration and logical deduction. On the other hand, we can always find rational and mature ideas under the irrational expression, just like an iceberg. In order to get a further recognition of how the rational and irrational work together, I referred to some films that I think have made a good combination of these two aspects.

Film/animation references

Tale of Tales (Norstein, 1979) is a significant reference film for my project. This poetic animation constitutes a series of fragments of the author's own memories and fantasies. The narrative of the story is not obviously linear, but includes sequences of different motifs that seem disconnected. However, they are associated with each other through the characters, the objects, and sometimes the music. In some sequences, there is nothing actually happening, but the auteur successfully builds up a perceptible atmosphere through the objects, gestures and environment to evoke the spectators' emotion. Norstein in this film built a world that combines opposite elements together

to create a complex and profound emotional environment, involving fantasy and reality, happiness and sadness, memories and myth archetypes. One sequence in this film shows the protagonist - the little wolf - staying in front of an old house, swinging himself on the treadle of a sewing machine alone. This sequence itself is non-narrative; only a series of im-signs such as the shabby house, germinant potatoes, half-burnt tree, golden fallen leaves, weeds and the abandoned sewing machine. Nevertheless, all those detailed images lead us to a silent and lonely space, while the noise made by the swing of the little wolf subtly draws our mind to the beginning of our memories. This is a sensation combined with some sort of pre-memory, something beyond oneself and belongs to everybody.[12] (Ymfilms, 2010)

I would consider this film as an extraordinary extract of life, a gentle and sincere presentation without imposing any certain sense of values. In this way, the audiences are invited into its narrative environment; to participate in the process of both emotional experience and forming up their own ideas. The use of memory fragments, non-linear narrative sequences, as well as the combination of both reality and fantasy is a critical method in my project. These help build proper atmosphere to convey the emotional feeling of my character.

Figure 2:2 (Norstein, Y. 1979)
Still image of the artist's memory fragment from *Tale of Tales.*

Such gentle invitations can also be discovered in most of Miyasaki's animations. It is hard to find something absolutely good or bad, right or wrong in his films. Miyazaki stated that he never wanted to create a film where things can be easily valued as yes or no because they are much more difficult and complex. (Miyazaki, H. 2014c) Another distinctive character in his works is the use of *emptiness*, which is beyond any specific narrative part. A typical example is the train sequence in *Spirited Away* (2000), where the protagonist travels to her destination. This sequence has no direct relationship to the main narrative, but to my understanding, it is another metaphor about life that harmoniously merges into the whole story.

The use of emptiness can also be found in some live-action films such as those directed by Andrei Tarkovsky and Yasujiro Ozu. Their works are also regarded as representatives of poetic films. From a standard perspective of narration, many sequences in their

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[12] The original sentence was spoken by Yuri Norstein in an interview about *Tale of Tales*.

films are inefficient[13], which means they are useless to the narrative proceeding. However, such inefficient and seemingly useless part is exactly the most poetic part of the story, reaching the true essence of life, which is worth the spectators' perception. It reflects not only a special aesthetics but also an attitude towards aesthetics. Tarkovsky criticized Eisenstein in *Sculpturing in Time* that he "makes thought into a despot: it leaves no air, nothing of that unspoken elusiveness which is perhaps the most captivating quality of all art, and which makes it possible for an individual to relate to a film." (1987, p. 183) The 'unspoken elusiveness' works as the core of a poetic film and to some extent avoid imposing a fixed sense of values, which gives the spectators enough space to draw their own conclusions. While the meaning is elusive, the emotion must be conveyed truly enough otherwise the audience would not be touched. The expression of such elusiveness is a very challenging and ambiguous technique that I tried to use in my short film, and I did this test within my own understanding of poetic film, relying on my own life experience.
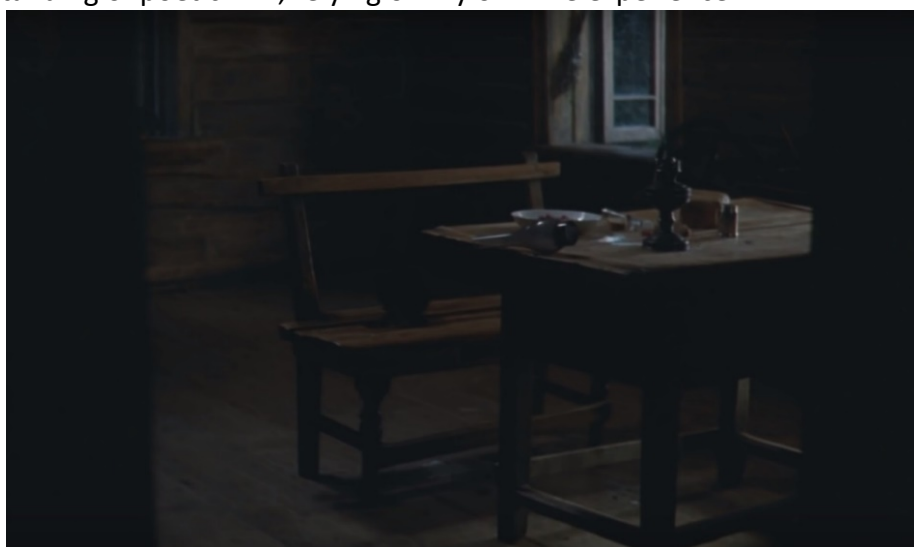
Figure 2:3 (Tarkovsky, A. 1975) Still image from *The Mirror*, where Tarkovsky took a long shot to wait for the lamp-chimney falling down to the floor.

Another animation I refer to is *When the Day Breaks* (Tilby & Forbis, 1999). From my understanding, it is also a film using suggestiveness to reveal the subtle relationship between different people and the uncertainty of life. The creators smartly used ordinary things we usually neglect in our life such as electric wires, the sewage system, and the airwave to connect each character in this film. Those visual symbols[14] play a role as both part of the narrative background and metaphors of the invisible connections among people. This animation has a similar theme and background to my story. I also referred to its character design since I used animal characters in my own animation. The visual style of this animation only consists of muted colours and simple backgrounds; some of which were produced based on photos of the real life. I felt that this is an appropriate way for the visual expression in my animation, too.

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[13] For example, in *The Mirror* (1975), Tarkovsky used a long shot to present a lamp-chimney falling off the table when everyone goes out of the house. And in *Late Spring* (1949), Ozu deliberately made a shot to express a book sliding off the chair after the characters leave the room.

[14] The airwave in animation can be illustrated as a visible object though it is invisible in reality.
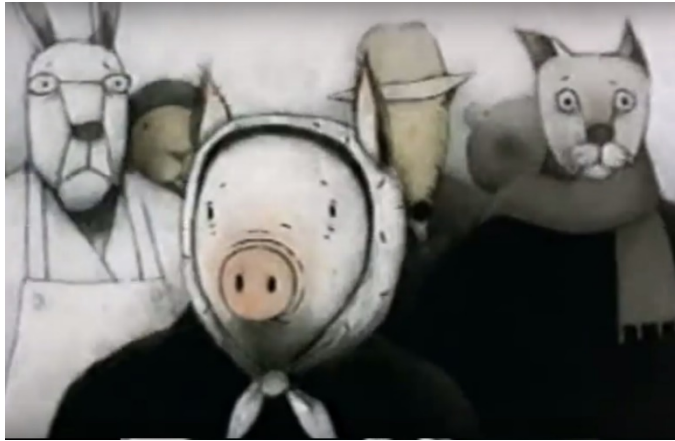
Figure 2:4 (Tilby, W. & Forbis, A. 1999)
Still image from *When the Day Breaks.*

Summary

It took me long time to achieve a clear recognition of what the iceberg theory is. During the thinking process, my review of the research context expanded to a wider area including the methods of both literature and film, western and eastern philosophies, which stimulated me to gain new understandings of these areas.
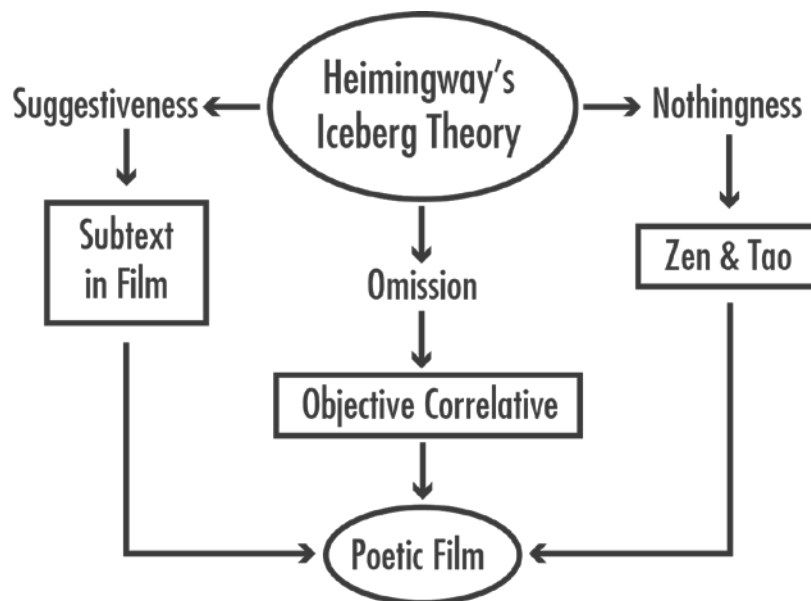
Figure 2:5 (Liao, Y. 2016)
Mapping of my research context review process.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology and research practice

Methodology

A few methodologies are used in my research practice, including practice-led methodology (Candy, 2006), action research (Schön, 1983) and elements of narratology (McKee, 1997).

I made a short animated film as a practice of my research, however, as practice –led research is usually concerned, the main focus is not on the animation itself but to create a further and better understanding of practice, which is a main difference from practice –based research. The application of Hemingway's iceberg theory in my film seeks to do so, namely to reach an advanced understanding of film making through the creative process.

Although my research is about telling a story in an indirect and suggestive way, my research practice is simple and direct. Another significant methodology leading my project is Action Research, the principle of reflection-on –action proposed by Donald A. Schön is used to deal with "situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict." (1983, p. 50) Since this study concerns some areas that I was not familiar with, there existed many uncertain and confusing elements. In such circumstance, "do it based on what I know" was a suitable choice to start the research circle, which involves three frameworks – Research, Practice and Reflect.

The most critical part of my research is constructing the story. After the initial orientation was confirmed, I constructed the general frame of my story, and then I continued to shape it within the frame and enrich it with more details. During the process, it was important to observe and check the outcome of each step critically in order to find out the potential improving possibilities, after which necessary modification and refinement were made to make sure that the story would develop towards the right direction.

A series of methods have been used corresponding to the frameworks in my Action Research, including mind mapping, writing, drawing etc. The association between the methodology and the methods is illustrated in Figure 3:1.
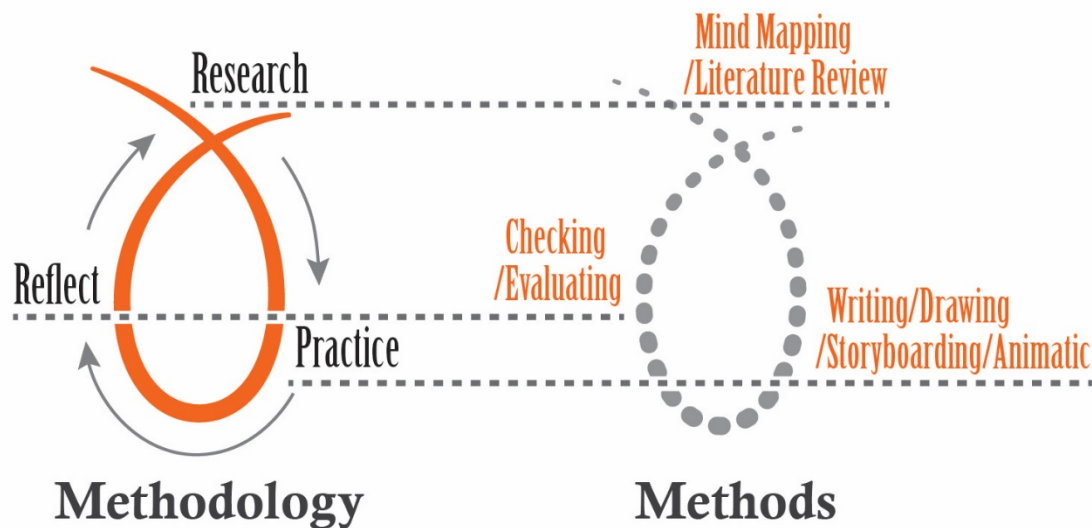
Figure 3:1(Liao, Y. 2016) Association between methodology and methods in my project.

Narratology is another methodology I used at the stage of script writing. I mainly referred to McKee's idea of writing based on premise and around theme, which I discuss in detail in the next section.

Research Practice

The research practice of my project is in close conjunction with the literature review. The process of creating my own film overlapped the process of understanding Hemingway's method and its connection to other theories. I evaluated each step in my project, found out the problem and made adjustments on its development after further review on the relative literature. This helped me strengthen not only my story but also my recognition to those theories.

Reading and Initial Understanding

In the beginning, I did not refer to much material and literature about the analysis of the iceberg theory. Instead, I decided to read Hemingway's fictions first since I wanted to understand the method through my own reading experience. In this way, I would not be led by others' opinions, which would probably disturb my own thinking process. After I had the initial understanding to Hemingway's method, I planned to write a story first as a test of my understanding. Then I would read other theorists' points of views to get additional recognition on the iceberg theory. If the new recognition was generally in accord with the narrative method in my story, I would continue to refine the script. If they differed too much, then I would abandon the original story and write a new one.

My understanding of the iceberg theory just stayed on the omission level at first. I considered it as a kind of omission on the narrative timeline. At this stage, I had not thought about the suggestive meaning, which is involved in the omitted part. I just felt that such indirect narrative strategy of keeping something untold helps the audience participate more and this makes the story more attractive. In other words, I only noticed the strategy itself, but ignored the content that omitted. I compared my understanding to a sequence in Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* where a samurai attacks the bandits alone and captures their guns in a night.[15] In this sequence, Kurosawa deliberately omitted the process of the main event, and only kept the beginning and the ending. In doing so, he successfully shaped a vivid image of the brave and supremely skilled samurai and made this part even more engaging. I believe if he showed the fighting scene directly on screen, it would have much less impact on the audience. Led by such recognition, I wrote a rough synopsis of a story, within which a segment of the narrative was omitted, only the beginning and ending was shown.

Reviewing and Evaluating

Nevertheless, I still felt my story lacked something that I could feel from Hemingway's stories. After I read some literature discussing the iceberg theory, I realized that this method actually combines both omission and suggestiveness. However, I limited my previous thinking only within an area of letting the audience spontaneously fill the gap in the narrative timeline, but I did not explore deeper into what this part is. Both Kurosawa and Hemingway used omission in their works. The difference is that the former has no suggestion about something else, and the audience is quite clear on what the director wanted to show as the motif of the sequence is still obvious. I would call it a narrative condensation that uses parts to represent the whole. It is like intentionally covering up a peak with clouds and fog, only a small tip of the peak can be seen. However, the focus is not on the part that is covered, but on the taste and atmosphere that are created by both the peak and the cloud. Imagine if the whole peak was shown in front of us, the feeling would be much less impactful. This concept is much closer to the "leave blank" strategy in Chinese ink painting which I mentioned in Chapter 2. It is not completely the same as Hemingway's theory but they do have a significant similarity, the building of atmosphere.

It became obvious that my initial story did not reflect the iceberg theory properly. It used omission but still lacked something worthy of further exploration. Therefore, I gave up my original idea and decided to write a new story.

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[15] In this sequence, the hero Kyuzo volunteers to detect the bandits address. He sets off at evening, and the next shot jumps straight to the next morning. Kyuzo comes back with two guns and says that he has killed two. The detecting and fighting process is completely omitted. But the audience can imagine more on what a breath-taking fight has happened.

Rewriting

In *Story,* McKee (1997) brought out two ideas that support the creative process: *Premise* and *Controlling Idea*. He stated that "Premise inspires the writers' desire to create a story" whilst Controlling Idea is the ultimate meaning which is expressed "through the action and aesthetic emotion of the last act's climax" (p. 112). Controlling Idea is also related to the theme of the story.

A premise mostly is "an open-ended question: What would happen if...?" (Ibid) The idea of my second story comes from a newspaper that I read online which was about the recent redundancy in the IT industry. That reminded me about another redundancy event which was caused by the global financial crisis in 2008. I was working in Beijing at that time. Although the redundancy did not happen in my company, I was saddened that so many people lost their jobs every day, including a large number of young people who came to this city from other places like me. Some of them chose to stay and seek for new jobs, but most of them had to leave. Therefore, the premise of my new story was generated from this: What if such a thing happened around me or to me? How would I face it? How would that change my emotional state? If explored further, was it able to reflect the psychological state of some young people working hard in a metropolis far from their hometown?

Stanislavski called this the "Magic if" (Ibid), an initial opened door that leads to others. According to this premise, I could explore various possibilities and consequences in my imagination, but at the same time, I still needed to confirm the controlling idea of my story.

Figure 3:2 (Liao. Y. 2016) Concept Drawing Based on the Premise.

Miyazaki claimed in an interview that it is the needs of story itself rather than the auteur's thinking and design that leads to the end of the story, so he had no choice but

to follow the interior order of the story. ("The Auteur of Anime", 2005) My understanding towards his words is that the purpose of telling a story is to give the audience a lucid presentation of the world in a natural and true way. However, it is certain that the order followed by the auteur is influenced by his own vision of the world, the idea and sense of value. Therefore, in the process of building up the main frame of my story, I used McKee's narrative theory: to develop the story around the Controlling Idea.

"The Controlling Idea shapes the writer's strategic choices. It guides your aesthetic choices toward what is appropriate or inappropriate in your story, toward what is expressive of your Controlling Idea and may be kept versus what is irrelevant to it and must be cut……The more beautifully you shape your work around one clear idea, the more meanings audiences will discover in your film as they take your idea and follow its implications into every aspect of their lives." (1997, p. 114)

The premise provided a series of opening questions, and I confirmed the theme of my story after I figured out my own answers towards these questions. If something extremely depressing happened to me, the first thing I would think of is my family. So family love became my theme, and I wrote down my Controlling Idea: We are encouraged to live on; because we can find peace from the people we love. The next step was to imagine and design the shape of my story around this idea.

I figured out a synopsis which is about a girl's life within a day when she witnesses her colleague getting fired by her company. I created some segments of what could possibly happen on that special day, which might reflect the protagonist's emotional variation, with a clue running through the story that she is longing to get in contact with her family. However, the main event which directly expresses family love –the scene that her parents comfort her on the phone – was omitted. The story has already reached the end during the moment the protagonist picks up the phone, and the audiences can imagine what happens next themselves. Since the previous emotional tension has foreshadowed this to some extent.

Referring to other films/animations

I had been confused about what the underwater part of the iceberg really was during the period of literature review. As I discussed in Chapter 2, sometimes it is hard to make clear what is really hidden among Hemingway's words. While reading various literatures about the iceberg theory, I was also referring to some films which I thought were analogous to Hemingway's works and I found such icebergs in many excellent animations and films. Take Norstein's *Tale of Tales* for instance[16], I tried to find out some kind of subtext which can be clearly described from this animation, and then to

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[16] Fedor Khitruk, the doyen of Russian animation likens Norstein's *Tale of Tales* to an "an iceberg" as well. (Kitson, 2005, p. 6)

understand its theme. At this stage, I was trapped in the concept of *subtext*. For a long time, I could not understand why I felt some films were very deep and touching, and it was difficult to figure out specific meanings from them. They seemed to be hiding something else, even though there is no obvious subtext.

After reading Tarkovsky's point of view about the 'unspoken elusiveness' in films, I realized that I probably had entered an erroneous thinking area. What I had been seeking for was something logically explainable, which to some extent restrained my mind within a frame of various concepts. However, there are so many things in real life that cannot be explained with logical concepts or verbal languages. Therefore, I stopped the attempt of seeking clear subtext and tried to change my thinking mode to a more poetic way. I thought, before I create a poetic film, I need to learn how to appreciate a poetic film. I referred to some poetic films directed by Norstein, Tarkovsky, Miyazaki and Ozu, and found a general phenomenon of something I feel in their films that are quite different from the same thing that I feel in real life. For example, the rain, the snow or the falling leaves are ordinary phenomenon that I have experienced many times in my own life. Why do I hardly deem them meaningful when I experience those in real life but in Norstein or Tarkovsky's films I can feel so much, even if they are elusive? I think this phenomenon can be partly explained by McKee's discussion on aesthetic emotion. He claims "In life, moments that blaze with a fusion of idea and emotion are so rare, when they happen you think you're having a religious experience. But whereas life separates meaning from emotion, art unites them. Story is an instrument by which you create such epiphanies at will, the phenomenon known as aesthetic emotion." This is "the simultaneous encounter of thought and feeling." It "harmonizes what you know with what you feel to give you a heightened awareness." (1997, p. 110-111)

I then associated McKee's explanation with Eliot's 'Objective Correlative' and concluded that ordinary objects can be used to generate meaningful emotions when connected with specific characters and events in a story. In poetic film, such connection is sometimes so ambiguous that it is difficult to describe it with language but can usually be perceived, as depicted by McKee, by "our innate sensitivity to the truth". (1997, p. 112) I supposed that it is exactly why ordinary phenomenon can link to the audiences with the characters in the story.

Back to the tip of the iceberg

As I mentioned above that I had already confirmed my controlling idea, which seemingly belongs to the underwater part of the iceberg. While I always attempted to find out the controlling idea when reading Hemingway's stories or watching other directors' films, my job turned to the opposite direction when making my own film. Since what I need to do in this research practice is to create the visual part of the iceberg that can evoke the right emotions leading to the controlling idea. In other words, it is a process of building up the emotional links between the audience and my character through those

visual elements.

Scriptwriting provides the linguistic description of the story. Although the words used in the script are normally more objective and "visualized" than other writing forms, for a film focusing on atmospheric expression, it is more helpful to evaluate it through real visual materials. Therefore, even if the script was not entirely confirmed, I started to make the storyboard, so that I was able to get a direct sense of information and emotion from those images.

Figure 3:3 (Liao. Y. 2016) Storyboarding.

In most films, emotions are expressed mainly through narrative, and the delivery of emotions are usually fulfilled after an act is finished or at the end of the story. Poetic film achieves more on this. It not only uses the general methods but also conveys emotions instantly through the images, which offers a possibility of generating immediate experience on the part of the audience even if they are not fully aware of the whole event. In this aspect, poetic film overlaps a lot with poetry-film and film-poem[17]. Although I planned to apply poetic strategies in my story on its expression, it is necessary to avoid being over-poetic, since I still wanted my film to be reasonably understandable. Therefore, I attempted to find a balance between both narrative and lyricism. The story in this short film is actually very simple, everything is related to the ordinary life such as working, eating and taking trains. But I thought the emotions that we usually ignore in our daily life can be evoked in some circumstances, and this was what I could do in my film. In this story, the character realizes how important her family is after she faces a difficult situation. Moreover, the ordinary scenes around her might convey meaningful emotions when combined with such situation. The storyboarding process is like sculpturing the tip of the iceberg. Eliot's 'objective correlatives' were mainly used in this part, and most of the scenes in this animation were designed to emphasise the character's feeling rather than to show what is happening.

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[17] The definition of film-poem is still vague so far. It is basically considered as 'poetic avant-garde film' or 'verse-documentary', most of which implies the filmmakers' personal lives.

Figure 3:4 (Liao. Y. 2016) Mannequins in the snow render a subtle isolated atmosphere.

Refining

Modification and refining took place at each step of the project. I did not require every stage to be perfect before I proceeded to the next one, since new ideas usually emerge automatically while the project is developing in a practical research. Many details could be ignored during the period of scriptwriting or even storyboarding, and the rhythm of the whole story was kept indistinct until I finished the animatic.
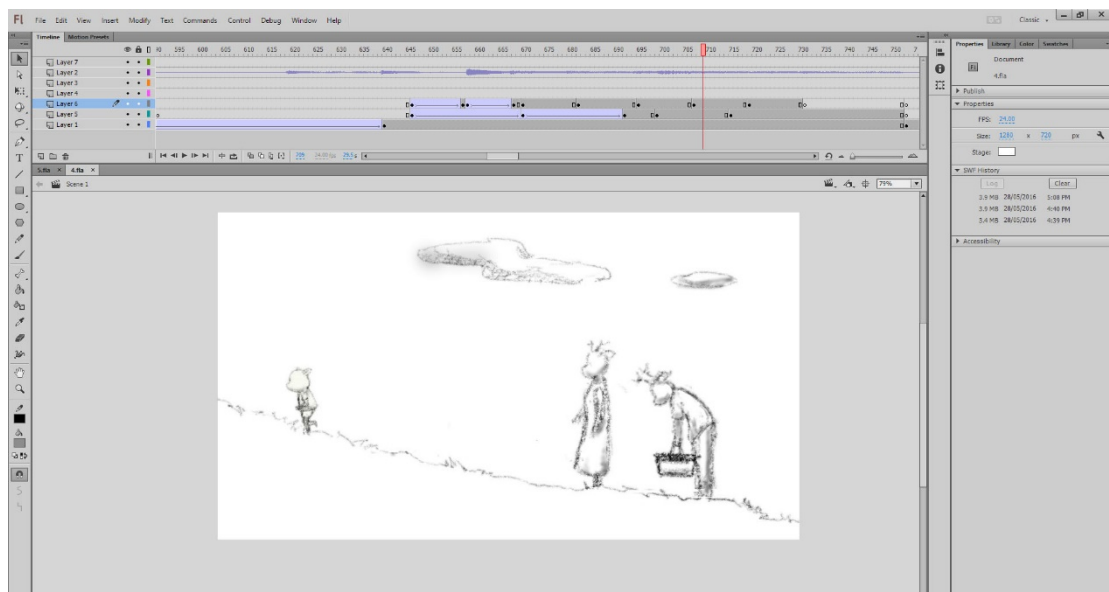
Figure 3:5 (Liao. Y. 2016) Making animatic in FLASH. Image drafts from storyboard were arranged to find a proper rhythm with sound effect and music added in.

A main modification on the narrative is the consideration on the character's wish. In the first version of my storyboard, the story comes to the end when the character picks up the phone. In this version I emphasised her desire to her parents' care when she faces with difficulty, as well as the weakness of individuals in social reality. However, the character's wish in this version is somewhat monotonous. I thought there might

be some way to make the protagonist more complex. Beneath the superficial wish that she seeks for comfort from her family, she may also have an unconscious desire to be freed from the psychological dependence on her parents, and becomes a real independent person. These conscious and subconscious desires are seemingly self-contradictory, but they would endow the protagonist multidimensional characteristics. (McKee, 1997, p. 138)

Therefore, I made a modification to the end of the story and created another scene in which the protagonist bids farewell to her childhood-self in her sub-consciousness. I intended to express the character's wish through this sequence: she realizes that she must finally say goodbye to her childhood as well as her parents. The memory may fade but the feeling of love is eternal, with which she can face her life with a more mature attitude.

Besides that, I also refined my story in some details such as making the expression less clichéd. For example, I used a boat in the waves to symbolize the difficulties in life, and the peaceful harbor to represent family love. But these visual elements seemed too cliché and do not quite relate to the main narration. Therefore, in the second version of my storyboard, I extracted some elements in the protagonist's memory – the dandelions and the umbrella, as the metaphors of her departure with her family and her hope to be in the care and protection of her family.

At the animatic stage, I also finished the three dimensions of my understanding to the iceberg theory - omission, suggestiveness and nothingness. The tip of the iceberg can be described as a narrative environment providing emotional experience, which is conveyed through a universal way of perception. While the underwater part is the thought or meaning that the audiences form with their own experience, and this thought can strengthen the emotional experience in turn. Compared to direct narrative method, such indirect and suggestive expression makes audiences participate and contribute more and thus deepen their spectatorship. This project is my first test bringing this method into visual-audio language, and I have some introduction and explanation to the elements of my film in the next chapter.

CHAPTER4: Critical commentary

Non-linear narrative structure

The narrative component of this film includes three parts: reality, memory and sub-consciousness. The narration in reality is generally linear, but it is inserted with the character's memory and her mental world, which reflects her psychology. The anterior part is mainly about narrative, describing a special experience of the protagonist in a seemingly normal day. The latter part turns to lyricism, focusing on the character's emotional expression. The film uses ten sequences to line up reality, memory and fantasy. The emotional variation of the character is shown in Figure 4:1.
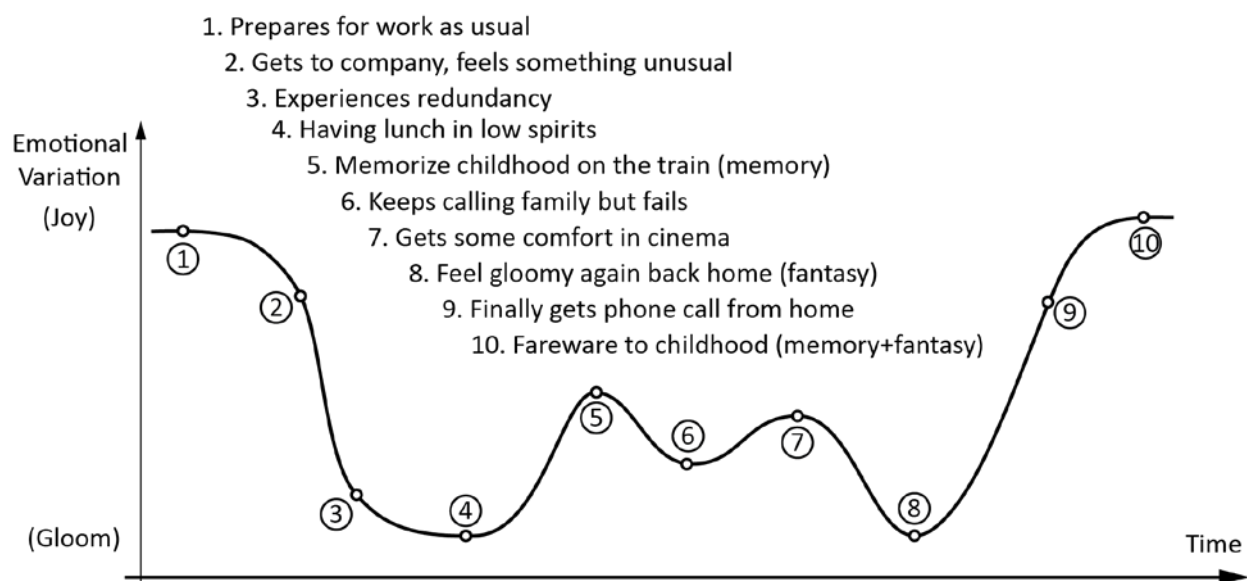
Figure 4:1 (Liao. Y. 2016) Emotional variation curve of the character.

Suggestiveness

As a main feature of Hemingway's method, suggestiveness was used in my animation as well. There are many ways of suggestiveness, and I mainly used symbolism, metaphor and informative association.

Symbolism & metaphor

*Dandelion***:** The first shot in the film is an image from the childhood of the protagonist. The seed of the dandelion flies away, suggesting that the protagonist leaves her parents to live her own life somewhere else. The sound of the thunder suggests a potential frustration on the journey.

Figure 4:2 (Liao. Y. 2016) Dandelion

Train: There are many train scenes in this animation. Trains are the main form of transport in metropolises. In Beijing, many people even spend hours on the train every day. Trains have become part of the daily life, especially for those who come from other places in China to work in Beijing. In this film, the train is an icon of journey, also a symbol of life.

Figure 4:3 (Liao. Y. 2016) Train scenes in the film

City elements: Buildings in the snow, pedestrians on the road looking down, mannequins behind the window, cat on the rubbish bin, closed shop…all these elements together with the train compose a city, which is prosperous and exciting, also with apathy and alienation. Each of these visual icons does not have a specific symbolic or metaphorical meaning. However, their combination creates a depressive atmosphere, which amplifies the desperate need of the character to contact her family.

Figure 4:4 (Liao. Y. 2016) Cat on the rubbish bin

Umbrella: In the character's memory, her father opens an umbrella for her mother, the same umbrella appears in her latter fantasy too, which is a metaphor of family love and protection. In the end of the film, the character opens an umbrella, suggesting that the love is reserved.

Figure 4:5 (Liao. Y. 2016) Umbrella

Figure 4:6 (Liao. Y. 2016) Leaves on her antlers

Leaves growing: The branches and leaves growing on the antlers of the character

reflects her mood. Normally the growth of plants represents life, hope and joy. In this sequence, the character feels family love when she is watching her parents together under the umbrella. Here I visualized her happy feeling as the growing green leaves on her antlers. In the latter sequence, the leaves fall off from her antlers, which reflects her growing more depressed.

Eagle: The eagle hovering above the city can be explained as a symbol of either freedom or loneness. It can be considered as a metaphor of the protagonist herself. However, the spectators are free to explain this in any way according to their own understanding.

Figure 4:7 (Liao. Y. 2016) Eagle in the sky

Fireworks: When the character finally gets the phone call from her family, the scene cuts to the exterior, and there arise fireworks between the buildings. People usually associate firework with festivals, especially Spring Festival in China. I did not intend to suggest that this story happens before or after Spring Festival, instead, I just used firework as a metaphor of happiness in life, indicating that life is interweaved with both sadness and happiness.
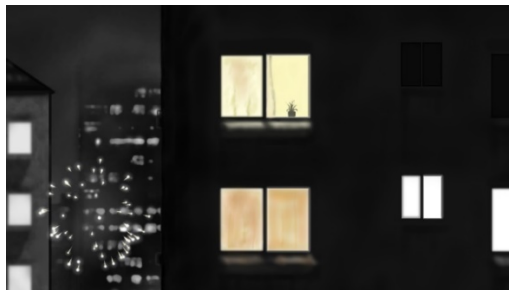
Figure 4:8 (Liao. Y. 2016) Fireworks

Figure 4:9 (Liao. Y. 2016) Farewell to her childhood

Farewell to childhood: The last sequence illustrates that the adult protagonist watches her childhood family walking away. This represents a departure, but with a meaning of growth. This scene suggests that the character bids farewell to her childhood, also her psychological dependence on her parents.

Informative association

I have set two informative suggestions in this film. One suggestion is when the character sees the reception with no one there, and causes her to sense something unusual. I used this to foreshadow the redundancy event that happens next. The other suggestion is when the character gets off work and goes back home; there are only a

few people on the train, which contrasts to the crowd in the train when she is going to work. Associated with this is the scene when the goat manager calls for her, the audience might get the idea that the protagonist is also fired and goes home before peak time. Unlike the other symbolisms and metaphors I used in this animation, these informative suggestions rely more on the spectator's cognitive experience rather than through emotional atmosphere.

Figure 4:10 (Liao. Y. 2016) the protagonist on the train with few people

Visual/audio treatment

Images and sounds dominate space and time respectively in film, the combination of them constructs the particular space-time art form. The main colours of my film are black, white and gray, with muted colors interspersing among the images. Since this story is about a gloomy and depressing day of the character, the color of the visual elements is designed based on the emotional tone. My initial plan is to make a pure black & white film, but there was a problem in the process. Because of the limited production time, I used Flash, which is convenient as an animation tool. However, the vector images created in Flash have no texture, and it was difficult to achieve a rich visual effect like the style of black & white photographs. Besides this, some subjects in the scenes merged into the background and became indistinct. Even though I added
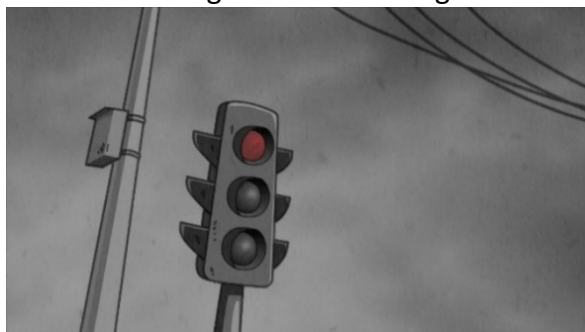
some texture and lighting in After Effects, I still could not resolve this problem completely. Therefore, I used some muted colours to make the subjects stand out from the background, and also avoided the images from being over-gloomy.

Figure 4:11 (Liao. Y. 2016) Add muted color to the subject

Although this is an animated film, the story happens in a modern city, and its theme is closely related to reality. Hence, I used a technique mixed with both real photos and drawings to create some of the backgrounds in the film, such as the city buildings and the trees in winter. I rendered these photos to black & white and attached them with paintbrush effects. The final images illustrate the features of both photos and paintings. The priority of doing so is to bond the animated world more closely with the real world, and strengthen the visual texture as well.

1. Choosing pictures   2. Rendering to black & white

3. Rendering with painting effect   4. Adding textures
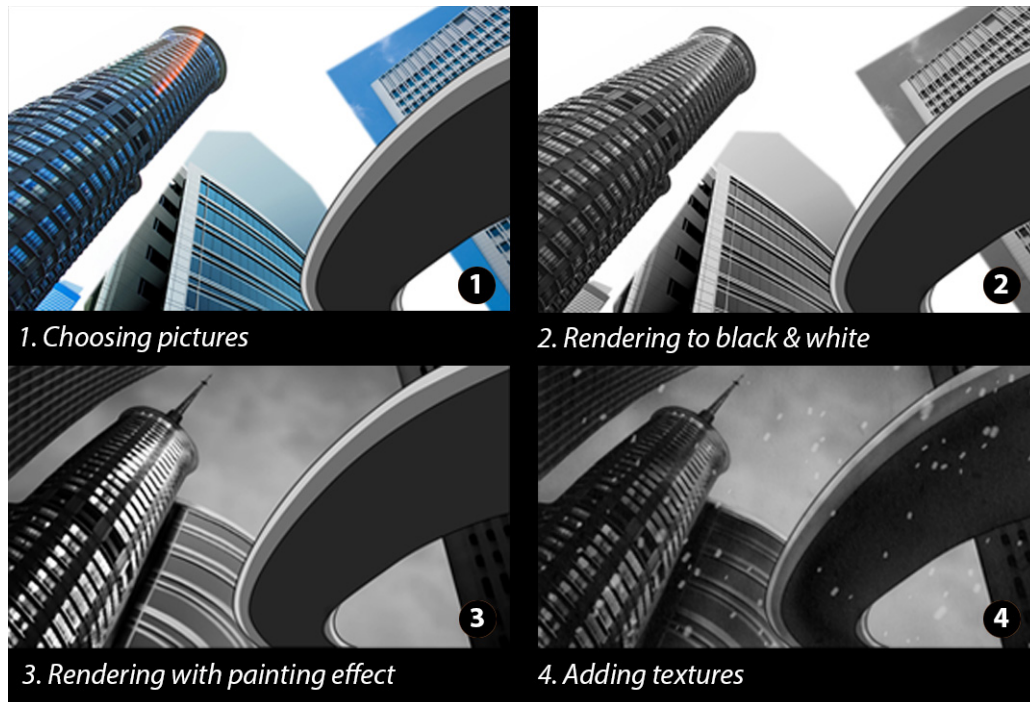
Figure 4:12 (Liao. Y. 2016) Process of mixing real photos with drawings

Besides the use of real photograph, I also used some fragments of live-action film in the sequence of the character taking a shower. I took these raining shots casually when I was doing the scriptwriting, just in case that they might be helpful as image design reference. When designing this sequence, I associated the shower with an atmospheric scene in the rain, which I thought in accord with the character's current mood and psychology, so maybe I could use those shots I took earlier. The visual style of those live-action shots was largely different from drawing, and I managed to reduce this difference by adding brush effect and adjusting the light in After Effects.

Figure 4:13 (Liao. Y. 2016) Adjusting the live-action shot to drawing style

Sounds play an important part in the construction of narrative environment just as images do. The online resource provided many audio clips, and I recorded some clips on my own. I tried to make those sounds serve fully as possible when the atmosphere is needed. For instance, while the character comes back home in the night, I amplified the sound of the clock and made it last for a relatively long time, by which the lonely and depressed mood of the character was amplified, too. Time is needed to ensure the effect of sounds, so the arrangement of sounds directly influences the rhythm of the film. As a narrative animation using poetic strategies, the rhythm of the whole film is controlled in a slow pace, because I did not want to tell the story in a hurry. Enough space for imagination needs the assistance of enough time, so the audiences are able to fully perceive and experience the texture of time, which I thought is also a significant feature of poetic film.
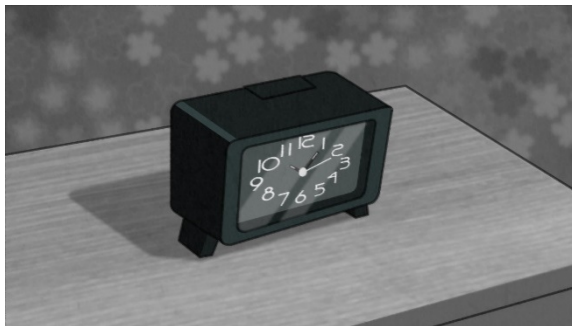
Figure 4:14 (Liao. Y. 2016) This clock shot lasts a few second emphasising the tik-tok sound.

Animation strategy

This project was created referring to Hemingway's iceberg theory and some methods for making poetic films. Nevertheless, as an animated film, I also brought in some techniques particularly used in animation such as anthropomorphism, condensation and metamorphosis.

Anthropomorphism

I set the protagonist in my film as a deer instead of a human. Equally, other characters in this film are all animals. The story is set in a metropolis, or to be more specific, in Beijing. However, I did not want to constrict the identification of the character as Chinese or Asian. Instead, I hope the audience could associate the story with their own life, rather than consider it as something that only happens to Chinese or Asians. Anthropomorphic characters break the limitation of the human image, and reconcile 'otherness' through the "imposition of human character traits that render material and natural artefacts familiar". (Wells, 2007. p. 27) Although they have animalistic appearances, the audience still naturally considers them as human in animation.[18] Anthropomorphism makes it more acceptable that the character can be an avatar of anyone. It separates the character from the creator him/herself, while shortens the distance between the character and the audience.

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[18] This setting was partly influenced by one of my animation references *When the Day Breaks.*

Condensation

In short, condensation means the compression of narrative information within a specific timeline. The applications of condensation in animation include the normal techniques of elliptical cut such as *fade in* and *fade out*, dissolving or wiping between images (Wells, 1998. p. 76), which are also used in live–action films. Other than that, animation has its own way to signify the flowing of time by comic elision. I used this technique in the sequence when the character goes home from the cinema. On the way home, the green leaves gradually fall off from her antlers. The journey home is condensed with the process of the leaves falling off, reflecting the character's emotional variation: the little comfort she got in the cinema is immediately depleted on the way home.

Figure 4:15 (Liao. Y. 2016) Leaves falling off when she is going back home

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis is a popular technique in animation. It is the technique when an image smoothly transforms something entirely different. In this film, I used metamorphosis in the changing process between two scenes. When the protagonist is on the train back home, she looks out of the window and sees the smoking chimney. The smoke gradually transforms into clouds, and as the camera moves down, the scene is transferred to the hill in her childhood.

Conclusion

This master research is undoubtedly a challenging one for me, as it refers to areas that I was unfamiliar with or even never heard of. However, when a baffling question was broken through, or when some loose ideas finally formed up to a reasonable system, all the previous efforts were rewarded. Thus, I would say that this research provided me not only a challenge but also enjoyment.

Unlike my last research in the postgraduate year, within which I focused mostly on exploring a technical pipeline for my practice, in this research I went through a process of thinking about more than a practical experiment. I did not actually explore uncharted territories of new ideas; instead, I dug into old theories and tried to find out what those could do for the art creation nowadays, and to form new understanding on top of the existing knowledge. During the thinking process, I found connections between different theories and knowledge from both western and eastern literature, which to some extent mutually support each other. It was, in my own mind, a unique experience to play a communication between literary and film, eastern philosophy and western art that illustrates a new direction for my future creation.

The initial purpose of my research is to adapt the ideas from Hemingway's iceberg theory and to apply them into my animated film. I cannot say that I did this application well, since I am still far away from "a real artist", but I am happy with the fact that I have acquired a deeper understanding to this iceberg, and an understanding to art creation, though there is still a long distance from understanding to perfect application.

As my research title shows, this is a research about invitation and participation, in other words, a research about the link between creator and spectator. So what would the link be? Perhaps the world view, emotion, or the sense to life etc. This thesis is not criticizing those movies which are not "poetic", instead, it reminds me of a fact that sometimes we are just so eager to create and to see something extraordinary that we ignore the extraordinary aesthetic of the normal life. I would suggest that a successful artwork, referring to Hemingway's idea, is one that makes us feel "it has happened to ourselves", even if it is a fantasy story.

This research also encouraged me to seek for the true essence of life, and learn to appreciate it. I would like to use Norstein's quote and comment towards a Haiku when he said "composed by the life itself", as the ending of my thesis:

> "The sun shines.
> Two women meet in the street.
> One says to the other: "What weather do we have nowadays."
> And the other replies: "I feel pity for those, who died yesterday."
> That's the whole philosophy of life." (Verspate, 2012)

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Project Pipeline

The critical frames of this project are mainly about story building, animation and visual treatment. Although the work proceeded one stage after another basically, I often went back to the previous stages and modified them after continuous evaluation and reflection of current stage.
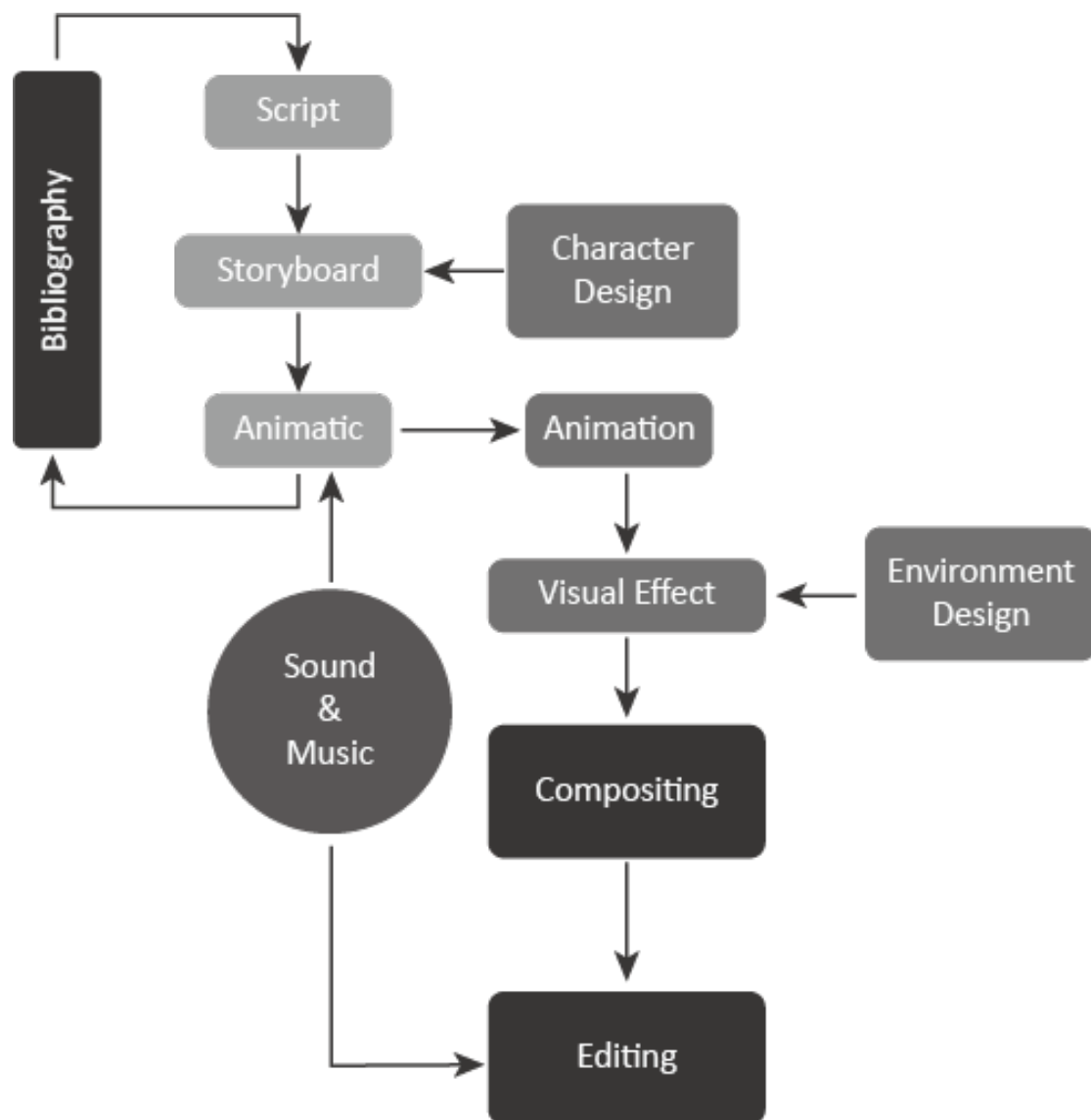
Appendix 2: Project Schedule

TW	Date	Script	Storyboard & Animatic	Animation (Flash)	Visual Effect (After Effects)	Compositing & Editing	Sound & Music	Thesis Writing
				SEMESTER 1				
1	29 Feb-4 Mar	▓						
2	7-11 Mar	▓						
3	14-18 Mar	▓						
4	21-25 Mar	▓						
5	28 Mar-1 Apr	▓						
6	4-8 Apr	▓						
7	11-15 Apr	▓						
	18-22 Apr	▓						
	25-29 Apr	▓						
8	2-6 May	▓						
9	9-13 May	▓	▓					
10	16-20 May		▓					
11	23-27 May		▓				▓	
12	30 May-3 Jun		▓				▓	
13	6-10 Jun		▓	▓			▓	
14	13-17 Jun			▓				
15	20-24 Jun			▓				
				SEMESTER 2				
1	18-22 Jul			▓				▓
2	25-29 Jul			▓				▓
3	1-5 Aug			▓				▓
4	8-12 Aug			▓				▓
5	15-19 Aug			▓				▓
6	22-26 Aug			▓				▓
	29 Aug-2 Sep			▓				▓
	5-9 Sep			▓				▓
7	12-16 Sep			▓	▓			▓
8	19-23 Sep			▓	▓	test	▓	▓
9	26-30 Sep			▓	▓		▓	▓
10	3-7 Oct			▓	▓	Thesis Submission		
11	10-14 Oct			▓	▓	▓		
12	17-21 Oct			▓	▓	▓		
13	24-28 Oct					▓		
14	31 Oct-4 Nov			Exhibition & Examination				
15	7-11 Nov							

Appendix 3: Treatment for *Jingle Bells*

SEQUENCE 1: GRASSLAND
A seed of dandelion flies away. We can hear a faint thunder.

SEQUENCE 2: HOME
The alarm sounds, the deer stretches her hand on turn it off. Then we see her bedroom and hear the sound of flushing toilet. She brushes her teeth, makes bed and sprays perfumes on her antlers in front of a mirror. She picks up her phone and leaves home. We can see the photo of her family on the desk.

SEQUENCE 3: TRAIN STATIO/TRAIN
She stands on the escalator descending; we can hear the sound of the train entering the station. She stands among the crowd in the train. The city views out of the windows keeps moving.

SEQUENCE 4: OFFICE
She gets out of the elevator watching her watch. She notices that there is nobody at the reception. In the office, she is working at the computer, and hear a sound of the door opening. She turns her head and sees her colleague – a rhino walking slowly out of the office of the manager, and gradually disappears, as well as his office stuff. She imagines that the rhino's document is deleted from the office system of the company. She is silent for a moment, then turn back to her work. She hears the door-opening noise comes again. She turns her head and sees the manager – the goat waving her.

SEQUENCE 5: STREET/RESTAURANT
The bell on the clock tower rings. A group of pigeons flies away. The traffic light switches to green. In the restaurant, a bowl of noodle is put down on the table. The deer sprays some chili powder on the noodle and starts eating. She rubs and sucks her nose after eating for a while. In the toilet, we can see her feet from the gap under the door of the stall, and hear a voice saying after the sound of telephone call: the number you dial is currently unavailable, please try again later…

SEQUENCE 6: CITY/TRAIN
A train comes across a viaduct. The deer sits silently in the train with a few people. She hears a laughing of kids and sees two little rabbits playing on the opposite seats. Their mother stops them making noise. She smiles and looks out of the window. There is smoke rising out from a chimney.

SEQUENCE 7: GRASSLAND (MEMORY)
The smoke gradually changes to clouds. The camera moves down and we can see a grassland. The deer family appears, and the father carries a picnic box. The child runs up hill. She picks up a dandelion and blows it. The seeds spreads and she sees her parents sitting together. Her mother rises arm to cover her face from the sunshine,

and her father opens an umbrella for her mother. The child deer smiles and leaves grow on her antlers. We can hear a sharp noise of the train braking.

SEQUENCE 8: STREET
She is walking on the snowy street, dialing the number repeatedly, but always fails. The voice repeats: the number you dial is currently unavailable, please try again later... The shots cut to the city in snow, the window mannequins, the stray cat, and the closed shop while the character is walking and dialing. She finally gives up dialing and stops on the pedestrian bridge with a sigh. There comes a sharp scream, she looks up and sees an eagle hovering in the sky.

SEQUENCE 9: CENIMA & WAY BACK HOME
She buys a movie ticket and a box of popcorn. She sits in the cinema and watching the two characters on the screen kissing each other. The green leaves grow on her antlers. She walks back home, and the leaves drop off gradually. She closes the door of her room in depression.

SEQUENCE 10: HOME
The clock ticks in the silent room. She goes to the bathroom and turns on the shower nozzle. As the water running, she imagines herself in the rain, and the shadow of tree leaves floating on her face. There comes a sound of music, she sees a pink umbrella on the ground. As she goes forward and picks the umbrella up, she seems picks up a dandelion, which appears in her childhood. The music suddenly becomes clear, and it is the music called *Jingle Bells.* She finds that it is her cell phone ringing. She runs into her bedroom and picks up her phone.

SEQUENCE 11: OUTSIDE HER HOME
In the night, we can see her figure through the window of the building. She listens to the phone and disappears behind the window. Among the buildings, fireworks are lighted up and disappear repeatedly. We can see the city with myriad twinkling lights in distance. A train passes through.

SEQUENCE 12: GRASSLAND (ENDING)
The young deer tries to touch a grasshopper, but it jumps away. She raises her head and sees a vague figure on the top of the hill. She hears her parents calling her, she takes a last look at the figure, turns around and runs to her parents.
On the top of the hill, the adult deer looks after her childhood family leaving. She turns around and opens a pink umbrella. As the background changes to the city, she is walking with a smile.

Appendix 4: Examples of Visual Treatment

I used a large number of real pictures and merged them into the drawing as visual treatment of the background in my film. Nevertheless, I did not make them to be very realistic, but tried to find a balance between photography and a painting style.