
**Applying Intertextuality to Chinese Traditional Animation
Making in a Global Context:
Using *Jingwei Reclamation* as an Example**

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the application of intertextuality theory in Chinese traditional animation making, which can be understood as a study of intertextuality between Chinese and Western cultures in a hybrid media form. This is a practice-led artistic thesis that consists of an animation adaptation, *Jingwei Reclamation* (2021), and a written exegesis. This thesis applies the concept of ‘Yi Xiang’ to explore the perception of integration with Western culture from a Chinese lens. Intertextuality has been used to integrate the three-act structure, Aristotle’s tragedy theory and Chinese mythology’s tragic principles, and to incorporate animism and Tian Ren He Yi’s philosophy into the adaptation. The concept of technical intertextuality makes Chinese shadow puppetry and Chinese ink-wash painting established the visual expression and style with Chinese characteristics, as well as integrated the darkness and light of Western shadow theatre to enhance the emotional communication of visual language. Through the application of intertextuality, the Chinese mythological spirit of fearlessness and sacrifice from *Jingwei Reclamation* can be understood in a wider global context.

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I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Chen Chen, for her guidance, inspiration and dedication throughout my research, especially in the research progress of plot adaptation and the Yi Xiang system. I am indebted for the support offered by the faculty and staff at AUT School of Art and Design for research grants and COVID-19 influence kindness. Thanks to Lesley Ung and Jessica Liang for their companionship and peer feedback. I would also like to acknowledge Zhaohui Lei for his professional skills in the *Jingwei Reclamation* (2021) music arrangement.

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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 (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Xiaoying Ye 17/10/2021

Intellectual Property Rights

The author/designer asserts the intellectual and moral copyright of the creative work *Jingwei Reclamation* (2021) contained in this thesis. All rights of the owner of the recorded work are reserved. The animation is copyright protected in all of its formats, and use of the recording is restricted. Any manner of exhibition, broadcast, public performance, dissemination, copying, resetting, hiring or editing constitutes an infringement of copyright unless the copyright owner has expressly consented in writing.

Introduction

*Jingwei Reclamation*¹ is an adaptation animation from the myth of the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*² that aims to represent the original spirit³ and charm of the myth. As a result of globalisation, almost every country is now multicultural, as one of the features of modern society.⁴ Therefore, I am going to apply a multicultural perspective for exploring the possibility of bridging Chinese culture with Western culture from the perspective of intertextuality, in which I will not only integrate different aspects of Chinese traditional culture into the global context for promotion, but also enable the spirit of *Jingwei Reclamation* adapted from intertextuality to be more easily understood in contemporary society than in the original text. This thesis advances technical and literary intertextuality contextual research based on an essential question:

How can intertextuality be applied to create animations with Chinese traditional elements that can be appreciated in a global context?

In my practice, I use *Jingwei Reclamation* as an example to answer this question.

Key Terms Used in This Study

This is a practical study of Western intertextuality theory through the Chinese lens of Yi Xiang; thus, it is necessary to begin with a definition of intertextuality and introduce the

¹ The original text of *Jingwei Reclamation* is as follows: 'Three thousand ninety li farther southeast, then northeast, stands Departing-Doves Mountain. On its heights are many mulberry trees. There is a bird dwelling here whose form resembles a crow with a patterned head, white beak, and red feet. It is called Jingwei and makes a sound like its name. She is the younger daughter of the Flame Thearch named Nüwa (different from the mother goddess Nüwa of Chinese myth). Nüwa was swimming in the Eastern Sea when she was unable to return to shore and drowned. She then transformed into the bird Spirit-Guardian and regularly carries twigs and stones from the Western Mountains to fill up the Eastern Sea. The Zhang River emanates from here and flows eastward into the Yellow River' [又北二百里，曰发鸠之山，其上多柘木。有鸟焉，其状如乌，文首、白喙、赤足，名曰精卫，其鸣自詠。是炎帝之少女名曰女娃，女娃游于东海，溺而不返，故为精卫。常衔西山之木石，以堙于东海。漳水出焉，东流注于河。]. Strassberg, Richard E., ed. and trans., *A Chinese bestiary: strange creatures from the guideways through mountains and seas*, (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2002).

² The *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, also known as *Shan Hai Jing*, is a Chinese canonical text and a complication of mythic geography and beasts.

³ The term 'spirit' in this study has several meanings pertaining to human will and consciousness, which refer to the Chinese term, '精神'; it is not a philosophical term. Readers can comprehend the meaning through the relevant context.

⁴ Nkosinathi Sotshangane, 'What Impact Globalization Has on Cultural Diversity?', *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 1.4 (2002): 214-231.

concept of Yi Xiang. The fourth chapter, 'Critical Commentary', will analyse the sub-contexts of intertextuality and their applications in my practice.

Definition of Intertextuality Theory

Intertextuality refers to the formation of one text in relation to other texts, and includes the absorption and transformation of other texts.⁵ Intertextuality is a term that encompasses not only the artist or author borrowing, transforming, rewriting or absorbing a preceding text or texts, but also the reader's reference to a text or texts that they have already read and understood while reading the text in question.⁶ Intertextuality theory was proposed by Julia Kristeva⁷ in the article 'Word, Dialogue and Novel',⁸ in which she discussed that literary words are the intersection of text interface, which is a plane, not a point. This interface is a dialogue between many discourses, including those of the author, the reader, the work's characters, and present and historical cultural texts. Any text represents the absorption and transformation of other texts. Kristeva states that, in 'the bound text', text is the arrangement and replacement of many texts, with a kind of intertextuality: in the space of one text, several parts from other texts can meet and integrate with each other. Intertextuality given that the basis of existence is text, everything in the world can be textualised, so that the world can be regarded an unlimited text.⁹ Regardless of the context of text, such as social, economic, political, psychological or even philosophical, text can be regarded an intertextual text. This phenomenon demonstrates that textual boundaries can be eliminated, at which point external forces and influences are textualised. Given that each text is derived from another, intertextual relationships form between them. Since Kristeva explicitly relates intertextuality to Chinese symbolic understandings, as against the prevailing homogeneity of a globalised culture, on the basis of preserving cultural differences, this study puts different cultures

⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

⁶ Zengin Mevlüde, 'An Introduction to Intertextuality as a Literary Theory: Definitions, Axioms and the Originators', *Pamukkale University Journal of Social Sciences Institute* 50 (2016): 299–327.

⁷ Intertextuality is generally believed to come from Julia Kristeva—a French semiotician, philosopher and feminist. When Kristeva first came to France, she was invited by Roland Barthes to introduce Mikhail M. Bakhtin's 'Dialogic Theory' and 'Carnival Poetics' to French scholars. In this process, she creatively presented the theory of intertextuality.

⁸ Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue and Novel', *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

⁹ Liquan Zhi, 'Application of Semiotics and Intertextuality in Design Works', *Art Review* 18 (2019): 263–4.

into one text space for dialogue and communication, so that different texts of culture can meet each other in the medium of animation.

The Concept of Yi Xiang

The term ‘Yi Xiang’ first appeared in Xie Liu’s *Wen Xin Diao Long* [文心雕龙], which states that ‘an insightful craftsman can use tools to work according to the Yi Xiang that has emerged in his mind’ [独照之匠，窥意象而运斤].¹⁰ In the final summary of *Shen Si* in *Wen Xin Diao Long*,¹¹ Xie Liu noted that the creative idea is connected by a series of ‘Yi Xiang’, which is caused by change in emotion. In the process of ‘Yi Xiang’ produced by the integration of spirituality and physicality, ‘Xiang’ (physicality) comes from external objects and combines with inner ‘Yi’ (perception/emotion).¹² For example, bamboo has the natural characteristics of being slender, evergreen and hollow, which refer to the feature of physicality (‘Xiang’). In China, these characteristics indicate youth, longevity and modesty, and suggest the interpretation of spirituality in emotion (‘Yi’). This concept indicates that the creator is able to form ‘Yi Xiang’ through the perception and integration of physicality and spirituality. In the context of artistic practice, the creator can use ‘Yi Xiang’ to convey the creative idea through physicality. The concept of ‘Yi Xiang’ can also be understood as the integration of subjective and objective.¹³ ‘Xiang’ derives from the perception and reproduction of the natural/physical world, and integrates with the perception and emotion that the creator wishes to express (‘Yi’) through physical images to form ‘Yi Xiang’.¹⁴

Study Rationale and Significance

Rationale

The myth of *Jingwei Reclamation* reflects Chinese traditional culture, especially the thoughts of primitive Chinese people; it embodies an aspect of the Chinese spirit. In terms of *Jingwei Reclamation*, I consider Chinese mythology’s spirit of sacrifice and

¹⁰ Xie Liu, *Shen Si, Wen Xin Diao Long* (Beijing, China: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012).

¹¹ The original text in *Shen Si*: ‘The spirit is connected by the physical image, which is bred by the change of feelings and thoughts. The physical image uses its appearance to impress the creator, and the creator has reasonable emotion and feeling in his mind as a reaction.’ [神用象通，情变所孕；物以貌求，心以理应] Liu, *Shen Si*.

¹² Liu, *Shen Si*.

¹³ Jing Zhang, ‘Xie Liu’s Aesthetic in the Theory of Yi Xiang’, *Jilin University Journal Social Sciences Edition* 1 (1997): 19–25.

¹⁴ Ibid.

fearlessness as exceptionally valuable; however, it may not be easy to understand the spirit conveyed by the myth in a contemporary context. Thus, I sought to apply intertextuality to communicate the Chinese and Western artistic expressions to reach a wider audience. Technical intertextuality refines the integration of technical discourses in digital media on the basis of intertextuality. By using technical intertextuality to present Chinese shadow puppets, Chinese ink-wash paintings, and the ‘Yi Xiang’ system as visual languages, the charm of Chinese mythology as a traditional culture can be communicated in the digital space.

Significance

This research is significant because it bridges Chinese and Western culture and applies intertextuality to recreate traditional culture in animation. This study uses intertextuality as a framework for cultural communication between Chinese and Westerners to link different types of Chinese traditional culture. The plot, frames and music of the animation correspond to the traditional culture of myth, art and instruments. Intertextuality enables the presentation of traditional culture in novel ways by integrating the contexts of Western shadow theatre, Aristotle’s tragedy principles and the three-act structure. Diverse traditional cultures are integrated into the animation from a global perspective.

Structure

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1, ‘Positioning the Researcher’, discusses my personal experiences and the emotions that motivated me to conduct this research. Chapter 2 reviews contextual knowledge through an intertextual adaptation, and analyses the contexts of the Yi Xiang concept, Chinese ink-wash painting, Chinese shadow puppetry and Western shadow theatre. Chapter 3 presents the research design methodology and methods, discussing how practice-led methodology guided this research, and the role and relationship among the methodology and research methods of case studies, visual research, observation, storyboard, self-review and external feedback. Chapter 4 presents the critical commentary of *Jingwei Reclamation*, which constructs the narrative adaptation, Yi Xiang system, character design and technical application in the context of intertextuality. This chapter also discusses how to incorporate both Western and Eastern concepts and artistic elements into animation making from a global perspective.



Chapter 1: Positioning the Researcher

When I was a child, my family told me mythological stories from the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*. ‘Hou Yi Shoots the Suns’ [后羿射日]¹⁵ and ‘Jingwei Tries to Fill the Sea’ are both classic myths that I remember by heart. The plots filled my head with fantasy and curiosity about the unknown world. The animation of Shanghai Animation Film Studio accompanied my childhood. Their excellent adapted animations, such as *Nine-coloured Deer* [九色鹿],¹⁶ *Prince Nezha’s Triumph Against the Dragon King* [哪吒闹海]¹⁷ and *Havoc in Heaven* [大闹天宫],¹⁸ left a deep impression on me. However, I did not realise why I found Chinese animation so memorable at that time. After primary school, I became a fanatical aficionado of Japanese animation because of its meaningful stories and exquisite production. As a result of the demands of schoolwork in China and my family asking me to focus on my studies, I was unable to learn painting skills professionally, and so began imitating and drawing characters from Japanese animation in junior high school (Figure 1.1). While I respect and adore these Japanese animations, particularly after I learnt how to make them, they did not offer me the sense of belonging and pride I had felt as a child. Thus, I realised that animation has a ‘soul’—a culture that belongs to the country from which it derives. When I recall the animation moments that touched my heart, almost all of them conveyed culture and spirit. The sense of belonging in childhood was the animation created by the Chinese traditional culture at that time.

I was determined to become an animator after travelling to New Zealand to study abroad. A large part of my motivation was the effect of Chinese animation on my childhood. At the undergraduate level, I learnt 3D animation and motion graphics in elective courses. During this period, I attempted to create short animations about China using the skills I had acquired. Figure 1.2 displays a motion graphics animation of the giant panda I made when I was at second-year undergraduate level. In the graduation project, I created a

¹⁵ There were 10 suns in Chinese mythology. Initially, the 10 suns crossed the sky in sequence, but, one day, all 10 suns emerged simultaneously, scorching the earth. Hou Yi was tasked by the mythical King Yao with the responsibility of restraining the suns. Hou Yi began by attempting to reason with the suns. When that failed, he pretended to shoot at them with his bow in an attempt to intimidate them. When the suns ignored Hou Yi’s warnings, he began shooting them, one by one. As they fell, they transformed into three-legged ravens. Finally, only one sun remained, and both King Yao and the sun’s mother Xihe pleaded for the sun to be spared for the sake of human prosperity. Jan Walls, *Classical Chinese Myths* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1984), 68–9.

¹⁶ *The Nine-Colored Deer*, directed by Jiajun Qian and Tielang Dai (Shanghai Animation Film Studio, 1981), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9E4QcYHIK4&t=325s>.

¹⁷ *Prince Nezha’s Triumph Against Dragon King*, directed by Shuchen Wang, Dingxian Yan and Jingda Xu (Shanghai Animation Film Studio, 1979), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0SKGg8xOPs&t=2417s>.

¹⁸ *Havoc in Heaven*, directed by Laiming Wan (Shanghai Animation Film Studio, 1964), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu0XosgxCyU>.

Jingwei Fill the Sea animation without adaptation (Figure 1.3). According to the feedback received on this project, the story was simple to comprehend, but the mythic spirit was not. I understand that creating good animation necessitates extensive research into the subject, and one semester is insufficient to complete an animation and conduct additional research. As such, as an international student, during this postgraduate study, I sought to integrate Chinese mythology and traditional culture into the context of multicultural society and adapt mythology with a contemporary perspective.

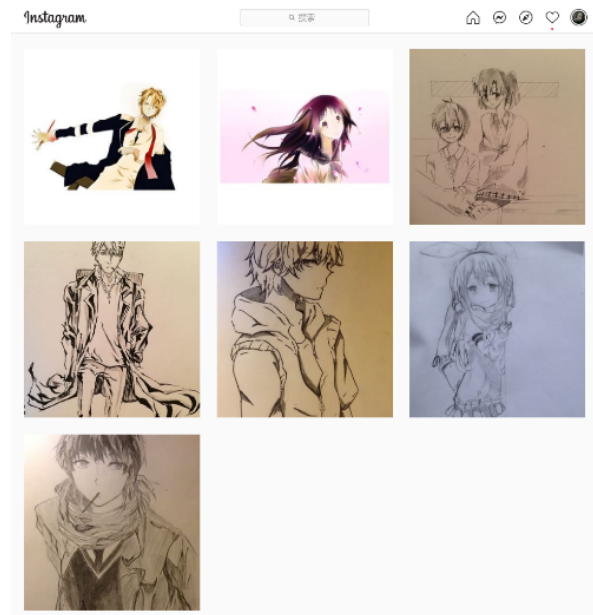


Figure 1.1. Xiaoying Ye, drawings from senior high school, 2021, screenshot from shino_ye Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/shino_ye/.



Figure 1.2. Xiaoying Ye, *The Giant Panda*, 2018, motion graphics animation, <https://youtu.be/JXoysHhCy5k>.



Figure 1.3. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Fill the Sea*, 2019, motion graphics animation, <https://youtu.be/utRBlyjiKXM>.



Chapter 2: Review of Contextual Knowledge

2.1 Concept of Yi Xiang (Chinese Imagery Language)

2.1.1 Origin of Xiang in Taoist Works

‘Xiang’ was first used in philosophy by *Lao Zi*¹⁹, in which Xiang was not referred to as a specific concept, but as an illusory Xiang related to Taoism that transcends specific objective notions.²⁰ Compared with the description of Xiang in *Lao Zi*, the meaning of Xiang is more clearly expounded in *Zhou Yi*²¹.²² According to *Xi Ci Zhuan* [系辞传], in *Zhou Yi*, Xiang is ‘like’,²³ which is like a model.²⁴ Fu Xi²⁵ is the model,²⁶ and Fu Xi creates eight trigrams (things worth learning) through observing the world. Thus, Xiang comes from the objective world; when something becomes Xiang, it also connotes underlying meanings, which refer to ‘Yi’.

¹⁹ *Laozi*, also known as *Tao Te Ching*, is a classic text written around 400 BC and traditionally credited to the sage Laozi. It is a fundamental text for both philosophical and religious Taoism and has had a significant impact on the formation and development of Chinese culture.

²⁰ Lichun Hu, ‘The Theory of Yi Xiang in Lao Zi’, *Jin Tian* 000.005 (2016): 11.

²¹ *Zhou Yi*, also known as *Yi Jing* (*I Ching*), was traditionally ascribed to the Zhou cultural heroes, King Wen of Zhou and the Duke of Zhou, and was also associated with the legendary world ruler Fu Xi; it was originally a divination manual in the Western Zhou period (1000–750 BC). Over the course of the Warring States period and the early imperial period (500–200 BC), it was transformed into a cosmological text with a series of philosophical commentaries known as the ‘Ten Wings’. An ancient Chinese divination text, it is among the oldest of the Chinese classics and provides the theoretical foundation of natural philosophy and humanistic practice in Chinese traditional thought and culture.

²² Jingfang Jin, *Zhou Yi—Xi Ci Zhuan Reorganised with Detailed Explanation* (Liaohai Publishing House, 1998). The original author and creation age are unknown.

²³ ‘Xiang is “like”’ [象也，像也] (the third chapter in *Xi Ci Zhuan part B*).

²⁴ ‘The sage who compiled the *Yi Jing* [易经] had a way of introducing the actual situation of the world. He designed to introduce many models worth learning in the Scriptures and compared them to choose appropriate things. Therefore, he called these models worth learning as “Xiang”.’ [圣人有以见天下之赜，而拟诸其形容，象其物宜，是故谓之象] (The eighth chapter in *Xi Ci Zhuan part A*).

²⁵ Fuxi is a cultural hero in Chinese legend and mythology, credited, along with his sister and wife Nüwa, with creating humanity and the invention of music, hunting, fishing, domestication and cooking, as well as the Cangjie system of writing Chinese characters, in around 2,000 BC. Fuxi was counted as the first of the Three Sovereigns at the beginning of the Chinese dynastic period.

²⁶ ‘When Fuxi [伏羲] ruled the world in ancient times, he looked up to observe the phenomena of the sky, looked down to see the laws of the earth, and observed the suitability of bird and animal patterns to the earth. He chose various personal experiences and numerous distant observations. Therefore, he began to create eight trigrams according to these situations to convey the wise enlightenment of knowledgeable people and analogy to the actual situation of all things in the world.’ [古者包牺氏之王天下也，仰则观象于天，俯则观法于地，观鸟兽之文，与地之宜，近取诸身，远取诸物，于是始作八卦，以通神明之德，以类万物之情。] (The second chapter in *Xi Ci Zhuan part B*).

2.1.2 Origin of Yi in Taoist Works

‘Yi’ [意] was also explained in *Xi Ci Zhuan*, wherein Yi²⁷ is content that the author wishes to express that is difficult to fully convey in words, and readers may not easily comprehend the meaning. Thus, to better elaborate, hexagrams and emotions are used to express the content. To enable others to more deeply understand the author’s expressed intention or content, the author sympathises with their readers in their creation, so ‘Yi Jing’²⁸ [易经] can be implemented jointly by all people to the greatest extent (see footnote 27). The words of empathy stimulate people’s emotions and make others want to understand the content of the author’s creation; thus, ‘Yi’ also involves ‘emotion’.

2.1.3 Relationship between Yi and Xiang in Taoist Works and Potential Meaning of Yi Xiang

Given that words cannot fully express ‘Yi’ (see footnote 27), the sage created ‘Xiang’ to show ‘Yi’. The potential meaning of ‘Yi Xiang’ in *Wen Xin Diao Long* is based on ‘Jian Xiang’ [见象] and ‘Li Xiang’ [立象] in *Zhou Yi*. ‘Xiang’ has two types, in nature and in humans.²⁹ ‘Xiang’, in the context of nature, refers to the observation of natural phenomena, which is ‘Jian Xiang’ (‘to observe nature’). By contrast, ‘Xiang’, in the context of humans, refers to our perception of the laws of nature, which is ‘Li Xiang’ (‘to recreate from nature’).³⁰ Given that both ‘Yi Xiang’ and ‘Li Xiang’ are created by humans, the difference is that Li Xiang is the creator who first sees the physical phenomenon (Xiang), and then has the perception (Yi) to recreate it, whereas Yi Xiang is the creator who first has a certain subjective perception (Yi), and then integrates it with a physical

²⁷ Zi (teacher) said: ‘It is impossible for a monograph to record all the content that the author wants to express, so the recorded words cannot be the whole content that the author wants to express’. In this case, can we not fully see and understand the content that the sage who created *Yi Jing* [易经] wanted to express? Zi said: ‘The sage who created *Yi Jing* [易经] decided to use people or things worthy of imitation to elaborate on the content he wanted to express to the greatest extent, created a set of predetermined symbols for measurement to reflect the context and changes of things to the greatest extent, and the words connected with hexagrams to show his ideas to the greatest extent. The content of the expression is reasonable and can be implemented jointly by all people, which reflects the benefits of *Yi Jing* [易经] to the greatest extent. The words can stimulate people’s emotions. They all tried to find this book to explain the mystery and magic of *Yi Jing* [易经] to the greatest extent’. [子曰: “书不尽言, 言不尽意。” 然则圣人之意, 其不可见乎? 子曰: “圣人立象以尽意, 设卦以尽情伪, 系辞焉, 以尽其言。变而通之以尽利, 鼓之舞之以尽神。”]. (The twelfth chapter in *Xi Ci Zhuan part A*).

²⁸ *Yi Jing*, also known as *Zhou Yi*; refer to footnote 21 for further details.

²⁹ Xiangfeng Wang, ‘From Zhou Yi to Baihua Zong’s Theory of Yi Xiang: A Historical Analysis of Chinese Yi Xiang Category’, *Journal of Liaoning University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)* 1 (2002): 5–10.

³⁰ Ibid.

medium (Xiang). According to Baihua Zong's definition, Yi Xiang is a progression of concrete imagination,³¹ and is the primary way of thinking to realise artistic creations, and creating an artistic conception occurs through concrete imagination, rather than through physical images. In Taoist works, 'Xiang' refers to an entity, whereas 'Yi' refers to the creative process of mind. The creator creates Xiang in this progression through subjective and objective perception and integration, as well as through the interconnection of their emotions. Baihua's interpretation of Yi Xiang is more akin to the Taoist process of forming Yi. He regards Yi Xiang as the starting point for artistic creation, whereas the Taoist Yi Xiang is the end result.

In artistic practice, the creator forms a certain imaginary Yi (implied meaning) through their perception of physicality and inner emotion. The creator may be prompted by this Yi to visualise their imagination. In the progress of visualisation, the creator forms Yi Xiang through the simulation of physical things and the integration with Yi. Therefore, the potential meaning of Yi Xiang in this research reflects the creator's imagination and emotional concretisation, yet has an openness that can make the viewer have different feelings and interpretations, which result in a certain entity/outcome.³²

2.2 Chinese Ink-wash Painting

2.2.1 Introduction

Ink-wash painting takes the nature of objects as the best state of painting and achieves an ideal artistic conception and abstraction through simple black, white and grey, as well as wet-dry techniques.³³ 'Ink divides into five colours' is the technical name for ink painting using water to adjust the ink density, reflecting the colour of coke, and then thick, heavy, light and clear: five levels of change.³⁴ They are not different colours, but various shades of ink. Infinite possibilities of colour gradients can be generated from the various shades.

³¹ Baihua Zong, *Strolling in Aesthetics* (Shanghai, China: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1981).

³² Zhang, 'Xie Liu's Aesthetic'.

³³ L. I. Xiaoguang, 'Establishment of Meaning of Ink Wash Painting in Modern Times: Evolution of Chinese Ink Wash Painting as a Formal Language of Oriental Figure Painting', *Studies in Literature and Language* 8.3 (2014): 152–5.

³⁴ Way De-Lor, Shen-Wen Huang and Zen-Chung Shih, 'Physical-based Model of Ink Diffusion in Chinese Paintings', *Journal of WSCG* 11 (2003): 1–3.

2.2.2 Yi Xiang (Chinese Imagery Language) in Ink Animation

Ink animation imagery language mainly refers to the artist's spiritual thoughts, aesthetic interests and artistic atmosphere. It includes verve, emotion and brush techniques. Verve refers to the depiction of Yi Xiang³⁵ and spatial structure.³⁶ Emotion refers to how different emotions represent different Yi Xiang, and it is necessary to integrate emotion into the ink painting animation scenery.³⁷ Although exaggerated performance is a common expression in contemporary animation, ink painting is frequently indirect in its expression of mood, as it is concerned with the artistic characteristics of imagery. This metaphorical mood is expressed incisively and vividly in the 2D ink animation, *Feelings of Mountains and Waters*.³⁸ In this animation, a master bids farewell to an apprentice, and the intense and complex emotion is manifested through rain, wind, clouds moving and a group of river waves with violent turbulence (Figure 2.1). At this point, the animation's rhythm accelerates, the music accelerates, and the sadness associated with the master's farewell is conveyed to the audience through the depiction of diverse natural scenarios.



Figure 2.1. Farewell imagery scene, Wei Te, *Feelings of Mountains and Waters* [山水情], Shanghai Animation Film Studio, 1988, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_0oX03tr4I&t=1007s.

³⁵ The depiction of Yi Xiang means that, when creating Xiang, it must be similar to objective things, yet not exactly the same, and must be integrated with context, implied meaning and emotion; that is, the expression of Yi should be vivid in Xiang. Ouya Liu, 'Imagery Language Research in Ink Animation,' master's thesis, Hangzhou Normal University 2019.

³⁶ The spatial structure refers to the visual expression of the integration in virtual and real senses, and the treatment of blank composition. Liu, 'Imagery Language Research in Ink Animation'.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ *Feelings of Mountains and Waters*, directed by Wei Te (Shanghai Animation Film Studio, 1988), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_0oX03tr4I&t=311s.

2.2.3 Cun (Wrinkle) Brushwork

Cun [皴] brushwork is a Chinese artistic language form refined by landscape painters of all dynasties, which has been in continuous practice in China since the Southern Dynasty (420 to 589 CE).³⁹ It is one of the most important techniques of ink landscape painting. In freehand ink, the ink lines based on the art of Chinese painting have made significant contributions to the development of five traditional techniques: ‘Cun, rub, stained, points, and hook’⁴⁰ and expressions, as well as drying, dyeing, pouring, producing, breaking and other techniques.⁴¹ Combining ink increases the texture and movement of images, resulting in a striking depiction of the state of Chinese art.

Among all the techniques mentioned above, Cun brushwork is applied to my practice most frequently. Cun brushwork is an expression form developed by ancient painters in response to the varied geological structures of mountains, stones and vegetation.⁴² By applying Cun technique, the artist may express Yi through external perception of the world. Generally, this type of brushwork can be divided into point, line and chunk (Figure 2.2). Through the change of texture, Cun can show specific differences in shape, texture thickness and the concave or convex curves of rocks (Figure 2.3). In Figure 2.3, through the application of Cun, the rock retains a clearly visible sawtooth shape in the snow, as well as the sense of massiveness and layers caused by the snow.

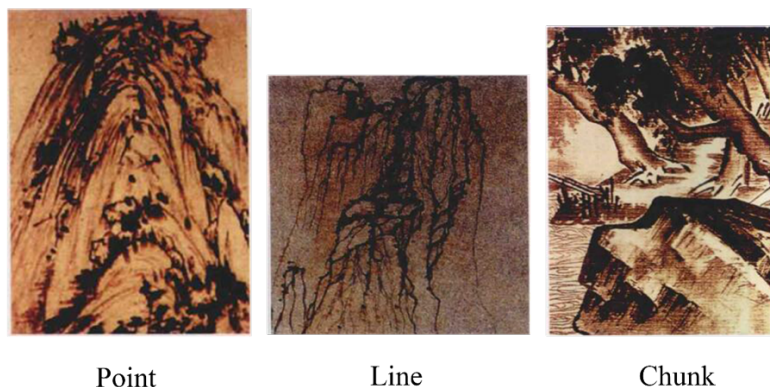


Figure 2.2. Examples of Cun brushwork.

³⁹ Mingzhe Chen, ‘Modern Significance of Traditional Cun Brushwork’, *Arts Circle* 000.001 (2018): 58–61.

⁴⁰ In these five traditional techniques, Cun brushwork is the primary distinctive technique of ink-wash painting. Hook, rub, stained and points brushwork are used with Cun when painting mountains, stones and trees. Chen, ‘Modern Significance’.

⁴¹ Jing Wang, ‘Interpretation of the Expression of Digital Ink Animation’ (Master’s diss., Nanjing University of the Arts, 2017): 11–2.

⁴² Chen, ‘Modern Significance’.



Figure 2.3. Ran Ju, 五代南唐巨然雪圖, 五代十国 (755/874/902-979), traditional Chinese ink painting, National Palace Museum, Taiwan.

2.2.4 Chinese Ink-Wash in 3D: Two Case Studies

Both 2D and 3D ink animation have the imagery language of traditional ink painting. The difference is that the imagery language of 2D ink animation is reflected in the depiction of things,⁴³ while 3D ink animation is mainly reflected in imagery generated by the fluidity and realism of ink.⁴⁴ The incorporation of digital technology offers the benefits of the randomness and flexible nature of ink in water.⁴⁵ With 3D technology, ink animation has been applied in the commercialised form of television commercials and title sequences.

In the opening of *The Long Night*,⁴⁶ the randomness of ink and the feeling of depression evoked by the dark colours represent the story's gloomy and sinful emotional tones (Figure 2.4). The aesthetic expression of ink animation is no longer limited to the imitation of traditional ink painting. As an element applied to animation, it can convey the Yi (implied meaning) of the plot, so that a crime is introduced to the audience without literal expression. The ink gradually drains from the city, implying that it is being corrupted by sin. The opening 3D ink depicts the darkness of the criminal and the helplessness of victims in the story. Similarly, in my practice, I use the imagery created by the dark colour and random fluidity of 3D ink to express the Yi Xiang of the polluted sea and the sea spirit's evil state (see further analysis in chapter 4).

⁴³ For example, in landscape painting, the use of Cun to depict mountains and stones, and the ink language of integrating emotion into the scene when simulating physical things.

⁴⁴ Ming Sun, 'Chinese Ink Painting Effect Into 3D Animation Design' (Master's diss., Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts, 2010).

⁴⁵ Given that 2D ink painting is made by humans' physical skills with their hands, the randomness and flexibility reflect the artistic conception. However, 3D ink presents a simulation of ink dropped in water, and is more about simulation of the ink's physicality. While 2D ink is more about Yi Xiang, 3D ink's technical simulation is more about the progress from Jian Xiang to Li Xiang to form the ink's physical nature. Most of the artistic creation in 3D ink starts from the specific Yi and then simulates ink for visualisation. This progress can also be formed as Yi Xiang.

⁴⁶ *The Long Night*, directed by Yifu Chen (iQIYI, 2020), https://www.iqiyi.com/v_2g5a5i86730.html.

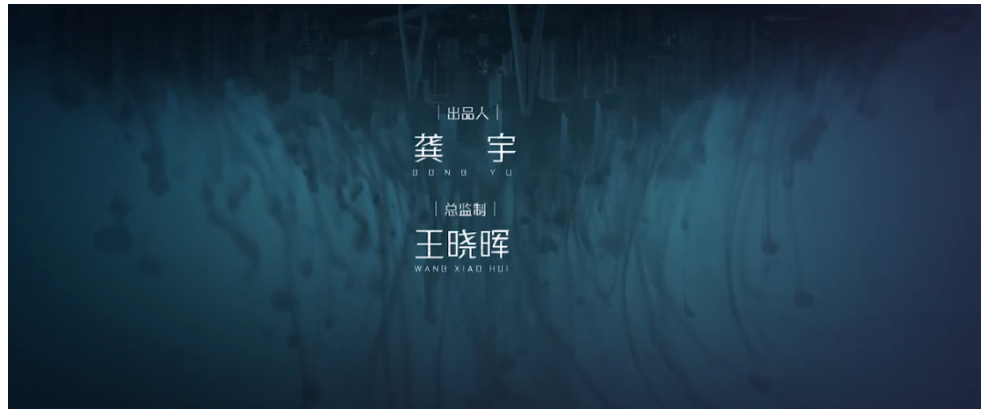


Figure 2.4. Yifu Chen, *The Long Night* [沉默的真相], 2020.

In *The Power of Brand*,⁴⁷ a drop of ink in water continuously transforms into mountains, swimming fish (Figure 2.5), a dragon, the Great Wall, Tai Chi dancers and trains, which gives the audience a visual impact with Chinese ink characteristics in cultural symbols. This classic imagery exemplifies the theme ‘from intangible to tangible, from bounded to boundless’.⁴⁸ The hyper-realistic ink elements bring this commercial to life. The director used the rhythmic exchange between flow and dissipation to simulate dynamic cultural elements from ancient to modern times.

The imagery language of the hyper-realistic ink inspired me to apply certain 3D ink effects in *Jingwei Reclamation*, such as dynamic brushstroke thickness and flow effects (Figure 2.6). After observing the details of the transformation of ink in this commercial, I adjusted the specific parameters of ink in my practice to enhance the accuracy of images. The 3D ink effect used in *Jingwei Reclamation* was simulated through the TurbulenceFD⁴⁹ plug-in in C4D. By adjusting different parameters to preview the effect, the real-time preview function of this plug-in can control the concentration, diffusion and flow of ink, thereby establishing the most suitable imagery dynamic ink effect for the frame.

⁴⁷ China Central Television, *The Power of Brand*, ‘Ink Episode’ (CCTV-1, 2010).

⁴⁸ Laian Wu, ‘Discussion on the Strategic Path of the International Development of Chinese Animation Industry—Taking *The Power of Brand* as an Example’, *Chinese Journal of Journalism & Communication* 07 (2010): 77–82.

⁴⁹ In general, the working principle of TurbulenceFD is to specify an object as an emitter, cache various parameters in various channels, cooperate with various force fields of TurbulenceFD, and set the flame and smoke shaders. Finally, the effect of flame and smoke is simulated through the default standard or physical renderers of C4D. The ink effect is made through the smoke shader channel.



Figure 2.5. Swimming koi fish, *The Power of Brand*, 2010.



Figure 2.6. Ink movement, *The Power of Brand*, 2010.

2.3 Analysis of Character Features in Chinese Shadow Puppetry

2.3.1 Introduction

Shadow puppets are a form of classic Chinese folk art, using animal skins or paper to create character silhouettes. The earliest shadow puppets can be traced back to the Han Dynasty, more than 2,000 years ago.⁵⁰ The performances use a white curtain similar to a movie screen, illuminated from behind. Actors behind the screen manipulate the puppets, which are crafted in advance and fitted with movable joints, to display shadows on the screen to the audience, alongside musical drums and libretto to enhance the story performance (Figure 2.7).



Figure 2.7. Chinese shadow puppetry, *Mouse and Cat*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZoMoZyX53UU&t=95s>.

2.3.2 Appearance

Shadow puppetry combines silhouette modelling, plane modelling, exaggerated deformation and linear modelling. Additionally, it incorporates traditional Chinese elements, such as ancient murals, Buddha statues, opera facial makeup, clothing and paper-cuts.⁵¹ The puppets are relatively thin and light, making them ideal for lighting to project illusory effects. Two types of facial pattern line carving exist: *Yin* and *Yang*.⁵² In

⁵⁰ Liqun Wei, *History of Chinese Shadow Puppets Theatre* (Beijing, China: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 2007).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Yin and Yang in ancient Chinese philosophy is a concept of dualism. John Bellaimey, 'The Hidden Meanings of Yin and Yang,' TED-Ed, video, August 3, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezmR9Attpyc>.

In shadow puppet theatre, it refers to the two basic carving methods of Chinese traditional lettering. Yin involves hollowing out the outline of the body, while Yang involves retaining the outline of the performance body and hollowing out the rest.

terms of puppet design, the head is typically larger than the body, the body is narrow at the top and wide at the bottom, and the arms extend past the knees. The facial sculpture has a distinct outline.

The portraits of characters are also used in *Yin* and *Yang* carving techniques in *Jingwei Reclamation*. For example, the face of the Emperor Yan's young daughter, *Yin* is used to highlight the expression and outline, while the patterns on the clothes were carved with *Yang*. The body shape of the little girl was also designed according to the proportions of shadow puppets (Figure 2.8). The characters in shadow puppetry are designed by combining abstract and realistic methods, which means that the puppets' movements and expressions need to be similar to real people, yet in an external artistic form.



Figure 2.8. Xiaoying Ye, comparison of Emperor Yan's daughter and a shadow puppet, 2020.

The characters in shadow puppetry are not based on accurate shapes and structures, but on the composition of the picture and the need for expression. Given that shadow puppets do not have facial expressions that can be edited, as in animation, puppet modelling focuses on the outline, rather than facial expressions, and the contour lines vary in thickness. In *Jingwei Reclamation*, I developed modern technology to add rich expression, special effects and camera applications to create subtler, more emotional cues. The characteristics of *Yin* and *Yang* carving, facial and body shape, proportion and the translucent texture of shadow puppetry were applied to the scenes and characters.

2.3.3 Motion and Action

To better display the unique characteristics of shadow puppets in animation, the action and motion conventions of puppets have also been applied to *Jingwei Reclamation*. Most traditional puppets are composed of 11 pieces: the head, chest, abdomen, two legs, two upper arms, two forearms and two hands. Each shadow puppet has three operating sticks, one of which is fixed on the puppet's neck to control the body and head, while the other two are fixed to the puppet's hands to control the upper limbs. Although the legs are not directly controlled, the shadow puppet can directly drive the leg swing with the movement of the head and upper body, and can use the edge under the curtain as a support.⁵³ The actions of shadow puppets are based on the imitation of live-action dramatic performances and have an exaggerated form.⁵⁴ This exaggerated action could not be reconciled with the overall style and emotional tone of *Jingwei Reclamation*; thus, I included intertextuality with Western shadow theatre to enhance the Yi Xiang generated by the shadow puppets' action characteristics.

⁵³ Li Jie, 'Chinese Shadow Play', in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Traditional Chinese Culture* ed. Chan Sin-wai (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

⁵⁴ As a result of the mechanical nature of the shadow puppet's action, it is necessary to express the puppet's emotion through large-scale and wide-ranging actions throughout the performance. As a result, the shadow puppet's actions are exaggerated.

2.4 Western Shadow Theatre

2.4.1 Introduction

Silent and powerful, faceless and face, which is the charm of shadow. Western shadow theatre is a form of dance that is suitable for small stage performances. It is also called ‘shadow dancing’. Shadow dancing has its origins in China, around 300 years ago.⁵⁵ Although Western shadow theatre is inspired by China, its artistic nature and imagery language is different from Chinese shadow puppetry. Chinese shadow puppets present imagery language through the influence of music and action in traditional Chinese opera, as well as the exaggerated form of puppets. However, Western shadow theatre presents visual expressions through the use of light and shadow. The performance venue usually has a white screen, and people or objects projected under the curtain are represented by a shadow feature of the black plane. Through setting different types of light sources with actors’ and actresses’ physical cooperation, performers can create different fantastical shapes (Figure 2.9). The dancer’s body language is presented in shadow through the light. The variability of the shadow enables dancers to produce various visual symbols and imagery language through the curtain. In the shadow puppet segment of *Jingwei Reclamation*, the flexibility of the shadow applies to the design of action, which may work against the restraint of Yi Xiang imposed by rigid action in a Chinese context. In this instance, darkness and light are the primary intertextual parts of shadow theatre and Chinese shadow puppetry.



Figure 2.9. Pilobolus Dance Theatre, *Shadowland—The Flower*, 2009,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0EO8rhCHhw&t=120s>.

⁵⁵ Lisa Sowards, ‘Out of the Shadows and Into the Spotlight: Behind the Scenes with the Amazing Dancers Tipped to Win Britain’s Got Talent (Despite Being Hungarian)’, *Daily Mail*, 31 May 2013, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2333630/Britains-Got-Talent-Attraction-Behind-scenes-amazing-dancers-tipped-win.html>.

2.4.2 Darkness and Light

In shadow theatre, performers use shadows as a visual factor in dramatic scenes. The effects of light in shadow theatre can reflect a 2D feeling in 3D spaces. The darkness in the performance has both practical and dramaturgical significance.⁵⁶ Darkness enables the audience to focus on the illuminated area and provides a clearer view of the stage and performance content.

The darkness may be regarded as distinct in drama, although it is not illuminated. Although the imagery of darkness and light in shadow theatre have not been sufficiently recorded in the literature,⁵⁷ *Shadowland—The Flower* shows the dramatic significance of shadow theatre in darkness and light (Figure 2.9). This performance tells a journey-based story⁵⁸ in the land of shadows,⁵⁹ which combines multimedia, projected shadow play and front-of-screen choreography.⁶⁰ However, the director did not use multimedia and front-of-screen at the beginning of the land of shadows; rather, projected shadow play appears.⁶¹ When I first saw the shadow performance in the story, the experience was at once gloomy and uncanny. The strange creatures in the story are described as being at ‘once comic and evil, threatening and seductive’.⁶² Given that the shadow image of the strange creatures connotes evil, there must a reason for the director’s use of the white curtain and projected light. This led me to research the dramatic significance of light and darkness. In the context of dramatic theatre, darkness and light connote the opposition of good and evil. As Russo observed in *Oresteia*, light is associated with joy and goodness in various literature, whereas darkness is associated with sorrow and evil. Light implies salvation, virtue and glory, while darkness is attributed to the obscurity and death.⁶³ However, in *Oresteia*’s opening speech, the interplay of light and darkness is also given

⁵⁶ Palmer Scott, ‘Harnessing Shadows: A Historical Perspective on the Role of Darkness in the Theatre’, in *Theatre in the Dark: Shadow, Gloom and Blackout in Contemporary Theatre* ed. Adam Alston and Martin Welton (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017): 37–63.

⁵⁷ I undertook a deep literature research on shadow theatre and shadow dancing, but the analysis is more focused on dancers’ body language and creative shadow image presentation, while not considering darkness and light.

⁵⁸ The story is a surreal tale of a young girl’s sensational world as she comes of age.

⁵⁹ ‘Shadowland—Pilobolus’, Pilobolus, last modified 2009, <https://pilobolus.org/shadowland>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ ‘Night. A teenage girl prepares for bed. As she falls asleep, the wall of her room mysteriously starts to spin, trapping her on the other side—a transfigured body stuck in the land of shadows. Unable to escape, the girl sets off on a journey of discovery. Strange creatures appear along the way—at once comic and evil, threatening and seductive.’ ‘Shadowland—Pilobolus’, Pilobolus

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Nicholas Mark Russo, *The Imagery of Light and Darkness in the Oresteia* (United States: The Ohio State University, 1974).

irony and gloomy foreshadowing.⁶⁴ Therefore, in different contexts, light may also generate darkness and sadness.⁶⁵ The colour or brightness of light also affects its significance in dramatic scenes, while a shadow illuminated by light may present dark imagery.⁶⁶ *Shadowland—The Flower* uses light, shadow and darkness to show the strange creatures as evil and threatening, while the girl's body language presents the strange creatures as comic and seductive, which both enhance the creatures' threatening sense and indicate the story content and emotion.

In the shadow puppet section of *Jingwei Reclamation*, the boundary of the screen created by the projection lamp is integrated with the darkness of the theatre (Figures 2.9 and 2.10), with the result that the performance presented on the screen is the only thing on which the audience focuses. When we are in darkness, we are more sensitive to light and can see the emotional expression of images in the story. The projection lamp casts light on the previously dark frames, which sets the stage for the upcoming plot. The large area of darkness contrasts sharply with the small area of light, and the characters are black (Figure 2.10), which generates a gloomy emotion, rather than a joyful sensation, and draws attention to the light centre.



Figure 2.10. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, the praying frames, 2021.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁶⁵ Such light is embodied in the beacon light of Oresteia, which ironically foretells doom for the household. Throughout the drama, men in the darkness of sorrow await the light of joy. The true light of happiness and redemption will shine radiantly. Compared with the dim light emitted by the beacon in the darkness, strong light, such as sunlight or bright light, can often represent happiness and kindness, but depends on the specific context. Russo, *The Imagery of Light*.

⁶⁶ Russo, *The Imagery of Light*.

2.4.3 Analysis of Shadow and Light in Animation

*Invention of Love*⁶⁷ is a retrospective of silent films from the 1920s.⁶⁸ In this short film, the characters and background are all silhouettes, and shadow imagery is used to create a strong contrast with the background light, which leads the audience to unconsciously focus on the emotion and plot described in the ‘shadow’ part. In the dark room, the silhouette of the protagonist contrasts with the light source and the weak light from the hollowed-out part, which increase the audience’s immersion in the stifling feeling of the protagonist yearning for love in a mechanical device (Figure 2.11). The film uses the characteristics of light and shadow to depict the character’s desire for love and the subtle emotion of becoming lost.

The characters in *Jingwei Reclamation* have the characteristics of hollow carving, which is similar to the hollowing-out setting in the film. The hollowing-out effect in *Invention of Love* is used to enhance the carving effect of the characters, which is reflected in the light scattering that enhances the light transmission and weakens the line features. I also apply the use of ‘shadow’ imagery and the background of contrast characteristics in *Invention of Love* in my character designs. For instance, in *Jingwei Reclamation*, the crowd on stage takes the shape of a shadow, in contrast to the main character, which is created using a translucent texture. This not only differentiates the characters, but also adds darkness to the crowd, emphasising the helplessness and compromise of Emperor Yan’s daughter, who chose to sacrifice herself. The prominence of ‘shadow’ against the background (Figure 2.12) directs the audience’s attention to the plot content expressed by the characters.

⁶⁷ *Invention of Love*, directed by Andrey Shushkov (HHG Film Company, 2010).

⁶⁸ This silent film is influenced by the expressionist style, and the story is straightforward. Although the characters and close-up objects are two-dimensional, Shushkov skilfully depicts the urban landscape as three-dimensional, using layers of superimposed silhouettes, and introduces the background with increasingly lighter colours, creating an illusion of an aerial perspective (Figure 2.13).



Figure 2.11. Andrey Shushkov, *Invention of Love*, 2010.



Figure 2.12. Andrey Shushkov, *Invention of Love*, 2010.



Figure 2.13. Andrey Shushkov, *Invention of Love*, 2010.



Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Research Methodology

The methodology in this study was practice-led research, yet with implemented ‘research-led practice’ to conduct cyclic academic research. Smith and Dean explain that research-led practice is ‘a terminology which we use to complement practice-led research, and suggests more clearly than practice-led research that scholarly research can lead to creative work’.⁶⁹ Essentially, ‘research-led practice’ is intended to support practice-led research to establish a clear academic research model. Candy suggests that:

Practice-led Research is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The main focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice.⁷⁰

Candy’s definition shows that the term ‘practice-led’ is primarily focused on new knowledge application and draws on the operational significance of knowledge for practice, rather than on gaining new knowledge in practice.⁷¹ In my understanding, practice-led research devotes more attention to the influence of new interdisciplinary knowledge on existing knowledge—that is, new knowledge with operational significance for practice may not be related to the area of expertise in practice, so new knowledge will have operational significance. With the developed model of practice-led methodology in relationship with the term research-led practice, Smith states, ‘we do not see the two patterns as separate, but as interconnected in ways which are very complex’.⁷² Thus, Smith advances the iterative cyclic web of practice-led research, in which the relationship between research-led practice and practice-led research is defined as:

Drawing on the experience of producing creative works that have started with research (research-led practice) and works that have started with a creative project but have proved a rich field for theoretical exploration (practice-led research).⁷³

The ‘new knowledge’ in this study is the theory of intertextuality, while operational significance refers to the concept of technical intertextuality. According to Smith’s

⁶⁹ Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, ‘Introduction: Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice—Towards the Iterative Cyclic Web’, in H. Smith & R. T. Dean (Eds.), *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press, 2009): 7.

⁷⁰ Linda Candy, ‘Practice Based Research: A Guide’, *CCS Report 1.2* (2006): 1-9.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Smith and Dean, ‘Introduction’, 8.

⁷³ Ibid, 252.

iterative cyclic web of practice-led research, research progress is divided into three cyclic stages. As shown in Figure 3.1, this study started with the exploration of intertextuality and discussed the specific application of intertextuality in animation, which was research-led practice (Stage 1). Connecting to the purpose of bridging Chinese and Western cultures, the study initiated practice according to previous study of intertextuality (Stage 2). During this period, the practice faced additional problems between the various contexts and intertextuality, which involved further research through the iterative cyclic web with research-led practice (Stage 3). During Stages 2 and 3, Smith suggests that:

Selection of an idea may instigate a return to the idea/generation stage. Similarly, the investigation/research stage might also result in a revisiting of the generation of ideas and so on. The cycle structure is combined with a web-like structure to demonstrate how it is also possible to jump from one point in the cycle to any other.⁷⁴

For example, in the third stage of my developed model, self-review and external feedback could result in reflection on the planning stage of the storyboard or the practice-led research (Stage 2). Each decision made that depended on reflection in action needed to meet the research question and aims. Thus, the term ‘research-led practice’ helped the practice-led methodology develop a precise research structure.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 21.

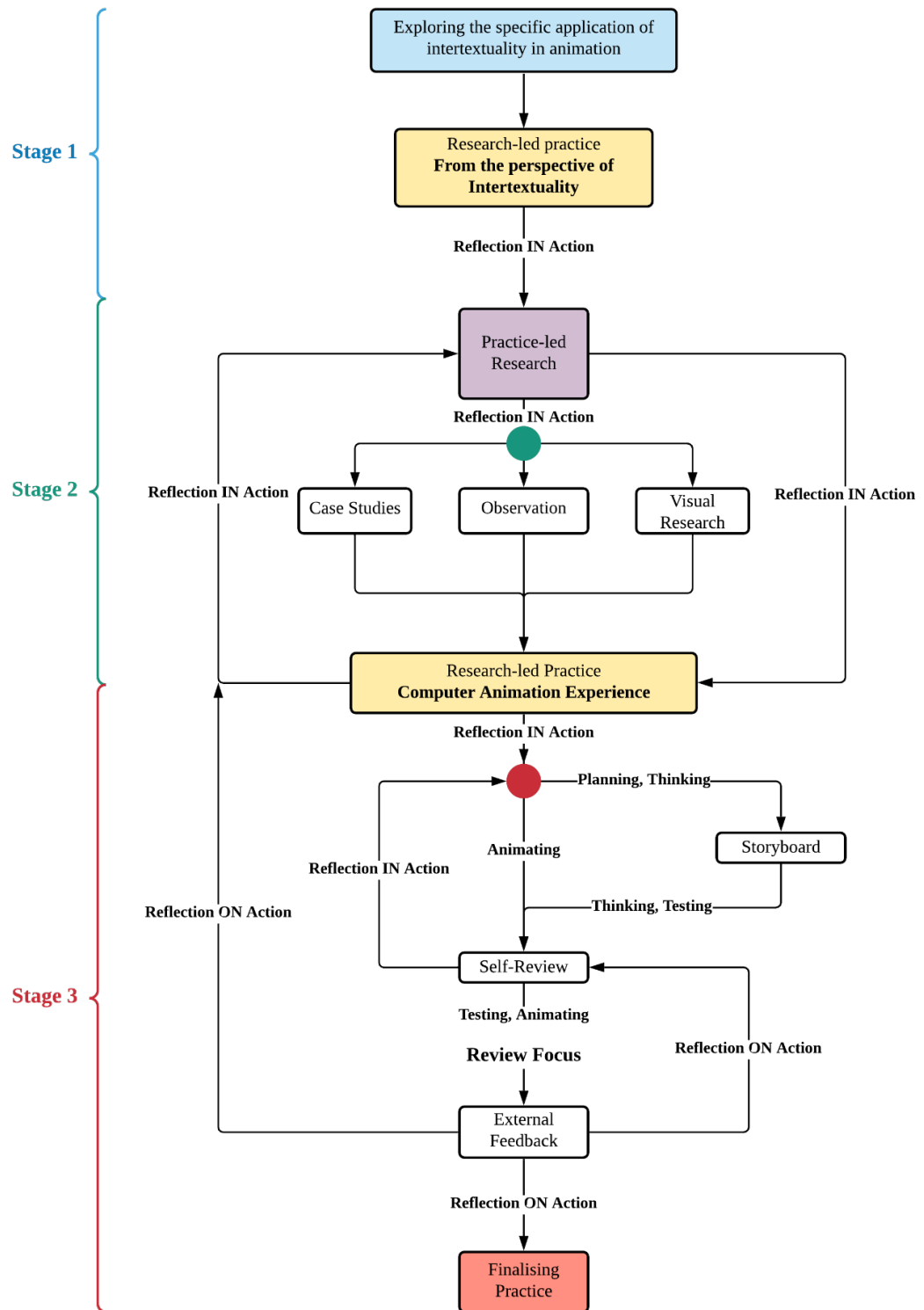


Figure 3.1. The iterative cyclic web, Xiaoying Ye, 2021.

3.2 Research Methods

As shown in Figure 3.1, this study conducted intertextual animation practice through six research methods: case studies, visual research, observation, storyboard, self-review and external feedback. These are each discussed in the following sections.

3.2.1 Case Studies

A case study may be defined as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.⁷⁵

This study adopted the case study method to explore the application and connection of the Yi Xiang system in 2D and 3D Chinese ink animation, and darkness and light in Western shadow theatre from an intertextuality perspective. There were four contemporary digital cases identified in Chapter 2's review of contextual knowledge, which were analysed in Chinese ink-wash painting and Western shadow theatre. In 2D ink animation, the *Feelings of Mountains and Waters* demonstrates the use of Yi Xiang to reflect emotions, and the content in the animation was discussed to illustrate the characteristics of Chinese imagery language in 2D ink animation to describe scenery, emotions and imagery. The two cases of *The Long Night* and *The Power of Brand* reinforce a hyper-realistic expression in Yi Xiang of ink animation that transforms traditional 2D ink painting techniques to a 3D digital presentation. In *Invention of Love*, I learnt how lightness and darkness produce Yi Xiang in shadow theatre and what form is embodied in animation. Thus, from the perspective of intertextuality, the case study helped me establish a link between the Chinese Yi Xiang system, traditional ink animation, and Western understanding of 3D light and darkness

3.2.2 Visual Research

Visual research methods are methods that use visual materials as part of the process of generating evidence to explore research questions.⁷⁶ This study used the method of visual research to explore application of the corresponding contexts during the animation

⁷⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Vol. 5 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009).

⁷⁶ Rose Gillian, 'On the Relation between Visual Research Methods and Contemporary Visual Culture', *The Sociological Review* 62.1 (2014): 24–46.

creation period, such as Cun brushwork in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2.3) and the divine tree discussed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2). I studied Cun brushwork visually to create 2D digital ink texture in my practice. Cun brushwork involves the classification of points, lines and surfaces, and the visual research method focused on these three classifications. I selected Yu Dian (raindrop) Cun⁷⁷ [雨点皴] and Da Fu Pi (axe splitting) Cun⁷⁸ [大斧劈皴] as examples to introduce relevant visual research that I conducted. Figure 3.2 presents an interpretation of raindrop texturing that includes the usage of mountains, rocks and peaks. The texture formed by raindrop texturing can be used to represent forests in mountains. This expression method was applied to the scenes in Figures 4.9 and 4.10 (Chapter 4). Figure 4.9 includes Da Fu Pi Cun brushwork, which belongs to the chunk texturing method. Da Fu Pi Cun is generally used to represent hard and angular rocks. As illustrated in Figure 3.3, Da Fu Pi Cun primarily uses dry rubbing techniques to depict rocks' complex edges and corners. The visual research of Cun brushwork encouraged me to undertake more rigorous 2D ink digital painting and provided me with a standard for self-reflection.

During the research progress, visual research not only allowed me to better understand the usage of ink strokes, but also inspired me to create elements of *mise-en-scène*, such as .

The Divine Tree, which was inspired by the No. 1 large-scale bronze tree from Sanxingdui.⁷⁹ Before the animation production, I had been considering which elements both conformed to the historical background of Chinese mythology and could integrate intertextually with Western culture. I found many interesting and profound bronze statues from Sanxingdui's official website, such as the 'sacrificial ceremony' in Exhibition Hall 3 (Figure 3.4). These visual studies conducted during the planning stage prior to animation production inspired me to develop an adaptation concept about Chinese sacrifice culture in ancient times. Further, because of the strong cultural aspect of these bronzes, I was not able to associate them with Western culture until after I found the

⁷⁷ Yu Dian Cun looks like raindrops and small grains, they gather into Cun, like sand gathers into mountains. Later generations named it because of its similar shape.

⁷⁸ This technique involves using the brush like an axe to chop wood pieces, thick on one side and thin on the other. Later generations named it because of its similar shape to axe splitting.

⁷⁹ Sanxingdui [三星堆] is an archaeological site and major Bronze Age culture in modern Guanghan, Sichuan, China.

large-scale bronze tree. The belief in nature and trees may be more in line with the concept of environmental and peaceful symbols in Western culture.

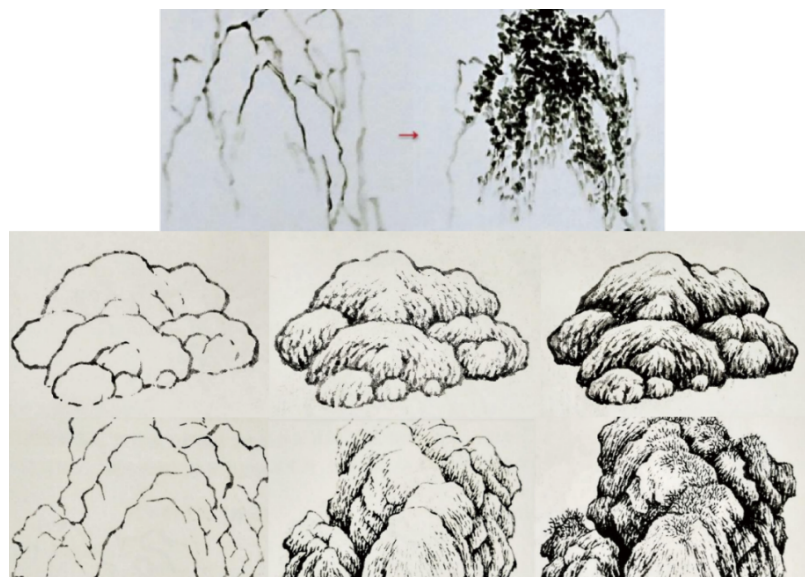


Figure 3.2. Visual research on the interpretation of Yu Dian Cun.

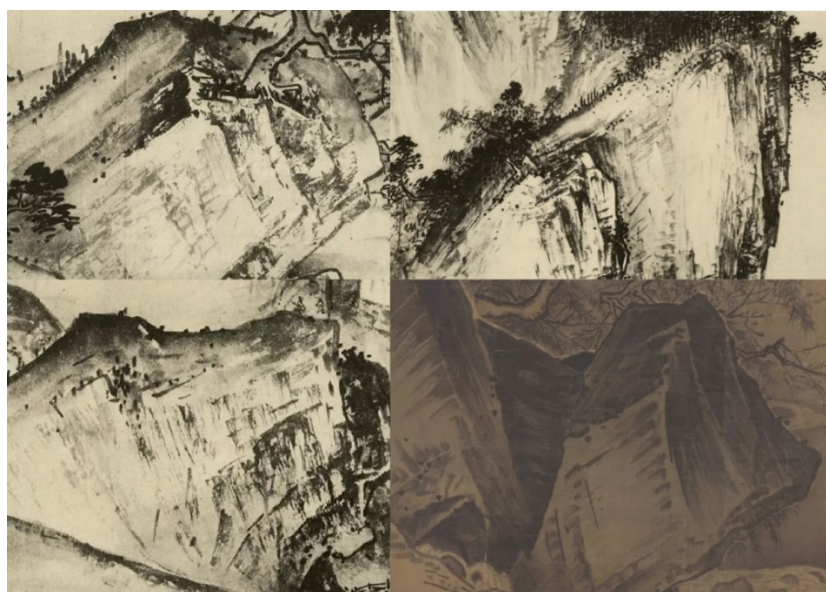


Figure 3.3. Visual research on Da Fu Pi Cun.



Figure 3.4. The sacrificial ceremony, Sanxindui Museum, <http://www.sxd.cn/index.asp>.

3.2.3 Observation

Observation is an empirical research method used in quantitative and qualitative naturalistic studies focused on understanding behavior and interactions as they unfold in real-time, which makes it particularly salient for examining the processes associated with the generation and adoption of creative ideas.⁸⁰

The observation method was mainly applied in my Chinese shadow puppet research. My animated characters have similar motions and appearances to shadow puppets. Thus, to better understand the *Yin* and *Yang* engravings of shadow puppets and the rules governing their movement, I obtained a series of shadow puppets from China, one of which was made according to traditional techniques⁸¹ (Figure 3.9). By observing and manipulating the shadow puppets, I could more accurately apply their shape and the proportion of their different parts, such as the size of the head and body, to my animation practice.

Given that three sticks control the puppet and the connections between joints, the puppet's actions are somewhat inflexible. Shadow puppets are usually fixed to the control stick on the head, so the lower body is usually uncontrolled. Therefore, when the lower body is fixed on the screen (e.g., when the lower body is placed on the screen's edge to form a kneeling posture), the action of the upper limbs is frequently unrelated to the lower limbs, but they move through the joint, as shown in the praying frames in Figure 2.10 (Chapter 2), where only the villagers' upper bodies move. Observing real shadow puppets enabled

⁸⁰ Jen Katz-Buonincontro and Ross C. Anderson, 'A Review of Articles Using Observation Methods to Study Creativity in Education (1980–2018)', *The Journal of Creative Behavior* 54.3 (2020): 508–24.

⁸¹ This is a complicated process of hand carving with more than 3,000 knives through eight processes: leather selection, leather making, painting, engraving, colour application, sweating and ironing, binding and joining.

me to confirm the standardisation of shadow puppet movements used in animation on a consistent real-time basis.



Figure 3.5. Photograph of shadow puppet, Xiaoying Ye, 2021.

3.2.4 Storyboard

Typically, a storyboard is a graphic organiser of sequential drawings used to pre-visualise digital artefacts.⁸² In my research progress, the storyboard was developed throughout the research process to record the flow of ideas and experiences, which helped me generate self-review in the later stages. At the initial stage of the research, the storyboard was used to draft a record of my brainstorming of ideas and research into the research topic (Figure 3.6). In pre-production, the storyboard in a draft form provided me with a clear understanding of the overall framework. A possible plot and script were visualised in the form of a draft storyboard to capture a variety of story and frame arrangement possibilities. Based on the draft storyboard, I could screen feasible ideas during self-review and improve the plot and frame setting.



Figure 3.6. Part of the draft storyboard, Xiaoying Ye, 2021.

⁸² Alyssa Maio, 'What is a Storyboard? The Fundamentals to Get You Started', studiobinder, last modified March 5, 2020, <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-a-storyboard/>.

3.2.5 Self-review

Self-review was used as a method of reflection in my research, wherein '[s]elf-review is the deliberate process of preparing, gathering information, making sense of information, and making decisions in order to bring about improvement'.⁸³ During self-review, a personal reflection on the form to which the integration of shadow puppetry and Western shadow theatre in animation has gradually updated. At the start of the third stage of my research (Figure 3.1), the design concept for shadow puppet animation was primarily fluency to demonstrate a different digital form⁸⁴ of shadow puppetry. However, through repeated self-review with the plot arrangement in the draft storyboard, this form was deemed unsuitable for expressing the plot of the shadow puppet animation. Therefore, I repeated the second stage of the research (Figure 3.1) on shadow puppets and shadow theatre in greater detail, and discovered another possible artistic expression⁸⁵ for shadow puppets. Self-review helped me develop the research on relevant contexts in-depth, and helped me discover the different forms of intertextual diverse contexts to improve practice and research.

3.2.6 External Feedback

External feedback comes from others⁸⁶ and provides a perspective beyond that of the creator to help the creator understand different critical thinking from a professional and peer perspective. Professional feedback was provided by my supervisor, Chen Chen,⁸⁷ who has in-depth knowledge of the Yi Xiang system and is an expert in film and digital media. Throughout the exploration, research and production stages, Chen gave me creative inspiration and critical guidance. In practice, I frequently lost sight of the

⁸³ Te Whāriki Online, 'Internal Evaluation', Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI), n.d., <https://tewhariki.tki.org.nz/en/design-your-curriculum/internal-evaluation/>.

⁸⁴ In the initial intertextual application of shadow puppetry and Western shadow theatre, I concentrated on how to integrate shadow puppet characteristics with the fluid movement of contemporary animation through the use of digital media. At the time, I attempted to integrate Western shadow theatre with shadow puppetry by altering the shape of the shadow. However, the final effect was unsatisfactory and failed to convey the plot's suggestions of gloom and restraint.

⁸⁵ To express the bound Yi Xiang, I examined the puppet in detail and discovered that the puppet's mechanical and rigid manner of action could convey the metaphor of being bound. As a result, I emphasised the rigidity of the shadow puppet and integrated the use of darkness and light, so that the puppet inspiration retained the majority of the shadow puppet's characteristics. Only editable facial expressions were added to convey the character's subtle emotions.

⁸⁶ Wayne Elderton, 'Coaching Feedback Series: Part 4: Internal vs External Feedback', last modified 3 October 2020, <https://acecoach.com/coaching-feedback-series-part-4-internal-vs-external-feedback>.

⁸⁷ Chen Chen is an internationally exhibiting film director, writer and designer with a background in both film and television production.

audience's perspective and presented the frame content according to my own understanding, but Chen always patiently indicated areas of potential audience confusion, which helped me develop a more objective review method. The professional critical discussion not only made me more circumspect about the research content, but also motivated me to constantly improve my review standards for practical work.

Peer feedback involved discussions and suggestions made by my postgraduate classmates, Jessica Liang⁸⁸ and Lesley Ung,⁸⁹ who were both the research's target audience.⁹⁰ Jessica occasionally engaged in online discussions to assist me, such as in selecting intertextually or adapted texts. During the planning stage, I discussed animism's adaptation direction with Jessica and ultimately decided on the design of the divine tree. Before finalising the practice, I invited Lesley to review, and received detailed feedback. Lesley stated that the sound effects had more opportunity to reflect the emotion in the corresponding scenes, and the transition of the darkness frame could take longer to fit with the rhythm of the animation. Lesley's professional perspective on animation provided me with critical and practical advice in further special effects and frame setting.

In the examiner's critical feedback, Dr Jason Kennedy provided me with comments from a non-Chinese perspective. His report observed that the explanation of Yi Xiang was not clear enough, so I added a specific example of Yi Xiang to the introduction. In the subsequent critical commentary, information relevant to Yi Xiang in the *Jingwei Reclamation* is further provided in the form of footnotes.

External feedback helped me discover new ways to improve the animation, beyond those considered during self-review, to ensure the artistry and rigour of the animation and research. According to the critical comments from external feedback, animation practice can be revised from a relatively objective and professional perspective.

⁸⁸ Jessica Liang is a Master of Design student at AUT specialising in spatial design, who was born and raised in China, but studied in New Zealand for more than six years.

⁸⁹ Lesley Ung is a Master of Design student and teaching assistant in digital design at AUT, working with 2D animation and paint. She was born in New Zealand and grew up with Chinese and Hong Kong culture.

⁹⁰ The target audience of this research comprised people: with rich knowledge of Chinese culture, yet not of animation/digital design; rich knowledge of animation/digital design, yet not born in China and with an interest in Chinese culture; or rich knowledge of both Chinese culture and animation/digital design.



Chapter 4: Critical Commentary

4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a critical commentary on narrative adaptation, the Yi Xiang system, character design and technical intertextuality in *Jingwei Reclamation*. Each section covers the application of intertextuality theory in my practice.

4.2 Narrative Adaptation

4.2.1 Application of Literary Intertextuality in Narration

In terms of narrative, literature and film can absorb, cross-reference and transform each other.⁹¹ Whether in literature or film, narrative objects reshape perceptual space through a series of narrative means.⁹² Based on intertextuality, the two kinds of works are complementary. In general, literature provides a broad source of material for film creation and promotes its unique aesthetic implications. Film is a great driving force for literary works to enter the broader public view; it is a medium for the visualisation of literary works.⁹³ Film adaptation is undoubtedly an intertextual art creation activity.⁹⁴ As a narrative medium, animation film is fundamentally different from film only in its form of expression.⁹⁵

Literary intertextuality is widely used in script adaptation, and this research focused on the adaptation of *Jingwei Reclamation* in a global context. Chinese myth focuses on a single overview or brief event. The original text of *Jingwei Reclamation* used only a few sentences to summarise the Jingwei bird, stating that Emperor Yan's young daughter was swimming in the Eastern Sea when she found that she was unable to return to shore and drowned. After being killed by the sea, her indomitable spirit became the immortal bird Jingwei and started trying to fill the sea, day and night. The text provided no detailed description of the story. Chinese mythology devotes attention to the spirit and implications of mythology, yet lacks description of characters and events.⁹⁶ Thus, I

⁹¹ Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan, *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (London: Routledge, 2013).

⁹⁴ Jampolski Mikhail, *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

⁹⁵ Films are narrated through the lens of the camera, whereas animation shapes the image content through frame-by-frame drawing or 3D modelling.

⁹⁶ Andi Pu, *Chinese Narrative* (Beijing, China: Peking University Press, 1996).

sought to intertextualise the film narrative model with *Jingwei Reclamation*'s narrative adaptation to hence a dramatic structure of the screenplay to create an integral story.

The adaptation of *Jingwei Reclamation* was arranged in a three-act structure, using the conventional linear narrative for plot consistency (Figure 4.1). Field argues that successful screenplays and films have a relatively stable and coherent dramatic structure, which should comprise three acts⁹⁷—a structure that is consistent with forms of traditional Chinese storytelling.⁹⁸ In the first act, the creator should establish the premise of the story, characters and dramatic background.⁹⁹ In my practice, this involved introducing the state of the sea and how misfortune occurred in the first act. These were all centred on the reasons why Emperor Yan's daughter went to the sea (see Section 4.2.2). The second act should depict the dramatic demand of the protagonist; the creator should show the protagonist's confrontation.¹⁰⁰ In my practice, this reflected confrontation between the princess and the sea, and showed the princess's spirit of fearlessness and sacrifice. The third act is the resolution, in which the creator should solve the contradictions and conflicts in the first two acts.¹⁰¹ In my practice, this involved solving the conflict between the sea and village,¹⁰² whereby the sea was purified.

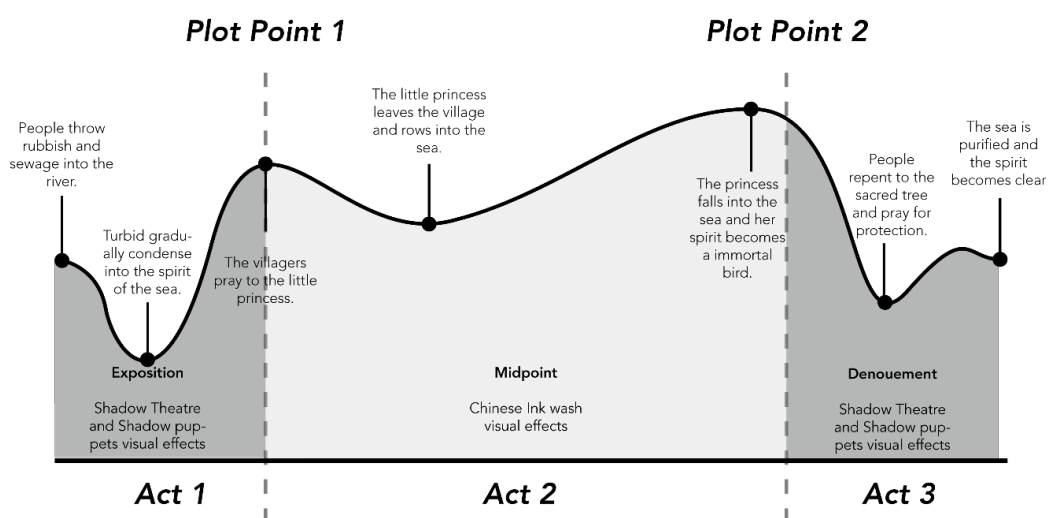


Figure 4.1. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation* three-act structure, 2021.

⁹⁷ Syd Field, *Screenplay* (New York: Delacorte, 1982), 40–2.

⁹⁸ For example, the structure of *Jingwei Tries to Fill the Sea* is as follows: Emperor Yan's little daughter was swimming in the Eastern Sea. She was unable to return to shore and drowned. She then transformed into the bird Spirit-Guardian and regularly carries twigs and stones from the Western Mountains to try to fill the Eastern Sea.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 43–4.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 46.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 47–51.

¹⁰² In my adaptation, I established opposition between the sea and the village to give Jingwei the rationality of 'filling up the sea'.

4.2.2 Intertextuality between Aristotle's Tragedy Theory and Chinese Myth

The definition of tragedy presented by Aristotle uses *Oedipus the King* as a paradigm.¹⁰³ Aristotle held the opinion that tragedy occurs as a consequence of the protagonist's 'fault', but not as a moral mistake.¹⁰⁴ Fault involves acting in an unexpected manner, resulting in disastrous consequences. This type of behaviour is a consequence of unfortunate circumstances that decent people should avoid, and we identify with the protagonist is similar to ourselves. People worry that such things may happen to them, and tragedy stirs sympathy and anxiety, resulting in the viewer's 'catharsis'.¹⁰⁵ *Poetics* is a summary of Aristotle's tragic creation practice in his time, which defines tragedy using a few principles¹⁰⁶:

1. The plot should be complete and integral.
2. If action imitated by tragedy can arouse pity, it is best to arouse it through plot arrangement.
3. The characters must be good, appropriate, realistic and consistent.
4. The plot should integrate complexity and denouement into the story and combine all tragic elements.

The premise of Chinese mythology's tragedy is humans' infinite struggle against finiteness, which is primarily reflected in the transcendence of nature,¹⁰⁷ others and the self.¹⁰⁸ In terms of the tragedy of human resistance to nature, 'Jingwei Tries to Fill the

¹⁰³ Thomas Gould, 'The Innocence of Oedipus: The Philosophers on Oedipus the King', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 4.3 (1965): 363–86.

¹⁰⁴ Leon Golden, 'Aristotle, Frye, and the Theory of Tragedy', *Comparative Literature* 27, no. 1 (1975): 47–58.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Humphry House, 'Aristotle Poetics', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15, no. 4 (1957): 487–488.

¹⁰⁷ In the historical background of Chinese mythology, the environmental circumstances of the Yellow River Basin are terrible, so primitive ancestors had to fight with nature to survive. The primordial ancestors continuously felt the inevitability and irresistibility of everything in their conflict with nature; thus, they used myth to represent their great will for survival and tenacious struggle spirit. Yue, 'The Tragic Factors'.

¹⁰⁸ Xinying Yue, 'The Tragic Factors of Ancient Chinese Mythology' (Master's diss., Northwest University, 2009), 9–26.

Sea' is a typical representative of the nature transcendence tragic myth.¹⁰⁹ There are a few tragic principles of the Chinese myth¹¹⁰:

1. Tragic spirit is closely related to lofty spirit.¹¹¹
2. The end of tragedy is often the deformation of life form.
3. External conflict is the main cause of tragic conflict.
4. When facing difficulties, tragic protagonists usually take the initiative and face them bravely.

The intertextuality application integrates all principles from Aristotle and Chinese myth, in which the adaptation concept starts from the third principle of Aristotle, wherein the characters must be good and consistent. This principle is intertextual with the third principle of Chinese myth of setting an external conflict to reflect the characters' personality. Aristotle's first principle is similar to the three-act structure, which makes the plot complete and integral. The first, second and fourth principles of Chinese myth are intertextual with Aristotle's second principle, in which the heroic spirit, deformation of life, initiative and bravely facing difficulties are constructed through a plot arrangement to arouse pity. The fourth principle of Aristotle is achieved through combining all tragic elements, and the complexity and denouement are indicated through the three-act structure and external conflict.

Specifically, according to the third principle of Aristotle's tragedy, the character must be consistent. However, the spirit of the Jingwei bird is not reflected in the role of Emperor Yan's daughter; rather, the soul of the Jingwei bird is the princess, implying that the princess may have the spirit of the Jingwei bird. Therefore, from the perspective of enriching the role of the princess, I embodied the spirit of the Jingwei bird in the princess, and integrated the contemporary context and Aristotle's tragedy theory to enhance the intertextuality adaptation of the original text in terms of logic, tragedy and integrity.

¹⁰⁹ When Emperor Yan's daughter was killed by the sea, she was an innocent victim of nature. Reflected here is the limitation and threat of nature, as the opposite of human beings. The daughter of Emperor Yan was not timid because of her youth. Although she lost her life, her spirit and will were not destroyed by nature. Instead, she became an immortal bird and vowed to fill the sea with her tiny body and insignificant power, challenging both death and nature. Jingwei is the embodiment of human power in the mythological age, while the sea represents the power of nature. The Jingwei bird's resistance and struggle to break through the limitations of the natural environment represents the tragic significance of this myth. Yue, 'The Tragic Factors'.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Such as the heroic spirit of saving people from danger, and sacrificing oneself for others. Yue, 'The Tragic Factors'.

Through applying intertextuality with the third tragic principle of Chinese myth and the third principle of Aristotle, I established external conflict between the sea and the village. According to river pollution in the Song Dynasty (960 to 1279),¹¹² the same pollution problem may also occur in primitive society, whereby ancestors dispose of garbage in the river. However, the river leads to the sea; thus, there is a contradiction between the sea and village, and the sea becomes evil to enact revenge on the village, which gives the princess a reason to visit the sea and gives the Jingwei bird a reason to fill the sea. In primitive society, ancestors lived by water in dense forests, and may not have seen the sea.¹¹³ Therefore, the contradiction between the village and sea did not make the characters in the story absolutely evil, while the princess and Jingwei bird were absolutely good.

Through applying intertextuality with the second principle of Aristotle and the first, second and fourth principles of Chinese myth, the spirit, pity and bravery of the princess were embodied in the plot arrangement. When facing the disaster caused by the sea, the princess chose to visit the sea alone for the villagers' prayer, as she could not bear to see more people suffer from the disaster (the first tragic principle of Chinese myth). The sea became evil and hostile to humankind, and thus took the princess's life. Before her death, the princess was thinking about her suffering hometown, which could arouse pity. Her strong will turned her into a Jingwei bird and returned hope to the village, which evokes the second tragic principle of Chinese myth. People's repentance and the will of Jingwei bird caused the divine tree to break off its branches, and the sea was purified through the Jingwei bird, which completed the plot.

¹¹² Zhanyang Wang, 'The Research on River Management System of the Song Dynasty' (Master's diss., Henan University, 2016).

¹¹³ Jing Tian, 'A Comparative Study of "Divine Pole" in Chinese Manchu Shaman Sacrifice and Korean Witch Custom Sacrifice', *Shen Hua: Xia Ban Yue* 10 (2013): 133–5.

4.3 Application of Intertextuality in Yi Xiang

4.3.1 The Calm Sea

The intertextual application of the calm sea was influenced by the image of water from Langston Hughes's poem 'Sea Calm' and the water Yi Xiang in Chinese poetry:

How still, / How strangely still / The water is today, / It is not good / For water / To be
so still that way.¹¹⁴

This poem expounds that still water is abnormal and will not offer any benefits. The strangely still hint has become an impending disaster in the animation (Figure 4.2). The poem also metaphorically suggests that the African American community must change and struggle for equality.¹¹⁵ I applied the image of water from this Western poem to my practice. In *Jingwei Reclamation*, this was reflected in the princess's struggle with the sea spirits. She tried to argue for her people, hoping to attain the forgiveness of the sea spirit and return to a state of harmonious coexistence with nature (Figure 4.3). This represents her struggle in the face of her natural belief, even if this struggle was insignificant. The sea spirit became evil because of pollution, and chose disaster. Against this background, humans are unequal in front of the sea. The princess did not know the reason that the sea spirit had become evil, but was worried about her people.¹¹⁶

In Chinese poetry, the tranquillity of a water surface can be understood as peace of mind, while a surging wave may have 'Yi Xiang' of fear and tension.¹¹⁷ In my animation, the state of the water surface reflected the inner feeling of the little princess. When rowing into the sea, the sea became turbulent (Figure 4.4), which was also reflected in 3D ink

¹¹⁴ Langston Hughes, 1926, 'Sea Calm', PoemHunter, last modified 3 January 2003, <https://terebess.hu/english/haiku/hughes.html>.

¹¹⁵ Elif Notes, '10 Famous Langston Hughes's Short Poems', last modified 23 August 2021, <https://elifnotes.com/langston-hughess-short-poems/>.

¹¹⁶ Although the princess struggled with the sea spirit, her natural belief also influenced her behaviour, so she chose to communicate with the sea spirit to seek forgiveness, as she still believed nature was all kind.

¹¹⁷ In Chinese poetry, the Yi Xiang of still water was expressed by Yuxi Liu's [刘禹锡] *He Pu She Niu Xiang Gong Er Shou* [和仆射牛相公寓言二首]: 'If the mind is as clear and pure as the still water, you can see all kinds of situations in the world' [心如止水鉴常明, 见尽人间万物情]. Haoran Meng's [孟浩然] *Yu Yan Qian Tang Deng Zhang Ting Wang Chao Zuo* [与颜钱塘登樟亭望潮作] shows another Yi Xiang of water: 'The waves came and rolled up thousands of piles of snow. The tide watchers felt frightened and cold' [惊涛来似雪, 一坐凛生寒]. Haoran's description of the wave through imagery reflects the vastness of the wave through the viewer's fear. The surging waves may also reflect the Yi Xiang of fear or tension.

(‘Xiang’), as the princess was nervous at this time (‘Yi’). When the princess was on the flat sea, she was ready to face whatever happened next, and her mood was calm.¹¹⁸

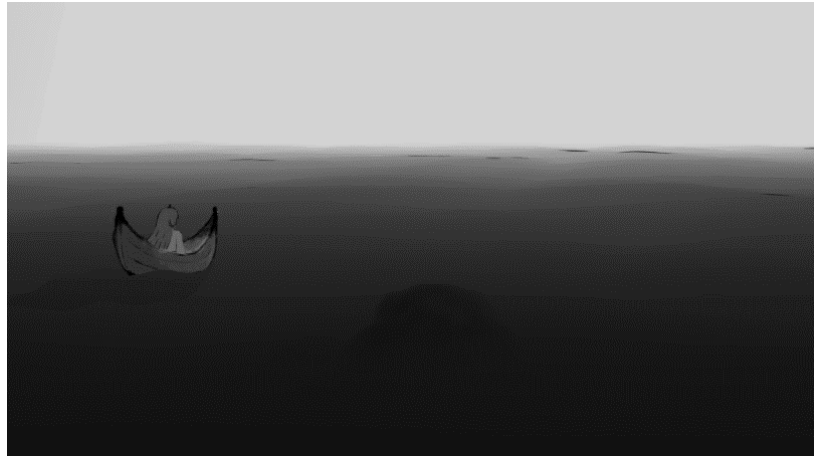


Figure 4.2. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, the calm sea frame, 2021.



Figure 4.3. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, struggle communication frame, 2021.



Figure 4.4. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, driving into the sea frame, 2021.

¹¹⁸ The princess’s mood of calm is reflected in Figure 4.2, while Figure 4.3’s water is not still. Her calm mood made her mind think about the inequality between humans and the sea. The calm reflection draws her choice for the negligible struggle.

4.3.2 The Divine Tree

The divine tree in the animation represents the belief and power of human beings, and was inspired by the No. 1 large-scale bronze tree in China and the tree of life in the Bible. According to the conclusion of the *Sanxingdui Sacrifice Pit*,¹¹⁹ the No. 1 large-scale bronze tree¹²⁰ (Figure 4.5) may be related to the legend of Fu Sang,¹²¹ in which one of its main functions is ‘Tong Tian’ [通天].¹²² The design of the divine tree in my animation used the No. 1 bronze tree as its prototype, combined with the image of the tree of life that can have eternal life after taking fruit, discussed in Genesis 3:22. The definition of the divine tree in animation has the meaning of connecting the will of the ‘sky’ and giving life—the fruit of the divine tree represents life, and the divine tree represents the medium of communication with the ‘sky’ (‘Yi’ of the divine tree).

To intuitively reflect the Yi Xiang that the divine tree can save people and its function of ‘Tong Tian’, I applied intertextuality to present a cross-cultural sacrificial ceremony.¹²³ Mongolians have been inheriting the sacred tree belief and sacrificed to naturally growing trees since the Han Dynasty (202 BC to 220 AD).¹²⁴ When offering sacrifices to the divine tree, according to the Mongolian sacred tree sacrifice process,¹²⁵ one must arrange the altar, delimit the area, water the sacred tree, kneel and kowtow three times, and then insert incense into the censer. In the frame shown in Figure 4.6, I altered watering the sacred tree to tying a note of repentance and hope on the branch, influenced by Manchu culture. Mongolians and Manchus share a belief in the existence of gods or souls in trees. Although the Manchu believe in sacred trees, they use a ‘sacred pole’ instead of trees, as

¹¹⁹ Sichuan Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, *Excavation of the Sacrificial Pits at Sanxingdui* (Beijing, China: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1999).

¹²⁰ The No. 1 large-scale bronze tree was unearthed from the No. 2 sacrificial pit of the Sanxingdui site in Guanghan, Sichuan Province. It has nine branches on the trunk, and a bird stands on each branch. There is a halo on the tree trunk and, under the flower receptacle of the branch, in which there are carved patterns, there should be the image of the sun.

¹²¹ Fu Sang [扶桑] is a sacred tree of the sun recorded in the *Classic of Regions Beyond the Seas: East*. The bronze tree from Sanxingdui is a compound product of Fu Sang, Jian Mu [建木] and other sacred trees in ancient legends.

¹²² The meaning of ‘Tong Tian’ in Chinese can be explained as connection with ‘sky’. ‘Tong’ means ‘act in response’ and ‘compatible’; ‘Tian’ means ‘nature’.

¹²³ Due to the limited understanding of nature and the universe in ancient times, people felt that nature was very mysterious and feared various natural phenomena. Because the development of agricultural society is highly dependent on the natural environment, people manifested a strong worship of nature, which transformed into the hope of receiving the protection of nature through sacrifice.

¹²⁴ Zhenzhen Meng, ‘Tree, Spirit, and Human—The Study of Tree Worship and its Ritual of Khorchin Mongolians’ (Master’s diss., Northwest Minzu University, 2015).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

they believe that the sacred tree can ‘Tong Tian’.¹²⁶ The Mongolian belief in trees is more about nature, which is consistent with the natural belief in animation. Thus, I applied intertextuality to the Mongolian natural belief and the sacrificial behaviour of ‘Tong Tian’ among Manchus.

Manchu people have a custom of hanging sacrificial objects on trees when sacrificing to a sacred tree.¹²⁷ Meanwhile, as a medium of communication with the ‘sky’, paper tied to a tree can directly reflect the behaviour of communication.¹²⁸ In the denouement of *Jingwei Reclamation*, after the sacrifice, the divine tree broke its branch with fruit (Figure 4.6). The branch in Figure 4.6 was designed with the characteristics of olive branches (Figure 4.7). The carved hollows of the bronze tree were retained on the fruits, which was intertextual with the peace ‘Yi Xiang’ present in the Bible as a dove and olive branch,¹²⁹ reflecting the divine tree’s ability to save people.¹³⁰



Figure 4.5. Siyuwj, bronze tree unearthed from Sanxingdui, 17 September 2017.

¹²⁶Yue Liu, ‘Harmonious and unified God, man and nature—a cultural interpretation of Manchu sacred tree worship’, *Dong Bei Shi Di* 2 (2010): 86-88.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ In this sentence, ‘Xiang’ refers to the behaviour and ‘Yi’ implies communication with the ‘sky’.

¹²⁹ Although in Ancient Greek and Roman allusions, the olive branch represents peace, in the Bible, the olive branch represents both ‘bringing us the peace of God’ and announcing ‘to the world the assessment of divine wrath’, which is consistent with the sacred meaning of the divine tree in the animation and meant that the Jingwei bird conveyed the sacred Yi Xiang.

¹³⁰ In this sentence, ‘Xiang’ refers to the designed olive branch and ‘Yi’ means to bring peace.



Figure 4.6. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, sacrifice to the divine tree, 2021.



Figure 4.7. Xiaoying Ye, the olive branch, 2021.

4.3.3 Blending Emotion into Scenery: Imagery Brushwork

Jingwei Reclamation's 2D ink frames use digital painting, which is intertextual with the use of brightness and darkness in Western shadow theatre. I divided the characteristics of ink brushwork into wet ink (Figure 4.8) and dry ink (Figure 4.9).¹³¹ As shown in Figure 4.6, thick ink presents a dark black colour in wet ink. If the philosophy of Yin and Yang¹³²

¹³¹ Wet ink is characterised by different proportions of water on paper. Dry ink involves using a brush to rapidly rub the paper surface without water. The strokes are rough and not smooth, and are called dry rubbing. Jane Evans, *Chinese brush painting: A complete course in traditional and modern techniques*, (London: Courier Corporation, 2004).

¹³² The two opposing principles in nature.

is introduced in the context of ink, thick ink belongs to Yang and light ink to Yin.¹³³ When expressing solemnity and strong emotion, the selection of thick ink painting can enhance emotion. Applying the philosophy of Yin, light ink gives a sense of elegance, both visually and intuitively. Thus, the intensity of ink indicates the depth of emotion.¹³⁴ Dry ink can be used to express vitality and tenacious emotion through dry and vigorous ink marks (Figure 4.9).

In Western shadow theatre, dancers use light to create darkness to express emotion in the scenery, with the dancers' body language reflecting the plot's emotion and the shadow image created by multiple dancers reflecting the significance of darkness in sorrow. In ink context, blank space has an imagery of 'emptiness'¹³⁵ and 'ethereality'.¹³⁶ Figure 4.11 embodies the artistic conception between reality and emptiness.¹³⁷ In Figure 4.10, the blank space and freehand drawing present the imagery between 'emptiness' and reality. The reality reflects on the environmental state of the princess through the physicality of river, boat and flow effects. On the conceptual level, the 'emptiness' reflects the imagination of this scene that the physicality cannot describe. I did not use any dialogues or monologues in this animation; many of the scenes are open to interpretation. On the artistic level, I left empty spaces in most frames, which create a mental empty space for viewers. In terms of Western influence, the flow of the river used thick wet ink, which reflected the princess's emotion, while the plot emotion was depicted through the contrast between lightness and darkness. In this frame, the princess has just left her hometown, and her sorrow for leaving and strong will are both reflected in the darkness flow and dry ink of the boat. Meanwhile, the large blank white space connotes that the sorrow is just a part of the princess's complex emotion, instead more is about hope in the scene shown in Figure 4.10.

¹³³ Bin Zhou, 'Ink Colour Aesthetics of Ancient Chinese Ink Painting and its Cultural Implication', *Journal of Wenzhou University: Social Sciences* 03 (2007): 70–5.

¹³⁴ Xiuzheng Wang, 'The Imagery Expression of "Subjective Colour" in Ink Painting', *Wen Yi Sheng Huo—Wen Hai Yi Yuan* 12 (2012): 52.

¹³⁵ 'Art shows its inner spirit through realistic images, that is, using what can be described to express what cannot be described'. Zong, *Strolling in aesthetics*. The emptiness reflects 'what cannot be described'.

¹³⁶ Xianlin Xiong and Yue Zhang, 'The Influence of Taoist Aesthetics on the "Blank" of Literati Ink Landscape Painting in the Yuan Dynasty', *Great Stage* 1 (2014): 28–9.

¹³⁷ In Figure 4.11, the depiction of pine trees and mountains reflects the artistic conception of emptiness and reality. When depicting the pine trees at the bottom, the painter presents the authenticity of pine trees, while, when depicting the mountain of the pine forest, the painter uses blank and dry brush strokes to reflect the emptiness and ethereality of the mountains. Such a real and virtual ink language enhances the natural verve of the pine forest, and the rough and powerful techniques reflect a sense of indomitable emotion.

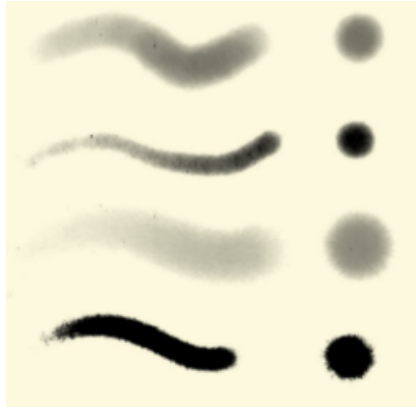


Figure 4.8. Xiaoying Ye, wet ink brushwork in digital painting, 2021.

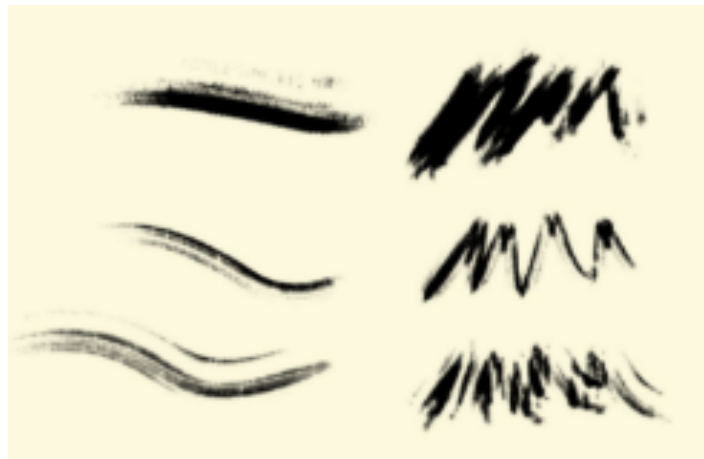


Figure 4.9. Xiaoying Ye, dry ink brushwork in digital painting, 2021.



Figure 4.10. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, flowing on the river, 2021.

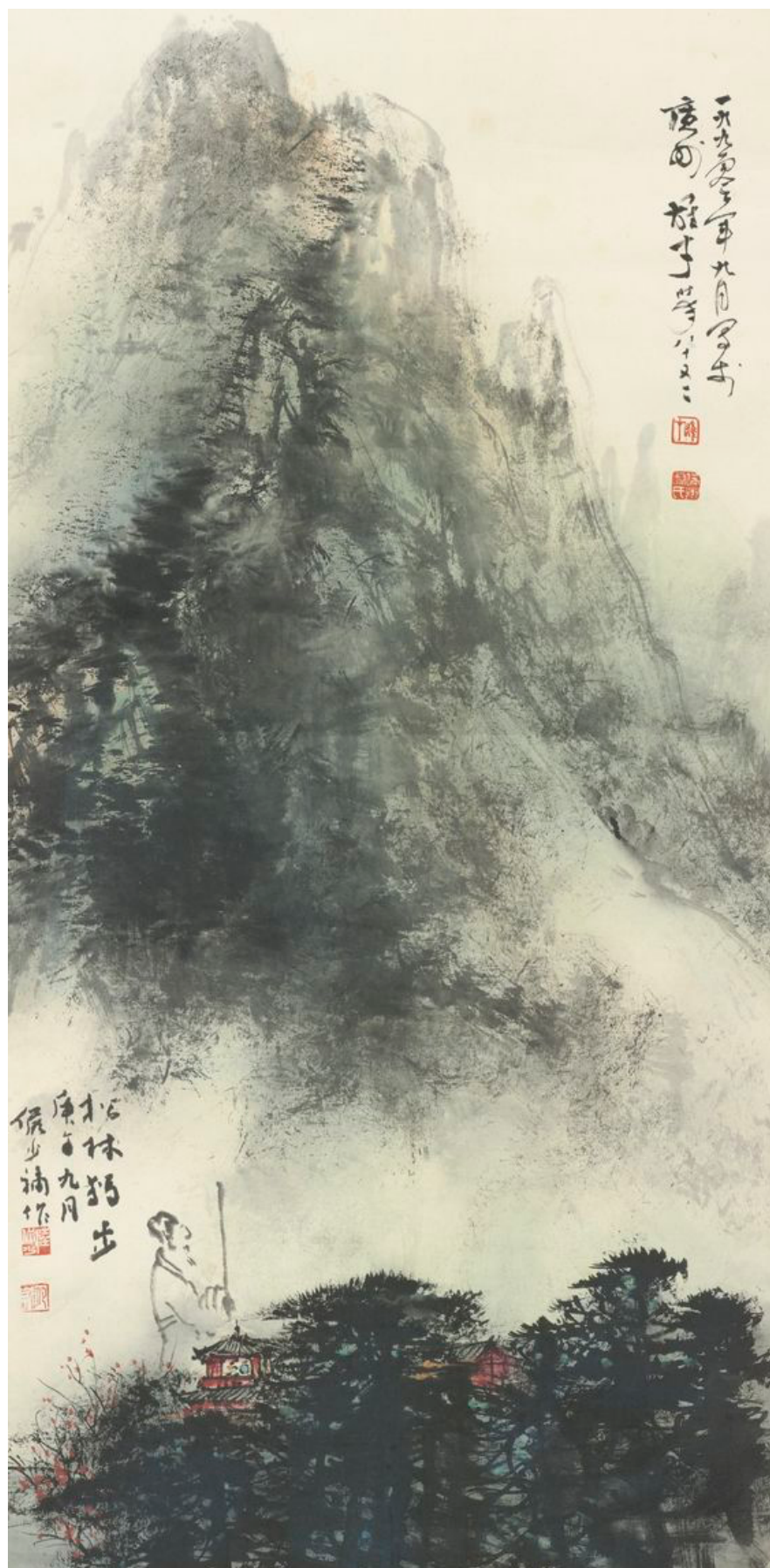


Figure 4.11. Li Xiongcai 1910–2002, Lu Yanshao 1909–1993, *Recluse of the Pine Forest*.

The imagery of thick and light ink and darkness and light can present different and complex emotions in the same landscape (Figures 4.12 and 4.13). Figure 4.12 is when the princess leaves the village, the second is the Jingwei bird returning to the village. The imagery ink strokes correspond to the protagonist's feeling of the secular world, and the imagery of light and darkness correspond to the emotion of the plot. The former relates to Yang (darker), while the latter relates to Yin (lighter), reflecting the emotions of the princess being unwilling to leave the village and the calmness of the Jingwei bird returning to the village with a purpose.¹³⁸ In addition, comparing the images of strokes between the two scenes shows that Figure 4.12 is more freehand, while Figure 4.13 is more meticulous. This corresponds to the village and the mentality emotion in the protagonist's eyes. The heavy ink and dry brush strokes in Figure 4.12 imply solemnity and tenacity, while the dark colour of the landscape reflects the sorrow of Emperor Yan and his daughter. Further, the princess left her hometown to find hope, and the blank white space represents the complex emotion between sorrow and hope, emphasising the princess's will and courage to sacrifice herself. However, the scene in Figure 4.13 does not have such complex emotions—only the mission that must be completed, memories of the past, and the hope and salvation brought by Jingwei. Therefore, the scene in this frame is both more meticulous in terms of lines, and lighter and wet in ink. The 2D digital ink painting incorporates varying degrees of freehand brushwork, meticulous brushwork and white space, depending on the emotion conveyed by the plot.

¹³⁸ In the context of ink, 'Xiang' reflects the digital ink painting in a different scene and 'Yi' relates to the emotions of the scene and the characters.



Figure 4.12. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, first time leaving the village, 2021.



Figure 4.13. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, second time leaving the village, 2021.

4.4 Character Design

4.4.1 Application of Intertextuality in Animism and Philosophy of Tian Ren He Yi (the Unity of Heaven and Humans) in Zhou Yi

In *Zhou Yi*'s ecological ethics, 'Tian' [天] refers to nature, the idea of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, and that all things are one.¹³⁹ In *Zhou Yi*'s philosophy, 'Tian' encompasses all things, including human beings. The philosophical concept of 'the unity of heaven and humans' means that humans should comply with the law of all things in nature, promote harmonious coexistence between all things, help and coordinate the development of all creatures while understanding and transforming nature, and achieve an ideal state of mutual integration between humans and nature, with the core concept that humans should treat nature so that 'all things grow together without harming each other'.¹⁴⁰

Edward Burnett Tylor expounded the emergence and development of the concept of soul and founded the theory that religion originated from animism.¹⁴¹ Tylor believed that the soul is an essential concept in all religious concepts. It is the origin and basis of fundamental religious belief and the main content of all religious consciousness. Primitive people used the analogy method to objectify the soul of human nature, and extended it to everything. They thought that inanimate things¹⁴² and natural phenomena¹⁴³ had a will and a soul, just like themselves, so the concept of 'everything has a spirit' came into being.

The philosophy of Tian Ren He Yi and animism embody similar reverence for nature. TRHY shows the way humans treat nature, while animism regards nature as having a soul and will. Given the concept of 'symbiosis of all things', humans also belong to part of nature. If applied intertextually with TRHY and animism, it reflects the concept of equality of all things, harmonious symbiosis, and that humans should revere nature. This concept is not only reflected in the adaptation of my animation's plot, but also in the

¹³⁹ Xiaohui Zang, 'Traditional Ecological Ethics in Zhou Yi and its Contemporary Significance' (Master's diss., Shaanxi University of Science and Technology, 2011), 9–25.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Edward Burnett Tylor, 'Animism', in *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*, ed. E. B. Tylor (London: Brentano's, 1924), 417–502.

¹⁴² Such as animals, plants, mountains, rivers and rocks.

¹⁴³ Such as thunder or storms.

setting of the characters. To more intuitively reflect that nature in the animation had a soul and present primitive humans' belief, I concretised the nature spirits in the animation.

4.4.2 Sea Spirit

According to animism, inorganic matter has a 'soul'.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the spirits in my animation were the conscious 'souls' of nature.¹⁴⁵ The sea spirit imagery represented the consciousness of the sea. When no one invaded its territory, it was unconscious.¹⁴⁶ The image of the sea spirit appeared as a water drop, which refers to the natural form of water. The sewage flowing into the sea turned into evil energy and eroded the sea spirit. The sea spirit became filled with evil energy or aura, which visually reflected the sea's different states.¹⁴⁷



Figure 4.14. Xiaoying Ye, character design of the sea spirit, 2021.

¹⁴⁴ Tylor, 'Animism'.

¹⁴⁵ Consciousness can affect behaviour; thus, when a person or animal has behaviour, they can be judged as conscious. J. R. Angell, 'Philosophical and psychological usage of the terms mind, consciousness, and soul', *Psychological Bulletin* 8.2 (1911): 46-47.

¹⁴⁶ Unconsciousness means that the entity of the spirit has no consciousness. The sea accounts for 71% of the earth's total area and contains vast energy. M. Pidwirny, 'Introduction to the Oceans', *Fundamentals of Physical Geography*, 2nd Edition, n.d., <http://www.physicalgeography.net/fundamentals/8o.html>. Therefore, the sea spirit is different from other spirits; its consciousness can be separated from the noumenon and integrated with the sea. The absence of eyes characterises the unconscious.

¹⁴⁷ Although the sea is evil at the beginning of the plot, its evil is due to humans' unintentional act of pouring sewage and garbage into the river. Ancient humans lived in the mountains for a long time and thought that plants and animals were spiritual, yet did not know about the existence of the sea. The sea cannot communicate with human beings; thus, there are contradictions. The setting of the sea itself is neither good nor evil.

4.4.3 Other Spirits

I designed several characters in the forest, based on the shape characteristics of insects, animals, trees and rocks. Figure 4.15 displays the stone spirit and tree spirit. The characteristics of the stone spirit are heavy and muddy, with gravel surrounding it. In contrast, with a slender body and leaf-covered head, the tree spirit embodies the characteristics of the spirit forest's trees.¹⁴⁸ The more diminutive spirit depicted in Figure 4.16 has two tiny wings with insectile antennae. There are two others in the background, as it is the most common spirit in the forest. The larger spirit is modelled after antlers and animal hair. Antlers have a sacred meaning and are a representation of a forest;¹⁴⁹ thus, this element served as the animal spirit.



Figure 4.15. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, the spirit forest frames, 2021.



Figure 4.16. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, the spirit forest frames, 2021.

¹⁴⁸ The trees of the spirit forest were designed on the basis of ink imagery language. They were painted in light ink, reflecting the elegant and sacred meaning of the forest. The imagery language of ink and wash and the imagery of darkness and light were intertwined, suggesting that the blessings of the spirits would bring hope to the princess.

¹⁴⁹ Garth C. Clifford, 'Bird Symbolism & Meaning (+Totem, Spirit & Omens)', WorldBirds, last modified 12 May 2021, <https://www.worldbirds.org/deer-symbolism/>.

4.4.4 Jingwei Bird

The intertextuality application of the Jingwei bird not only displayed the integration of animism and TRHY philosophy, but also had a cross-cultural application in bird imagery. In China, the mandarin duck described in CaoPi's *Lie Yi Zhuan* [列异传] is the continuation of a firm will to love.¹⁵⁰ In the Western context, a dove brings the olive branch back to Noah in the Bible, signifying the end of the legendary flood.¹⁵¹ The Jingwei bird is defined as the will of the princess with the consciousness of her spirit, indicating the end of the disaster. In terms of appearance, it refers to the sacred images of the crane¹⁵² in Chinese culture. The feather on top of the Jingwei bird's head is a sacred headdress that her father placed on the princess when she left the village. The feathered headdress has brave significance in the Native American culture,¹⁵³ which suggests the brave spirit of the princess.

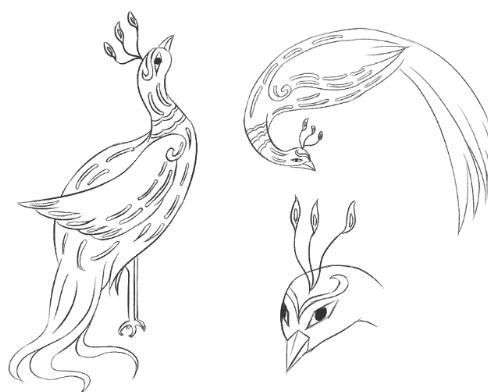


Figure 4.17. Xiaoying Ye, character design of Jingwei bird, 2021.

¹⁵⁰ This is a story between Ping Han and his wife. Ping Han [韩凭] also called Feng Han [韩冯], the earliest written record of the story of Han Ping and his wife is *Lie Yi Zhuan*, the original book has been lost and quoted in *Yi Wen Lei Ju* [艺文类聚], but the description is brief and incomplete. The complete record is presented in Gan Bao's *Sou Shen Ji* [搜神记]: 'King Kang of Song was so angry that he ignored Han's wife's request and asked Ping Han [韩凭] and his wife's fellow countrymen to bury them and let their graves face each other from a distance. King Kang of Song said, "the love between you two has not ended. If you two can close the grave, I will no longer stop you". Just overnight, two big catalpa trees grew from the top of the two tombs. In less than ten days, it grew thick. The trunks of the two trees are curved and close to each other. Their roots intersect underground and their branches crisscross above. There are two mandarin ducks, one female and one male, who live in trees for a long time and don't leave sooner or later. They cross their necks and moan sadly. Their sad voice is moving'; '[王怒, 弗听, 使里人埋之, 冢相望也。王曰: "尔夫妇相爱不已, 若能使冢合, 则吾弗阻也。" 宿昔之间, 便有大梓木生于二冢之端, 旬日而大盈抱。屈体相就, 根交于下, 枝错于上。又有鸳鸯雌雄各一, 恒栖树上, 晨夕不去, 交颈悲鸣, 音声感人]'. Liang, 'Research on the Story of Han Ping and His Wife'.

¹⁵¹ Clifford, 'Bird Symbolism'.

¹⁵² Cranes symbolise longevity, auspiciousness and loyalty. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the patterns of the highest officials' clothes displayed cranes. M. Guo-liang, 'The Cultural Phenomena of Red-crowned Crane', *Academic Exchange* 4 (2004): 001.

¹⁵³ William M. O'Barr, 'Images of Native Americans in advertising', *Advertising & Society Review* 14, no. 1 (2013): 1-51.

4.4.5 Human Characters

The design concept for the human characters represented intertextual application of Chinese culture in terms of shadow puppetry, hairstyle and clothing to retain Chinese cultural characteristics. The appearance of the human characters was influenced by shadow puppetry; thus, the intertextual application of animism and TRHY was not used for appearance, but for the personality of the princess.¹⁵⁴ The image of Emperor Yan in ancient times had no prominent identifying characteristics;¹⁵⁵ thus, to help the audience ascertain the royal identity of Emperor Yan, the original image was replaced with the general emperor archetype in shadow puppets (Figure 4.19). The emperor was expressed through a crown with a beaded curtain and complex auspicious cloud patterns.

The princess's design of hairstyle and clothing was primarily intertextual with the Tang Dynasty¹⁵⁶ (618 to 907). The princess's hairstyle was characteristic of the 'Ji' [髻]¹⁵⁷—dangling hoops [练垂髻].¹⁵⁸ Moreover, during this dynasty, women wore long tunics, with a second tunic over the first, and one cuff with wide features.¹⁵⁹ As depicted in Sui Xie's painting of *The Great Flood of Gun-Yu*¹⁶⁰ (Figure 4.20), ancient people in the Xia Dynasty (about 2070 to 1600 BC) wore simple clothes in their daily lives, as they generally faced material shortages¹⁶¹. In my story, the princess's character was kind, close to the people and considerate of others; thus, her clothing and hair accessories should not be overly complex. The pattern on her clothes was in the shape of cymbidium—a flower

¹⁵⁴ The personality of the princess indicated respect for and belief in nature. This setting was not only reflected in the spirit forest frames, but also appeared in the conflict when the princess faced the sea spirit.

¹⁵⁵ Shaolian Li, 'Exploration Research on Emperor Yan and Huang', *Academic Journal of Zhong Zhou* 5 (1989): 97–102.

¹⁵⁶ I chose a costume from the Tang Dynasty as the key reference because women's clothing of the Tang Dynasty represents a unique glorious period in the history of Chinese clothing development. The Tang Dynasty had a multicultural social structure, and the clothing combined the characteristics of previous historical dynasties and other cultures. Shaojun Wang, 'The Artistic Characteristics of Female Clothing in Tang Dynasty' (Master's diss., Wuhan University, 2014).

¹⁵⁷ Ling Wang and Dongdan Kong, 'Comparison of women's hairstyles and hair accessories between the Tang Dynasty and the unified Xin Luo period', *Dongjiang Journal* 036.002(2019):21-27.

¹⁵⁸ This style involved splitting the hair into two sections on each side of the head, and then folding it up and tying with knots. Unmarried women usually wore this hairstyle. Wang and Kong, 'Comparison of women's'.

¹⁵⁹ Wang, 'The Artistic Characteristics'.

¹⁶⁰ The story of *The Great Flood of Gun-Yu* was described in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, which is also known as the Gun-Yu myth. Yu's establishment of the Xia Dynasty inaugurated dynastic rule in China. David E. Mungello, *The great encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800*, (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012). The story of Jingwei occurred before the Xia Dynasty, since the period of Emperor Yan happens before the Gun-Yu myth.

¹⁶¹ Stressberg, *A Chinese Bestiary*.

that evokes nobility and virtuosity in China,¹⁶² which corresponds with a kind character and a belief in the divine tree.



Figure 4.18. Xiaoying Ye, character design of princess and Emperor Yan, 2021.



Figure 4.19. Example of general emperor archetype in shadow puppet theatre.

¹⁶² Haibin Xu, 'Ten Famous Flowers in China and Their Flower Language', *Zhong Guo Hua Hui Pen Jing* 05 (1985): 28–9.



Figure 4.20. Sui Xie, 清謝遂仿唐人大禹治水圖, 1776, Chinese traditional painting, National Palace Museum, Taiwan.

4.5 Technical Intertextual Application

4.5.1 Technical Intertextuality in Hybrid Media

The concept of ‘technical intertextuality’¹⁶³ is extended by intertextuality with different texts under the premise of applying digital media. Technical intertextuality emphasises the intertextuality generated with other texts in the production process, such as the integration with other cultures or texts in shooting, composition and special effects. Intertextuality has the characteristics of innovative, dynamic and hybrid ‘orders of discourse’.¹⁶⁴ If digital media is regarded a discourse medium, hybrid media¹⁶⁵ integrates the discourse in fundamental techniques, working methods, and ways of representing and expressing different media.

From the perspective of intertextuality, hybrid media has the characteristics of diverse discourse integration in techniques, similar to technical intertextuality. Technical intertextuality is concerned with the absorption and integration of diverse cultures or texts into technical expression, which entails interpreting the corresponding text content by using various technologies.¹⁶⁶ This concept aims to integrate the original text and other texts into an expression form using diversified production technologies.¹⁶⁷ Hybrid media can bridge the differences between aesthetics and preferences in a global context from a

¹⁶³ Christian Metz, a German semiologist, purported that films are not only an artwork, but a textual system that constitutes its own original, singular totality, in which the author, if involved at all, is only a constituent of this system. According to Metz, film, picture, colour, sound, motion and adaptation from literature, whether technological or mechanical, makes film a sort of technical intertextuality. Mohammad Khosravi Shakib, ‘Inevitability of Arts from Inter-textuality’, *International Journal of English and Literature* 4.1 (2013): 1-5.

¹⁶⁴ Christopher N. Candlin and Yon Maley, ‘Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity in the Discourse of Alternative Dispute Resolution’, in *The Construction of Professional Discourse*, ed. B.L. Gunnarsson, Per Linell, and Bengt Nordberg (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 204.

¹⁶⁵ Lev Manovich, ‘Understanding Hybrid Media’, in *Animated Paintings*, ed. Hertz (San Diego: San Diego Museum of Art, 2007).

¹⁶⁶ Different from the technical discourse integration of hybrid media, technical intertextuality devotes more attention to the expression of technical discourse and integrates technology on the basis of expounding the text.

¹⁶⁷ A case study of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. The *Spider-Man* shows a classic example of hybrid media and technical intertextuality by using 2D lines and 3D animation to recreate the sense of 2D comics, and expertly using elements such as comic segmentation and collage dialogue boxes to recreate the scene and atmosphere of comics. The thickness and length of the lines were drawn by hand so it would have some defects, which enhanced the characters’ imperfections and comic sense of the frames. The comic, animation and art form with typical postmodern art characteristics were creatively reconstructed to meet the diverse needs of plot and rhythm. For the mixed technology of 2D and 3D, *Spider-Man* used the 2D characteristics of comics to visually form a sense of 2D comics, resulting in a seamless integration of 2D and 3D. Thus, when 2D elements appear in a 3D scene, they can partially compensate for the visual difference between hand drawing and 3D.

perspective of technical intertextuality. In *Jingwei Reclamation*, innovative hybrid media was formed by remixing hand drawings, 2D effects and 3D production technology.

4.5.2 Ink, Chinese Shadow Puppetry and Western Shadow Theatre

In my practice, the technical intertextuality application of ink, Chinese shadow puppetry and Western shadow theatre comprised the following points:

- the technical intertextuality between Western shadow theatre and Chinese shadow puppetry
- the technical intertextuality between ink and Western shadow theatre.

Chinese shadow puppetry's traditional colour palette consists of red, yellow, white, green and black.¹⁶⁸ In my practice, I chose to desaturate the colours to emphasise the dramatic significance of darkness and light in Western shadow theatre. The action characteristics of shadow puppets are rigid, and they have no change in facial expression and are controlled by actors¹⁶⁹. In addition, puppets have a metaphor of denied free:

This silent suffering, misunderstood by the very beings on whom it is exerted, finds both an interpreter and a signifier in the puppet. One can also find a form of alienation in this suffering. This idea is present especially in the works of the German Expressionists, in which the puppet becomes the metaphor for the human being enslaved and denied free will by a society of machines.¹⁷⁰

In this case, the shadow puppets may be metaphors for bondage. However, the saturated colour of shadow puppetry may not accurately express this imagery. The dramatic significance of light and darkness in the Western shadow theatre can more clearly convey the feelings of sorrow and salvation to the audience (see Section 2.4.1). Therefore, I intertwined the imagery of darkness from Western shadow theatre with Chinese shadow puppets' rigid action to enhance the imagery of gloom, sorrow and bondage expressed in the shadow puppetry frames.

The technical intertextuality between 2D ink and Western shadow theatre was primarily reflected in the ink colour and white space. The protagonist's emotion was influenced by brush strokes, while the narrative emotional arch was influenced by Western shadow

¹⁶⁸ Xinxiang Chen, 'Colour Application of Shadow Puppetry Art', *Yi Hai* 4 (2006): 70.

¹⁶⁹ Jie, *Chinese Shadow Play*.

¹⁷⁰ Brunella Eruli, 'Myth of the Puppet—A Western Perspective', World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts, last modified 2009, <https://wepa.unima.org/en/myth-of-the-puppet-a-western-perspective/>.

theatre. The strokes were divided into dry and wet; thus, the wet ink's colour was primarily influenced by the contrast between darkness and light, and different shades of light in darkness. The 'emptiness' was formed from emotion through wet ink and white space. The dry brush stroke reflected the princess's strong will, the thick wet ink flow reflected darkness and sorrow, and the blank space's contrast reflected hope (Figure 4.23). This concept of 'emptiness' is also present in Figure 4.22, in which the ink flow is the lightest colour, and the boat presents grey wet ink with a dry ink outline. The princess just received a blessing from the forest spirits; thus, her sorrow of leaving her hometown was purified by the forest spirits. Instead, the protagonist's emotion is more about unflinching confidence. In this frame, the dry ink also reflects the protagonist's strong will, while the grey boat and white space present a contrast to imply the hope brought by the forest spirits and the impending disaster of the climax, as the grey boat is not darkness, but a different shade of light, indicating the metaphor of light bringing 'more sorrow'.¹⁷¹

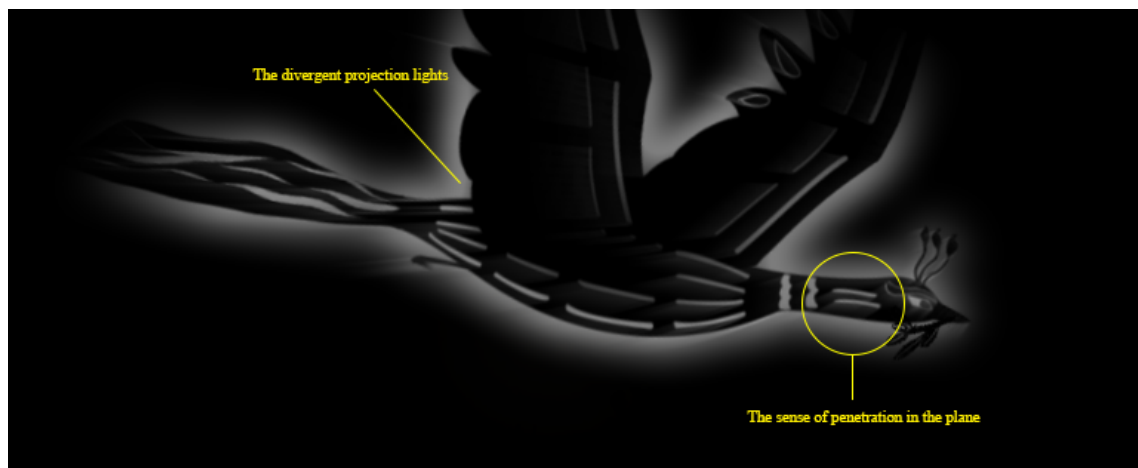


Figure 4.21. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, shadow theatre lighting feature applied on shadow puppet, 2021.

¹⁷¹ The significance of light and dark are defined based on context; thus, Figure 4.22's previous scene is Figure 4.15, and Figure 4.15's boat presents lightness white colour. Therefore, the grey boat reflects on light, but not darkness, and the significance is formed from Figure 4.15's ink colour of the boat. The flow in Figure 4.23 is formed with darkness, which is because of the large area of the white space, and the colour of ink is darker and heavy, but not grey. The use of heavy and light wet ink reflects different significance of darkness and light, so different shades of grey (light ink) also have different reflections on the light significance.



Figure 4.22. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, technical intertextuality of ink, Western shadow theatre and Chinese shadow puppetry, 2021.

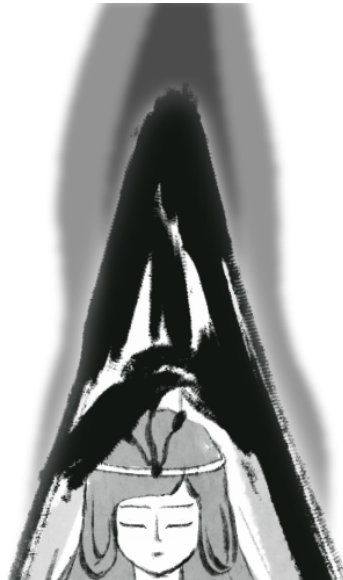


Figure 4.23. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, flowing on the river, 2021.

4.5.3 Technical Intertextuality between 2D and 3D

The technical intertextuality between 2D and 3D applies to the climax of the story.¹⁷² The main problems of combining different mediums involve style matching, frame rate, image format and timing.¹⁷³ To solve the problems of integrating 2D and 3D, O’Hailey suggests that, to achieve unity of style, confirm the practicality of pipeline before production, confirm the leading elements in each lens, and draw the leading elements first to ensure the unity of style; the frame rate and image format of different media shall be consistent; match keyframes of different media.¹⁷⁴

Jingwei Reclamation was created after confirming the practicality of pipeline, the leading elements and the general style. The creative methods of integrating 2D and 3D have three characteristics:

- 3D sense of 2D hand drawing in the composition
- naturalising elements for balancing 2D and 3D spatial and visual differences
- 2D sense of 3D modelling in the composition.

Before 2D hand drawing, a 3D sea scene was rendered to achieve unity of style, since it was the leading elements of Figure 4.21’s frame.¹⁷⁵ Given that the 3D part reflected a sense of space, the frame drawing of 2D matched the sense of 3D space. To balance such spatial contradictions visually, I processed 3D layers of 2D hand-drawn scenes in Adobe After Effects (Figure 4.24). To balance the dimensional differences, the third element was also applied. In Figure 4.21, 3D ink, as a neutralising third-party visual element, linked the state of the sea and merged 3D and 2D well (see footnote 167). Adding 2D visual elements to a 3D scene not only served as a medium of neutralisation, but also more intuitively expressed the emotions in the scene. For example, after the sea spirit becomes angry, the princess is buried by enormous waves. The leading element is the princess’s feeling of the sea; thus, in this part of the sea, 2D lines were added to a 3D sea to increase the visual effect of the waves, reflecting the insignificance of human beings when facing natural disasters (Figure 4.25). Technically, given that 2D and 3D are made separately, it

¹⁷² From the ‘driving into the sea’ frame to the ‘princess becoming the Jingwei bird’ frame.

¹⁷³ Tina O’Hailey, *Hybrid Animation: Integrating 2D and 3D Assets* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ In this scene, the 3D sea appears first, and the camera gradually pulls back to present the environmental situation.

was necessary to match key frames in Adobe After Effects during composition, and perform special effects on the composition according to different imagery.



Figure 4.24. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, the princess driving into the sea, 2021.

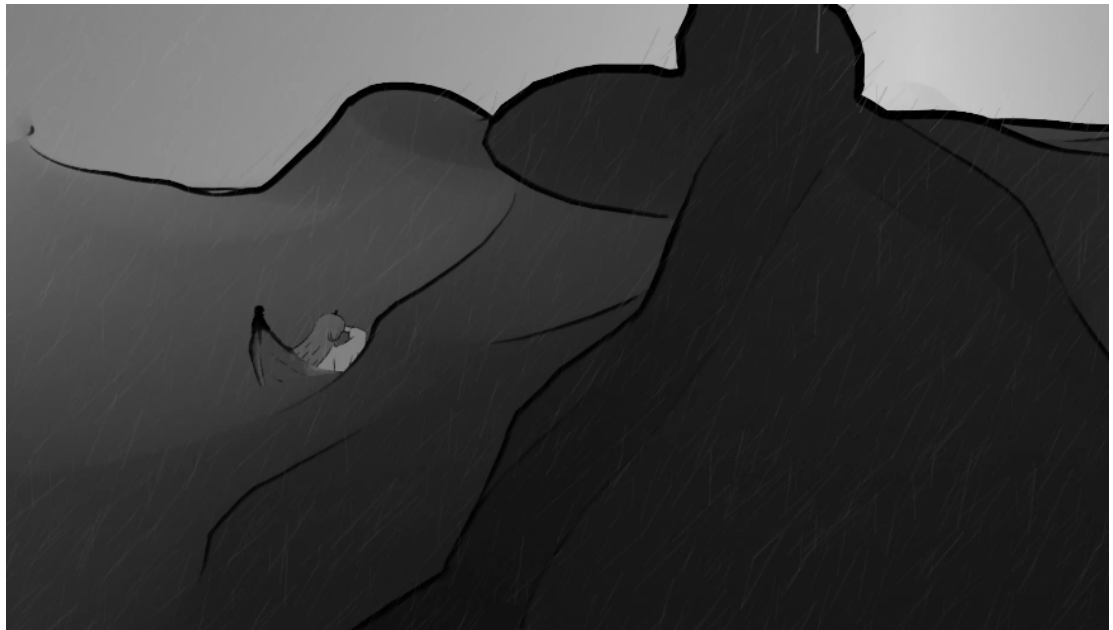


Figure 4.25. Xiaoying Ye, *Jingwei Reclamation*, the princess buried by enormous waves, 2021.

4.5.4 Music

The technical intertextuality of music was applied to the two different frequency bands and timbres of Chinese pipa¹⁷⁶ and violin. The timbre of the pipa has a sense of granularity, while the timbre of the violin is continuous; thus, these two ensembles are like the collision between stones and water at the riverside, which matched the theme of conflict between human and nature. The ensemble of these two instruments took the pipa as the main melody, and the melody composition and musical form structure of the violin was completed with the mode and tonality of the pipa, since the pipa led the emotion of the princess, which has significance to communicate the Chinese spirit. The violin led the plot emotion, which connected with the intertextuality of narrative adaptation.

The secondary instruments, the Chinese tanggu¹⁷⁷ and cello, provided low-key background sound to balance the high notes of the main rhythm. The Chinese pipa and tanggu, together with the Western violin and cello, were arranged by a professional music producer¹⁷⁸ to portray the emotion of the plot (Figure 4.26). The emotion of the music was opposite to the princess's emotion for the village,¹⁷⁹ corresponding to the metaphor of freedom and restraint. The animation starts with a pipa solo. Following the guidance of darkness frames, it reveals the reason for the princess leaving her hometown. After entering the spirit forest, the rhythm of the tanggu is like the heartbeat of the princess—calm and constancy. When the princess reaches the sea, the story and melody gradually reach a climax, and the tone of the violin guides the arrival of tension and danger. In the melody of the violin and pipa ensemble, the violin reflects the emotion of the main plot, while the pipa reflects the inner emotion of the princess/Jingwei bird, such as the reunion upon returning home and the release of the Jingwei bird's mission with a branch in its mouth. Thus, the Western and Chinese instruments work harmoniously in my practice, and enrich the content of my practice.

¹⁷⁶ The pipa is a four-string traditional instrument in China, which has comprised the main body of solo and ensemble music in most groups of Chinese culture since the early Ming Dynasty. John Myers, *The Way of the Pipa: Structure and Imagery in Chinese Lute Music*, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992).

¹⁷⁷ The tanggu is a nineteenth-century Chinese traditional drum. It is barrel-shaped and medium in size, with two animal skin heads, and is played with two sticks.

¹⁷⁸ The music in *Jingwei Reclamation* was made by professional music producer, Zhaohui Lei, who has rich knowledge of different instrument arrangements.

¹⁷⁹ The princess's feelings for the village in the animation become weaker and weaker, like the ink colour, but the music gradually reaches a climax with the plot, and the emotions of freedom and redemption become more prominent.

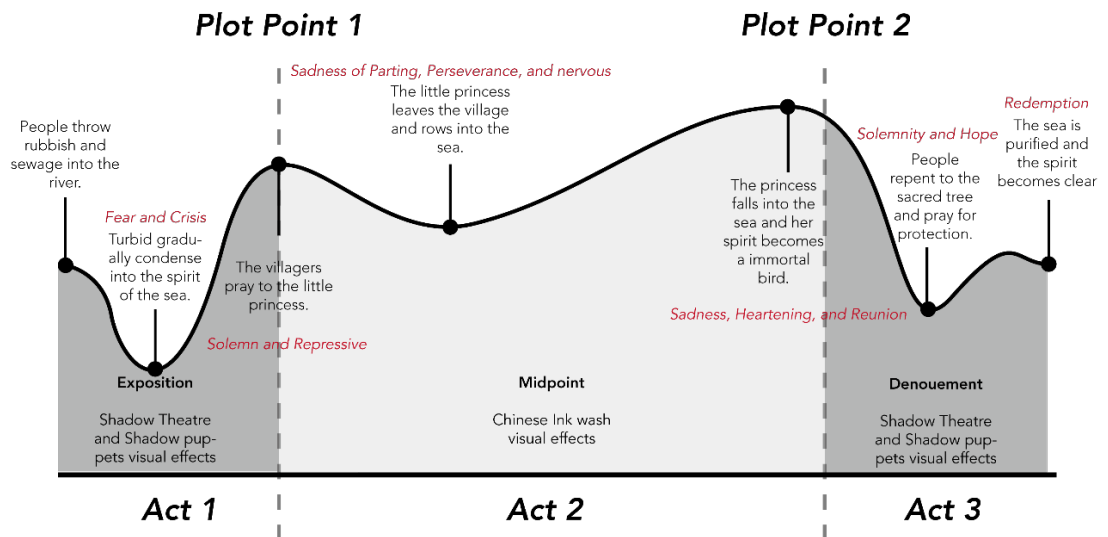


Figure 4.26. Xiaoying Ye, the three-act structure with emotion notes, 2021.



Chapter 5: Conclusion

The research question of this thesis explored the application of intertextuality to create an animation with Chinese cultural characteristics that could be appreciated in a global context. By studying the application of intertextuality in a global context, *Jingwei Reclamation* integrates with Western culture, while retaining Chinese culture characteristics in narrative, visual expression and music. In the narrative adaptation, I applied the three-act structure and Aristotle's tragedy theory to enrich the structure, integrity and tragedy of the original text, while retaining the original spirit of the myth. The integration of TRHY and animism established a 'harmonious coexistence between humans and nature' philosophy for the story background and the princess's personality of respecting nature. The darkness and light imagery of Western shadow theatre was conceptually and practically intertextual with Chinese shadow puppetry and ink, and the three visual elements were integrated into one media through the integration of 2D and 3D techniques. The intertextuality of music harmoniously integrated the pipa and violin, two different timbre instruments, so that the Yi Xiang of each plot could be more clearly conveyed to the audience.

In this research, I consider the narrative adaptation one of the most successful parts. I considered the philosophy of TRHY and animism, and integrated Aristotle's tragic theory and the tragic principles of Chinese mythology, so that the plot adaptation retained the tragic spirit of Chinese mythology, and improved the logic and sense of tragedy in the original text based on Aristotle's theory. Benefiting from a three-act structure and Aristotle's classic theory, *Jingwei Reclamation* displays integrity and consistency in logic and structure, which makes the heroic spirit in the original text of *Jingwei Reclamation* easier to comprehend.

In terms of the visual depiction of the plot, there are some successful aspects, yet other aspects requiring improvement. The emotional arc of the story was successfully built based on both Chinese and Western visual influences. The emotional plot points as the overall framework were basically interpreted by the significance of light and darkness, influenced by both Western shadow theatre and Chinese ink elements. In terms of character design, I am happy with the non-human characters, but not so much with the human characters. The human characters were based on the characteristics of Chinese shadow puppetry, since the visual effects and protagonist reflect Chinese culture, and one of the research aims is to retain Chinese culture in animation making. Therefore, it is a

pity that I was not able to be intertextual with Western culture in the appearance of the human characters' design.

In terms of the research aspect, I would like to conduct further research on Western shadow theatre and the intertextuality between diverse Chinese cultural elements to enrich this project in the future. As a result of the influence of COVID-19, I was unable to personally experience the dramatic significance of Western shadow theatre through field research, and there is limited existing literature analysing light and darkness in Western shadow theatre. Additionally, this research focused on the application of intertextuality in Chinese and Western culture, but not on the intertextuality between diverse Chinese cultural elements. While both Chinese shadow puppetry and ink were applied intertextually with Western shadow theatre separately, I did not research the technical intertextuality application between the shadow puppetry and ink.

I am proud that Yi Xiang is the fundamental theoretical concept of this research, with a distinctive Chinese characteristic.¹⁸⁰ The Yi Xiang expression of the plot and emotion enables the animation to express the content of the plot without any subtitles or dubbing, leaving room for audience interpretation. Through imagery description, the audience may feel the Yi¹⁸¹ (implied meaning) expressed in different intertextual elements. In the Xiang¹⁸² of *Jingwei Reclamation*, different audiences may feel different emotions expressed by Yi, and these Yi serve the same purpose—to reflect the spirit of sacrifice and fearlessness in Chinese mythology. The imagery designs of intertextual elements, such as the divine tree, olive branch and imagery brushwork, are closely linked to the plot, so the viewer can feel the content of the story and interpret the animation from different angles, instead of fixing the story in a specific plot. However, the application of Yi Xiang is not conducive to a general audience understanding the plot content, although they can feel certain emotions. Therefore, I made efforts to intertextually apply Yi Xiang with Western ideas to reach a wider audience. However, the cultural differences implicit in Yi Xiang's concept make the research unable to achieve its expected objectives. This is because intertextuality theory is not a solution for eliminating cultural differences but a means to highlight cultural differences. In this research, I have sought to bring different

¹⁸⁰ Lin Huang, 'The Theory of Yi Xiang System', *Academic Monthly* 07 (1995): 73–7.

¹⁸¹ Such as the sense of tragedy, redemption and homesickness.

¹⁸² In the analysis of the Yi Xiang system in Chapter 2, Xiang is the model, Jingwei is the model to show the spirit of fearless and sacrifice, and Xiang comes from the physical world. In this case, the animation of *Jingwei Reclamation* can be understood as Xiang.

cultures into dialogue, allowing them to express different metaphors harmoniously in animation; however, this does not mean that cultural differences have been eliminated. This study's focus on intertextuality reveals that the communication between different cultures is difficult—a challenge that is further enhanced by the engagement with Yi Xiang, a unique Chinese culture, which may be the embodiment of cultural differences. Therefore, since the concept of Yi Xiang does not exist in the Western aesthetic system, the objective of this study—to encourage Westerners to appreciate it—is difficult to achieve. At the beginning of this research, I hoped to build a bridge between different cultures through intertextuality. Intertextuality may become a way to reflect cultural differences, but through the practice of animation, diversity may coexist in the same medium, and the purpose of communication may be achieved, even though integration and unity are extremely challenging and difficult to attain.

In Dr Jason Kennedy's report, Aristotle's theory of tragedy is considered an overly ancient way of narration, and Yi Xiang's concept is deemed complex. The myth of *Jingwei Reclamation* itself has an ancient background and narrative mode, as influenced by traditional culture. In the study of intertextuality, two different narrative forms from separate periods may struggle to form a textual network of dialogue and communication. In this case, Yi Xiang's concept has developed the animation in a complex narratorial way. If the story communicates with the modern narrative, this may make it more difficult for the audience to understand the content of the story. Aristotle's classic narrative method can not only communicate with the tragic characteristics of Chinese mythology, bridging Chinese and Western cultures, but its strong structural characteristics also make it easier for the audience to accept and understand the development and content of the story. If I have the opportunity to conduct further research, I will examine the Western poetic literature in detail, and seek to find an equivalent poetic system to establish the theoretical foundation from a cross-cultural perspective, rather than from a pure Chinese perspective. If this study is given a second chance, one possible trajectory for it may be to apply intertextuality to different Chinese cultures, such as the contexts of Chinese shadow puppetry, ink and Duhuang murals.

Intertextuality theory provided me with the thinking required to eliminate boundaries of culture, animation style and adaptation texts. The concept of technical intertextuality enabled intertextual thinking to be operational and provided animation to fully exploit its pluralistic nature. In my opinion, intertextual thinking is one of the most important

theories of modern animation creation. In future applications, I will continue to integrate the dialogue between different discourses from the perspective of intertextuality theory to integrate borderless thinking in my future creations.

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