

**NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ART, DESIGN & MEDIA**



**REIMAGINING CHINESE GHOST TALES
THROUGH GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS**

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**A thesis submitted to the School of Art, Design & Media,
Nanyang Technological University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts (Research)**

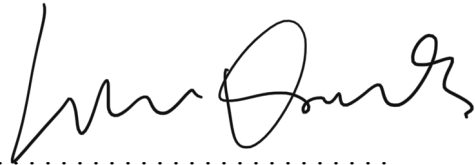
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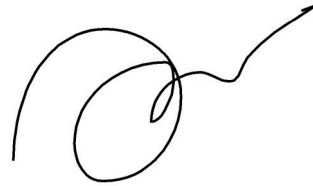
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Abstract

Chinese ghost literature can be considered one of the most imaginative and interesting human creations. Ghost stories and myths are common topics in early Chinese literary works. They help to convey and emphasize important cultural values, such as the virtues of Confucianism. However, in the modern Chinese society, the value of the Chinese Ghost Tales is underestimated as they are usually regarded as superstition or projected as spooky tales without values. Additionally, Chinese scholars have long underestimated the research value of Chinese ghost stories. This is because the Chinese government aims to eliminate superstition and promote the development of scientific knowledge. Ghost stories of any kind are generally considered superstition. Subsequently, even in the field of the art and design, few people regarded ghost art as the mainstream art of Chinese society. The public, especially the younger generation, lack the opportunity to learn and understand the cultural value of classic ghost stories. Thus, Chinese Ghost Tales as a traditional cultural heritage cannot survive and develop in contemporary society.

Chinese Ghost Tales have rich symbolic and cultural meanings. They reveal the darkness of human beings and promote good personality traits. This knowledge is valuable and may be related to our modern society. Therefore, the thesis aims at identifying the various cultural values of traditional Chinese ghost stories, in view of understanding the metaphorical meanings and human nature of the past society. It attempts to discern which types of values can be appropriately applied to the current situation. To achieve this purpose, the thesis reimagines Chinese ghost stories through graphic illustrations to explore fresh connections between the past and contemporary society and contemporary young people.

Applying Interpretation Design approach, the thesis studies the historical phenomena of Chinese Ghost Tales in the Six Dynasties, Tang, Song, Ming and Qing Dynasties, and then reimagines these phenomena from the contemporary context and perspective. From these dynasties, the ghost stories with cultural value were studied to determine ten valuable stories. Followed by the analysis of the ten stories, which provide the content for the visualization process. The findings showed four themes: Relationship, Suicide, Womanhood and Homosexuality and three creation ways: Expression, Imaginative and Connectivity.

Relating to the ideas and issues arising in the literature, the thesis results established an early step in understanding how traditional cultural values are still connected and can be applied to understand the humanization of contemporary society through graphic illustration. The findings are of high interest values for graphic illustrators who seek to explore traditional culture as their creative concepts. The thesis is not an explanatory account of the Chinese Ghost Tales, but an attempt to evaluate the value, moral and social issues related to the ghost stories and provide information for the visual exploration. It is not intended to provide an in-depth anthropological explanation of the Chinese Ghost Tales, and the final graphic illustrations should be considered as complementary to the stories in Chinese Ghost Tales, which are designed to arouse the interest of more people, especially the younger generation.

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Chapter 1. Overview of the Study

“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tales as a literary form.”

– H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*

1.1. Chinese Ghost Tale

Chinese ghost culture has been accompanied with Chinese history for thousands of years. In the view of materialism, spirit does not exist. For many contemporary people, they do not really believe in the existence of ghosts, although they may be curious or imaginative about ghosts. In addition, most Chinese people cannot read traditional Chinese text, and therefore lack the opportunity to appreciate the traditional ghost stories in a deep level. Spiritual concepts occupy an important position in the culture and history of many countries. The four ancient civilizations, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley and China have their myths and legends that can explain their origins. Myths and spiritual legends are the key to study the history or civilization of a country. Reading Chinese ghost stories also means further understanding of Chinese culture and history.

Under the influence of Chinese ghost culture, Chinese writers of different dynasties have created many classical Chinese ghost collections that have rich symbolic and cultural meaning. They reveal the darkness of humanity and promote good personality traits, and this kind of knowledge is valuable and may be relevant to our modern society. However, in this modern Chinese society, the value of Chinese Ghost Tales is underestimated. The Chinese government has not banned classical ghost stories publicly, nor has it provided opportunities for classical ghost stories to show their fascinating artistic and cultural values to the public, especially the younger generation (Chen, 2020). For instance, if we compare the versions of the Chinese movie and TV series of Painted Skin (画皮) after 2008, we will find that the main character, the female ghost has been adapted as a fox spirit. We cannot obtain direct evidence to confirm whether this change is related to Chinese Regulations for the Administration of Films, since the censoring process is not made transparent. However, we can see that the moviemakers tried to modify the original storyline in order to avoid crossing the bottom line of the censorship system. In this case, certain essence and deep meaning of the story could not be discussed in more depth. As an article of Voice of America (Chinese), “Feng Xiaogang: Shencha Zhidu Esha Zhongguo Dianying Chuangzaoli (冯小刚：审查制度扼杀中国电影创造力)” (2011), the famous Chinese movie director Feng Xiaogang (冯小刚) once expressed his concern that Chinese censorship will stifle the creativity of filmmakers. In addition, the original Chinese Ghost Tales are usually presented in complex classical texts and concepts. Therefore,

a relevant question to ask is how can we promote the cultural values of Chinese Ghost Tales to our younger generations?

1.2. Statement of Intent of the Study

According to Yuan Ke (2017), Chinese ghost literature can be seen as a reflection of extensive artistic generalizations of historical hints, social issues and special phenomena. Through these stories, people can get inspiration and different insights from life, so as to improve their life and attitude towards problems, and get more encouragement. Chinese ghost culture is full of aesthetic value and is worthy of appreciation and research. It also includes imaginative potential for contemporary illustrators to enhance their cultural creativity, as well as providing additional materials for contemporary writers and directors to adapt to literature and film. Chinese ghost tales can enhance people's historical knowledge and reveal the social life of ancient people. In addition, studying Chinese ghost stories helps to cultivate people's sense of national pride and national responsibility for the heritage and traditional culture. These stories inspire people to develop a sense of self-responsibility, social responsibility, self-growth, family responsibility, self-awareness and self-understanding. As such, the first intent of this project is to investigate the cultural values reflected in Chinese ghost stories and establish connections with contemporary young people and society.

The successful example of Japanese *yokai* culture provides more experience and direction for this project to develop cultural visual expression form targeted at contemporary young people. According to Kazuhiko (2017), visualizing *yokai* culture is one of the most significant historical events in Japanese art and culture history. The paintings alleviated the fearfulness of the characters in *yokai* stories and made this culture popular at that time. Furthermore, the popularity of *yokai* culture has attracted more painters to join the creating *yokai* paintings' process. In the process, people created more classical characters and naturally eliminated some stories and characters, which should not be visualized and preserved. The publication of the collection "*The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons*" by Toriyama Sekien in 1776 promoted the development of the *yokai* culture, thus reaching a new peak of art in Japanese history. His fresh imagination of the *yokai* collection attracted more painters to draw inspiration from Japanese literature and drama, and created many famous *yokai* paintings. These *yokai* characters and paintings were applied in brands and appear in people's daily life, which also aroused the interest of scholars in the study of *yokai* culture and made it an independent subject in Japanese culture.

In recent years, *yokai* culture and related games, manga and animations have attracted Chinese young people to participate in Japanese culture. Through visual forms, Japanese traditional culture is rapidly spread and accepted among millennials, which reflects the enhancement of visual arts. According to Baldwin (2020), illustration plays an important role in the digital age more than ever, which makes the story even

more impressive and imaginative. This project applies graphic illustration to pique the interest of the younger generation and enhanced their understanding of the original text and the cultural value behind the ancient Chinese ghost stories. When people are immersed in visual effects, a connection can be established between the young audiences, illustrators and stories through selected themes, new perspectives, artistic elements and illustration styles. Therefore, inspired by the developed and well-positioned Japanese ghost culture (*yokai* culture), the second intent of this project is to explore and reimagine traditional Chinese ghost tales through graphic illustrations.

1.3. The Research Purpose and Method of the Study

Employing Interpretation Design as the research method, the research steps included collecting ghost stories that reflect cultural values; to analyzing the meaning, analogy or motivation of allusions and metaphors; to exploring fresh perspectives and interpretations and discovering the connection between the past and contemporary society. The purpose of this project is to discover the effectiveness of reimagining Chinese ghost stories through creative graphic illustrations and show the cultural connection with the younger generation. The result of the Interpretation Design study is presented in four themes: Relationship, Suicide, Womanhood and Homosexuality and three creation ways: Expression, Imaginative and Connectivity (see Table 4.1. The structure of themes and creation ways).

The ultimate aim of this project is to enable the younger generations to gain insight and understanding about the values for the conservation of our heritage and classical literature. In addition, this project could also be an inspiration for graphic illustrators to choose themes and illustration style for art making

1.4. Significance of the Study

Through the visual exploration and interpretation of the original text, historical background, cultural value, moral and social issues reflected in the traditional Chinese ghost stories. The underlying significance of this project lies in highlighting the importance of ghosts as themes and carriers of creativity and cultural expression. Since ghosts are considered taboo or unpopulated in the field of Chinese visual art, what makes this research unique is the subversion of this concept.

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. Following the current chapter on the overview of the study, Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature covered in key research areas: the background and development of Chinese ghost literature, the most representative ghost collections of the Six Dynasties, Tang Dynasty, Song Dynasty, Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty, the Chinese ghost painting and the painting styles of two famous

Chinese painters, Chinese critical cultural values: the virtues of Confucianism, and *yokai* culture and generation Y. The focus is to define Chinese ghost culture and its cultural value, determine the appropriate illustration style and support the statement of intent. Chapter 3 introduces the research methods and discusses the details of the methods used in the research for data collection, creation process, and analysis. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the study, their significance, and contributions, in terms of implications for graphic illustrators and contribution to the literature.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms Used in the Study

The following is a list of definitions of key terms used in the current research.

Yokai: In Japanese culture, it usually refers to a broad concept. It can be a creature, existence or phenomenon, and it can be described as mysterious or weird.

Zhiguai (志怪): Literally, it refers to “records of anomalous”. This term was used as a literary genre in the Six Dynasties (220-589) to refer to related ghost stories.

Zhiguai Xiaoshuo (志怪小说): Tales of Miraculous.

Chuanqi (传奇): *Chuanqi* tales mean “transmission of marvels”.

Five Virtues (五常/五德): Ren (humanity, benevolence, 仁), Yi (righteousness, 义), Li (propriety, rites, 礼), Zhi (wisdom, knowledge, 智) and Xin (trustworthiness, 信).

Liaozhai Zhiyi (聊斋志异): *Liaozhai Zhiyi* or simply *Liaozhai* (Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio). It is created by the Chinese writer *Pu Songling* (蒲松龄) in the Qing Dynasty, which contains nearly 500 kinds of marvel tales in the styles of *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi*.

Shan Hai Jing (Classic of Mountains and Seas, 山海经): It is a Chinese text and a compilation of mythological beasts and geography.

The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons (Also known as *Gazu Hyakki Yagyō*, 百鬼夜行图): It is the first book of famous Japanese artist Toriyama Sekien in 1776, it promoted the development of the *yokai* culture, thus reaching a new peak of art in Japanese history.

Ching Ming Festival (清明节) (also known as Tomb Sweeping Day or Pure Brightness): It is a festival to commemorate and respect the deceased, usually held on April 4, 5 or 6 every year.

Double Ninth Festival (重阳节): It is a festival celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month. Its activities include climbing higher ground, paying tribute to ancestors and gratitude and appreciation to the elderly.

Zhong Yuan Festival (中元节) (also known as the Hungry Ghost Festival): It is celebrated every year on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month. The Chinese

believe that the gates of hell will open that day, and the living must hold celebrations and make offerings to the souls of the dead to appease them.

Lunar New Year's Eve (除夕): It is often called the Spring Festival, and the Lunar New Year celebrations will begin with ancestor worship, followed by a reunion dinner.

Green Dragon (Qing Long, 青龙): One of four mythological guardians represents the east.

White Tiger (Bai Hu, 白虎): One of four mythological guardians represents the west.

Red Phoenix (Zhu Que, 朱雀): One of four mythological guardians represents the south.

Black Tortoise (Xuan Wu, 玄武): One of four mythological guardians represents the north, a tortoise – like chimaera with the head and tail of a serpent.

Daoism: It advocates living in harmony and the way of nature.

Buddhism: It represents personal spiritual developments, and the ideas of suffering, impermanence of material items, and reincarnation.

Confucianism: It focuses on human virtues, societal rules and moral values.

Chapter 2. Contextual Review

2.1. Developments of Chinese Ghost Culture

Ghosts are regarded as non-existent by scientific viewpoints. However, the concept of ghosts has generally influenced the development of culture and cultural literature in many countries. In China's five thousand years of history, ghost culture has played a vital role in the formation of the human spiritual world and human civilisation. Ghost culture consists of two parts, physical culture refers to practical utensils, rituals and activities, and spiritual culture includes various ghost thinking and consciousness (Xu, 1991, p. 1). The focus of this research is on the spiritual culture of traditional Chinese ghost literature.

Ghost stories are the earliest form of ancient Chinese literature. The concept of ghosts began in the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BCE) (also known as the Yin Dynasty), which was the earliest recorded dynasty in China. The people of the Shang Dynasty were greatly affected by divination and witchcraft because the rulers of the Shang Dynasty used religion as a tool to manipulate the masses. According to the records in "Book of Rites" (*Li Ji: Biao Ji*, 礼记: 表記), the people of the Yin dynasty respected the gods, and the rulers led people to value the worship of ghosts and gods but ignore the propriety and other rituals (殷人尊神，率民以事神，先鬼而后礼). A firm belief in ghosts can also be found on the oracle bone inscriptions of the late Shang Dynasty (c. 1200-1050 BCE), mainly for divination and ceremonies. In addition, death often occurs in underdeveloped ancient societies, so in order to cope with the unknown and the fear of death, the concepts of ghosts and souls have also been developed to bring comfort and explanation to primitive Chinese ancestors.

According to the Chinese dictionary "Shuowen Jiezi" (说文解字) in the early 2nd century, the Chinese word Ghost (鬼, Gui) means Returning (归, Gui). The ancient Chinese people believed that after death, the dead would return to the world and live there as a spirit. The Daoist book "Liezi" (列子) explains the relationship between ghosts and Returning: After a person dies, the soul will separate from the body, and then the two will return to their true position or nature.

Ghost culture is the consciousness of ancient people and their thinking and belief in human death. In addition, ghost culture includes many categories, including spirit-related novels, drama, art, music, dance, and folklore proverbs (Lai, 1993, p. 2). Since ancient times, Chinese ghost culture has been flourishing because it is always combined with mainstream cultural resources at different historical stages, such as combining with religion and literature creation. Through the process of integration and adaptation, the influence of ghost culture becomes more approachable. It becomes a popular culture that was accepted by the public, rather than just a service for the king in the Shang Dynasty. It is worth noting that there are four key stages in the development of Chinese ghost culture.

In the first stage, worship of ghosts and gods in the Shang dynasty became a daily belief of people, and their function was the same as that of goddesses. These functions include requesting help and guidance from gods, ghosts and ancestors to fight disasters and diseases or bless their country and family (*Karetzky, 2014, p. 65*). The ghost concept was also considered to be an important political way for the rulers to manage the country and residence at that time. As kings of the Shang Dynasty, they possessed a certain spiritual power and could use the deceased ancestors as shamans in ceremonies.

Consequently, ghost culture of the Shang Dynasty gradually developed in the following dynasty and began its second phase. After the demise of the Shang Dynasty, the Zhou Dynasty was established (1050-256 BCE). In order to strengthen the Zhou dynasty, a new leadership system was established, and these countries were ruled only by the Kings and their kingsmen and close supporters. The combination of ghost culture and this new system has forced people to worship the souls of the Kings' late ancestors. This kind of worship and related rituals symbolised that only the Kings (also called Son of Heaven, Tianzi, 天子) and their kingsmen had the legal authority to manage the country as they are blessed by their late ancestors. In contemporary culture today, many Chinese families still follow this custom of ancestor worship, especially in the four most important traditional ancestral festivals. Firstly, Ching Ming Festival (清明节), also known as Tomb Sweeping Day or Pure Brightness, is a festival to commemorate and respect the deceased, usually held on April 4, 5 or 6 every year. Secondly, the Double Ninth Festival (重阳节) is a festival celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month. Its activities include climbing higher ground, paying tribute to ancestors and gratitude and appreciation to the elderly. Thirdly, Zhong Yuan Festival (中元节), also known as the Hungry Ghost Festival, is celebrated every year on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month. The Chinese believe that the gates of hell will open that day, and the living must hold celebrations and make offerings to the souls of the dead to appease them. Lastly, Lunar New Year's Eve (除夕) is often called the Spring Festival, and the Lunar New Year celebrations will begin with ancestor worship, followed by a reunion dinner.

In the third stage, Chinese ghost culture was popularized by people and became an important folklore belief. Since many people died in the Han Dynasty (206-220) and the Six Dynasties (220-589) due to warfare, famine and plague, witchcraft and religion became more widespread. When the population declined due to diseases and disasters, the countries were shrouded in a dark atmosphere of terror and melancholy, and corpses were everywhere. People believed the plagues and disasters were related to ghosts, and exorcism is the best way to avoid harm. Therefore, Buddhism and Daoism had become the means to combat and exorcise evils (*Wan, 2013, p. 6*). People also get relief from religion to comfort their loss and fear. With the development of Buddhism and Daoism, it also provides more theoretical support and imagination for the creation of ghost literature (*Jin, 2016, p. 55*). Chinese ghost culture gradually

merged with Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, absorbing different religious characteristics.

Daoism promotes the concept of eternal life and it states that the universe evolved from vitality (*Yuanqi*, 元气) – which created various forms of vitality, and *Yin* and *Yang* (Karetzky, 2014, p. 152). Therefore, following the idea of balancing Yin and Yang, one of the main literary themes of Chinese ghost stories during this period was “the love of human and ghost” (人鬼恋). The female ghost representing *Yin* must usually have an intimate relationship with the human man to gain enough *Yang* to remain in the human world. In addition, further development of Daoist legends and decorative patterns had appeared in many Chinese ghost stories. This includes patterns of the universe, apex and heaven, as well as mythological creatures in the four cardinal directions: green dragon (Qing Long, 青龙) of the east; white tiger (Bai Hu, 白虎) of the west; red phoenix (Zhu Que, 朱雀) of the south; and black tortoise (Xuan Wu, 玄武) of the north, a tortoise – like chimaera with the head and tail of a serpent.

Due to the social turmoil and uncertainty in the late Han Dynasty (220 CE), Buddhism became upsurge in popularity, and people found solace and comfort in Buddhism (Karetzky, 2014, p. 267). Accordingly, many Chinese ghost stories began to reflect Buddhist concepts and beliefs. For example, the story of “*An Account of the Governor of the Southern Branch*” (南柯太守传), from the Song Dynasty, reflected Buddhism’s concept that human life is nothing but a floating dream or fantasy. Ghost stories often helped to promote religious belief such as these. Unlike Buddhism and Daoism, Confucianism has an evasive attitude toward ghosts, and *the Analects of Confucianism* (论语) indicates this attitude: “Revere ghost and gods, but keep your distance from them” (敬鬼神而远之). Another famous point of view of ghosts in *the Analects of Confucianism* is: “You don’t even understand life. How do you understand death?” (未知生焉知死). Confucianism focuses on human practical behaviors, societal rules and moral values, rather than spirits and ghosts. It advocates the application of Confucius living philosophy in practice and human daily life, which means that Confucianism is a human-centered philosophy (Li, 2014, p. 84). Thus, Confucianism created the original concept of Five Virtues (五常/五德). This thesis discusses the meanings of the Five Virtues, transcending the definitions of Confucius, and explores the relationship between the five virtues contemporary relevance.

There are many Chinese ghost stories reflect human virtues, and the traditional Five Virtues are advocated by both the past and modern Chinese society. The Five Virtues are benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trustworthiness (Ren 仁, Yi 义, Li 礼, Zhi 智, Xin 信), which still exist in modern society. Later in this chapter, the project will further discuss the modern definition and value of these five virtues.

In the fourth stage, Chinese ghost culture is combined with *Zhiguai* fictions (also known as *Zhiguai Xiaoshuo*). *Zhiguai* literally refers to the “records of anomalous”. The term *Zhiguai* first appeared in the chapter of “Unfettered Excursion” (逍遥游) in

the book of *Zhuang Zi* (庄子): “The tales of miraculous are called *Zhiguai*” (齐谐者,志怪者也). This term was later used as a literary genre in the Six Dynasties (220-589) to refer to related ghost stories. Tales of Miraculous (*Zhiguai Xiaoshuo*, 志怪小说) first appeared in the collection of *Youyang Zazu* (酉阳杂俎) compiled by writer Duan Chengshi (段成式) in the late Tang Dynasty. Scholars such as Chinese writer and literary critic Lu Xun (鲁迅) had described the Tales of Miraculous as independent literary departments until modern times (*Leng, 2019, p. 52*). The Six Dynasties was a long period of division, chaos and war in Chinese history. It, therefore, provides an opportunity for Chinese ghost culture to further develop and integrate with the Tales of Miraculous. People had to reconsider the theme of death and afterlife in that period. Therefore, talking about ghosts had become a hot topic for literati and ordinary people. As mentioned earlier, Confucianism restricted the development of ghost culture, but the influence of Confucianism in the Six Dynasties weakened. Therefore, ghost culture had obtained the opportunity to develop literature (*Jin, 2016, p. 54*).

In recent years, Chinese scholars have devalued the study of Chinese ghost stories. In one aspect, this is because the current social ethos lacks enthusiasm because the Chinese government aims to eliminate superstition and promote the development of scientific knowledge. In another aspect, research work will be arduous and complicated, requiring long-term cooperation of professional teams or institutions. I grew up with Chinese Ghost Tales and believe that they contain rich symbolic and cultural meanings. In today’s scientific climate however, few people regard ghost artworks as the mainstream art in Chinese society. This is because ghosts as the subject of a painting or art theme is more difficult to create as compared with real-life subjects such as human figures, landscapes, flowers and birds of Chinese paintings (*Su, 2018, p. 25*). It requires more imagination to depict what a ghost should look like, and there is no standard. Conversely, the weakness is also the strength. It means there is more space for creativity in ghost painting themes (*Su, 2018, p. 22*). For now, many illustrations are more prone to represent mythological stories because they are auspicious and picturesque. However, for me, Chinese Ghost Tales are still an invaluable treasure and may be relevant to our modern society. Therefore, as an illustrator and graphic designer, my goal is to study the historical phenomena of Chinese Ghost Tales and reimagine these phenomena through contemporary context and perspective. To achieve this purpose, the following research question was explored: How can the cultural values of traditional Chinese ghost stories inform a series of illustrations that will raise the interest of a wider readership, particularly among the younger generations?

The following section establishes the extant literature pertaining to the history of Chinese ghost tales.

2.2. Chinese Ghost Literature

Chinese ghost literature has gone through several stages of development. As the Chinese writer and literary critic Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881-1936) mentioned in the book *Zhongguo Xiao Shuo Shi Lue* (中国小说史略): “Originally, China believed in witchcraft. Since the Qin Dynasty and the Han Dynasty, the discussion of deities had been prevailed. At the end of the Han Dynasty, the witchcraft had become popular again, and the ghosts had become more popular. The Hinayana Buddhism also spread to the middle earth of China and gradually it was accepted by the public. After that, people tended to talk about ghosts and supernatural things, so from the Jin Dynasty to the Sui Dynasty, there were many books created about ghosts and deities. (中国本信巫, 秦汉以来, 神仙之说盛行, 汉末又大畅巫风, 而鬼道愈炽; 会小乘佛教亦入中土, 渐见流传。凡此, 皆张皇鬼神, 称道灵异, 故自晋迄隋, 特多鬼神志怪之书)”. Thus, the significant development took place during the Six Dynasties (220-589), where witchcraft and Buddhism greatly influenced the development of ghost literature, which will be further elaborated in Chapter 2.2.1. In the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the development of literature gradually matured, and then revived and flourished in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). This project mainly focuses on the ghost tales of these dynasties mentioned. The following subsections are an introduction to the characteristics and the main representation of the ghost stories of these dynasties, and examples of relevant literature will be provided.

2.2.1. The Six Dynasties – *Zhiguai* Tales

During the Six Dynasties period, *Zhiguai* Tales created many ghost characters and established a complex relationship between people and ghosts (*Jin*, 2016, p. 66). The stories of *Zhiguai* are usually very short, with few details. Many *Zhiguai* writers were historians, so they compiled *Zhiguai*'s collections into another form of historical records. Therefore, readers of *Zhiguai* regarded ghost tales as true history (*Leng*, 2019, p. 52-53). According to Chan and Lo (2010), these ghost tales provided *Zhiguai* writers with a tool to express their views on social morality (Five Virtues) and a sense of humour and scepticism about life.

Zhiguai's early collection, *Lie Yi Zhuan* (Biographies of Extraordinary Persons, 列异传) (*Cao*, 1988), is composed of a series of stories with artistic value and ideological reflection (*Ye & Wang*, 1992, p. 102). The original author of *Lie Yi Zhuan* is still controversial in academia. Generally, this collection is believed to be attributed to Cao Pi (曹丕), Emperor of the Wei Dynasty (220–265/266) during the Three Kingdoms. The stories of this collection were influenced by witchcraft and Buddhism, reflecting the tragic lives of civilians during war, dark politics and social instability. Cao Cao (曹操), the originator of the Wei Dynasty, wrote a poem describing the real situation of people at that time: “The soldiers’ armour grew lice because they had been wearing it throughout the years of war. Thousands of people had died in wars

and related plagues. The wilderness was full of bones, and because the social order was destroyed, no cry was heard.” (铠甲生虱虱，万姓以死亡，白骨露于野，千里无鸡鸣). Based on social turmoil, civilians prayed for protection from the spirit. As social conflicts intensified, the ruling class also began to use miraculous stories to control people’s thoughts to strengthen their rule. *Lie Yi Zhuan* was created in this context. Hence, the content of *Lie Yi Zhuan* mainly advocates that alchemy can bring people back to life, the supernatural power of gods and the existence of the afterlife (Ye & Wang, 1992, p. 103-104). As the first collection of *Zhiguai*, *Lie Yi Zhuan* is unrefined. However, it represents the advancement of human thought, which means that people begin to regard ghosts as an important literary topic and begin to consider death rather than avoid talking about it.

The famous representative of *Zhiguai* collection is *Sou Shen Ji* (Anecdotes about Spirits and Immortals, 搜神记), attributed to Chinese historian, philosopher and writer in the Jin Dynasty, Gan Bao (干宝, fl. 315, died 336). *Sou Shen Ji* is a compilation of Chinese legends, short stories and other supernatural phenomena. It includes many characters and stories with high cultural and artistic value for us to learn. For example, the theme, “love of human and ghost” (人鬼恋) is not only important in the book *Sou Shen Ji*, but also the main theme of the later creation and development of ghost literature. There were 29 stories about the love affairs between a living man and a female ghost in the Six Dynasties ghost literature. By the Sui and Tang Dynasties, about 70 human ghost love stories had been created, and in the Qing Dynasty, the book of *Liaozhai Zhiyi* or simply *Liaozhai* (Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio, 聊斋志异) itself has nearly 20 such story themes. In *Sou Shen Ji*, many vivid and interesting female characters had been created on this love theme. For example, in the 16th Volume of *Sou Shen Ji*, the story *Zi Yu and Han Chong* (紫玉与韩重) (Gan, 2017, p. 209) describes a noble princess Zi Yu who fell in love with a young man, Han Chong, but her family opposed their marriage, and Zi Yu died of the opposition. She became a ghost, waiting for Han Chong’s return, and invited him to her grave to continue their relationship. Later, Zi Yu’s father misunderstood Han Chong and thought that he had stolen the treasure from his daughter’s grave and was preparing to imprison him. Zi Yu protected him by proving his innocence to his father. This story represents the pursuit of love and happiness of young people, who bravely broke the unreasonable rules of feudal society. Such stories also show progress in the awakening and liberation of women’s self-consciousness. Many women began to realize that in order to pursue love and eliminate inequality in a patriarchal society, they should enjoy the same privileges as men.

Another key theme of *Sou Shen Ji* is “dreams”. Dreams are the product of people’s thoughts, emotions, and memories of daily life, which has an influence on Chinese causality theory (Zeitlin, 1993, p. 154). The story *Jiaohu Miao Zhu* (焦湖庙祝) (283th volume of *Tai Ping Guang Ji*) (Li, 1961, p. 2254), is considered to be the inspiration for two famous dream stories in Chinese literature: *Zhen Zhong Ji* (Record within a Pillow, 枕中记) (82th volume of *Tai Ping Guang Ji*) (Li, 1961, p.526), and *Nanke*

Taishou Zhuan (An Account of the Governor of the Southern Branch, 南柯太守传) (475th volume of *Tai Ping Guang Ji*) (Li, 1961, p. 3910). The storylines of these three stories are similar. Basically, it is about a man getting a miraculous pillow, and the pillow enables him to watch his life journey through a dream. Then, he realized that life is short, and it is meaningless to pursue fame and wealth, and to enjoy the moment is more important. This concept is consistent with Buddhist teachings that life is just a dream. In summary, *Sou Shen Ji* provides many materials and possibilities for the development of Chinese ghost literature in the later dynasties, and it also influenced another important literary genre, *Chuanqi*'s (传奇) creation (Ye & Wang, 1992, p. 102).

Other typical collections of *Zhiguai* during the Six Dynasties period are also significant, include *You Ming Lu* (Records of the Hidden and the Visible Worlds, 幽冥录) (Liu, 1988), *Shi Yi Ji* (Record of Heretofore Lost Works, 拾遗记) (Wang, 1989), and *Yi Yuan* (Strange Garden, 异苑) (Liu, 2004). *You Ming Lu* collected stories from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), which are mainly about the miracles that ordinary people have. It holds more literary aesthetic value and description of human nature. *Shi Yi Ji* was compiled by Daoist scholar Wang Jia (王嘉) in the 4th century and included legends, a large number of geographical records and other histories. *Yi Yuan* retains 383 *Zhiguai* stories, compiled by Liu Jingshu (刘敬叔). *Yi Yuan* is considered to be an important collection of *Zhiguai*, because this book covers a wide range of topics and vivid imagination. The collection of *Zhiguai* created a new era of Chinese literati and promoted the prosperity of Chinese literature, especially ghost tales in later dynasties.

There are three main types of *Zhiguai* tales, and they were used to inspire the development of later *Zhiguai* stories. The first type is stories about people encountering ghosts. *Song Dingbo Sells a Ghost* (宋定伯卖鬼) (Gan, 2017, p. 207) is a famous story of this type. A young man met a ghost and pretended to be a ghost. Finally, he won the ghost's trust and used the ghost's weakness to catch and sell him for a lot of money. The second type reveals the corruption of the rulers or court officials. An example is the story of *Xian Yuji* (鲜于冀) (316th volume of *Tai Ping Guang Ji*) (Li, 1961, p. 2499), which describes two officials of court embezzled 4 million yuan and framed their dead colleague Xian Yuji. The emperor confiscated Xian Yuji's property, house and servants. His wife and children were also banished to an uninhabited place. The spirit of Xian Yuji appeared to defend for himself in the day, and he did not disappear until the emperor determined that he was innocent (In Chinese culture, ghosts only appear at night. The appearance of ghosts during the day means that they have experienced injustice). The third is to advocate human virtues. For example, in the story of *Lu Shaoqian* (鲁少千) (456th volume of *Tai Ping Guang Ji*) (Li, 1961, p. 3726), the protagonist Lu Shaoqian insists on his righteousness to fulfil his promise, rather than being tempted by the money and power offered by ghosts.

2.2.2. The Tang Dynasty — *Tang Chuanqi*

After the great achievements of the six-generation ghost literature, the writers of the Tang Dynasty absorbed the essence of *Zhiguai* tales and further developed into *Chuanqi* tales (Qiu, 2009, p. 4). The genre *Chuanqi* (Tales of Strange Events, 传奇) was created in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and are called *Tang Chuanqi*. *Chuanqi* tales mean “transmission of marvels”. *Tang Chuanqi* is usually mentioned together with *Song Chuanqi*, a similar literary work of the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Compared with *Zhiguai* in the Six Dynasties, *Chuanqi* was a more advanced genre, but the nature of themes such as fantasy has not changed significantly (Zhang, 2017, p. xiv). *Chuanqi*'s unique features include more polished writings with literary value; “realistic recording” that was much closer to real-life; and moral teachings reflect people's ideology (Zhang, 2017, p. xxviii).

There are many representative *Chuanqi* collections in the Tang Dynasty and Song Dynasty. For example, *Xuan Guai Lu* (Mysteries and Monsters, 玄怪录) (Niu & Li, 2012) is an early collection of strange persons and incidents in the genre of *Tang Chuanqi* novellas. Lu Xun, the leading figure of modern Chinese literature, highly praised the book *Xuan Guai Lu*. He said: “There are thousands of *Tang Chuanqi* novellas, many of which enjoy a high reputation in the history of Chinese literature, but only *Xuan Guai Lu* is the best.” (迨传奇之文，荟萃为一集者，在唐代多有，而焯赫莫如牛僧孺之《玄怪录》) (Lu, 1981, p. 3). *Xuan Guai Lu* was written by Niu Sengru (牛僧孺) (779-847), a famous politician and writer in the Tang Dynasty. Niu Sengru experienced the darkness of political struggle and witnessed the cruellest acts of humanity. Including the famous political events of the Tang Dynasty, “The Dissension between Parties”, which accelerated the downfall of the Tang Dynasty. Thus, he collected a lot of stories and wrote the book *Xuan Guai Lu* from different perspectives.

There are five main categories of *Chuanqi* collections in this project, represented as the “Anomalous experience”, “Love and marriage”, “Alchemy and magical power”, “Repaying”, and “Dreams”. They are also the main topics in the stories of *Chuanqi* and *Zhiguai*. *Chuanqi* (Transmission of strange tales, 传奇), another famous book in the Tang Dynasty, written by Pei Xing (裴铏) (fl. 860) also has a great narrative quality and has been widely disseminated and adopted by many movie directors. For example, the Chinese blockbuster movie, *The Assassin* (聂隐娘), directed by Taiwanese film director Hsiao-Hsien Hou (侯孝贤), adapted one of the stories in the book *Chuanqi* (194th volume of *Tai Ping Guang Ji*) (Li, 1961, p. 1456-1457). Besides the character, *Assassin*, the book also shaped many famous characters with impressive personalities. For example, the story of *Cui Wei* (崔炜) (34th volume of *Tai Ping Guang Ji*) (Li, 1961, p. 215) is about a benevolent man who saved an immortal person. In return, the immortal gave Cui some immortal medicines, which changed his fate. Cui used these medicines to treat and cure many people. A man healed by Cui Wei intends to kill Cui and sacrifice him to an evil ghost. Cui escaped the killing and fell into the dry well of a giant immortal snake. Cui Wei used the immortal medicine to

cure the snake's sickness. As a repayment, the snake sent him to a palace underworld. Cui married a ghost wife there, and got a lot of treasure from the palace, and he took his wife to the mortal world in the end. Another example is *Kunlun Nu* (昆仑奴), a story about an extraordinary servant with superpowers who helps his master solve problems. A young man fell in love with a girl who asked the young man to rescue her from her master's control. The young man's servant came from Kunlun, and he volunteered to help his master rescue the girl. The servant used his super ability to carry the young man and the girl over tall walls. His speed was so fast that the guards of the girl's master could not see them. Two years later, the police found the servant and wanted to arrest him. However, the servant flew through the gunfire but was not injured. Then, he disappeared in front of the police. Many years later, some people said that they met the servant, and he looked as if he hadn't aged.

The Tang period writer, Duan Chengshi (段成式) (803-863) compiled another classic masterpiece of *Tang Chuanqi* which is called *Youyang Zazu* (Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang, 酉阳杂俎) (Duan, 2012). It includes a lot of strange stories and extraordinary characters, providing rich information of the folklore customs during the Tang Dynasty, including the thought and daily life of the Tang people. *Chuanqi* tales are basically divided into "Love fictions", "*Zhiguai* novels", "*Xiayi* novels" (chivalrous novels, 侠义) and "Historical Notebook stories". In Ghost literature, the theme of *Zhiguai* in *Chuanqi* tales developed rapidly in the Tang Dynasty. It is because of the economic prosperity of the Tang Dynasty, the enlightened social atmosphere and stable politics (Yuan, 1993, p. 1-2). The Tang Dynasty is the longest unified dynasty in Chinese history and is also regarded as the golden age of art and culture. Poetry, prose, and other popular literary forms all reached their peak in the Tang Dynasty. They all promoted the creation of *Tang Chuanqi*, especially the structure and language of the *Chuanqi* novellas (Yuan, 1993, p. 2).

2.2.3. The Song Dynasty — *Zhiguai* Tales and *Song Chuanqi*

In the Song Dynasty (960-1279), *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi*'s literary traditions and themes were preserved, but *Chuanqi*'s stories absorbed more elements of the Song Dynasty's common folklore. Therefore, the main characters of *Song Chuanqi* were mostly ordinary people, which is different from *Tang Chuanqi*. *Tang Chuanqi*'s characters are mostly nobles and aristocrats. The significant difference between *Tang Chuanqi* and *Song Chuanqi* is that the stories of *Song Chuanqi* consciously reflect the author's creative consciousness. This means that they were not only writing extraordinary things and characters but also focusing on describing the personality of the protagonist, the internal logic of the storyline and more details (Yuan, 1993, p. 2). In the Song Dynasty, the school of *Chuanqi* literature has reached a mature stage. It also inspired the literary creation of the later dynasties, *Ming Chuanqi* and *Qing Chuanqi*. One of the most famous masterpieces of *Song Chuanqi* and *Zhiguai* is *Tai Ping Guang Ji* (Extensive Records of the Taiping Reign, 太平广记) (Li, 1961). It is a collection of a large number of supernatural events throughout ancient history and is also known as the "Encyclopedia of the supernatural". Ghost stories account for the most substantial proportion in this book. Of the 500 volumes in this book, 40 of them are ghost stories.

2.2.4. The Ming and Qing Dynasties — *Chuanqi* Collections

This project will not involve the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) because there are not many significant ghost literature during this period. The writers mainly continued the past literary style without further advancement. In addition, most stories of the Yuan Dynasty are about talented scholars and beautiful ladies (才子佳人), who violated unfair feudal social rules and died in pursuit of love (Li, 2016, p. 14). This theme of human love is not the focus of this research. In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), *Chuanqi* tales were more established. The romanticism of *Tang Chuanqi* and *Song Chuanqi* was preserved, while at the same time, the emphasis was on developing realism of *Chuanqi* stories (Yuan, 1993, p. 3). Therefore, *Chuanqi* of the Ming and Qing Dynasties revealed social conflicts and the aspirations of civilians through language description and fertile imagination. The following discussed two representative ghost collections of these periods. The first one is *Jiandeng Xinhua* (New Stories Told while Trimming the Wick, 剪灯新话) (Qu, 1981), which were created by the Ming Dynasty novelist Qu You (瞿佑, 1341-1427) in 1378. The book has been banned in China for a long time since 1442. This is because Li Shimian (李时勉, 1374-1450), the chancellor of the National University of the Ming dynasty, believed that vulgar fictions such as *Jiandeng Xinhua* corrupted public good. However, *Jiandeng Xinhua* holds a pivotal position in the history of early literature in modern East Asia. From the 15th century to the 18th century, it was widely popular in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam (Joo, 2011, p. 7). For example, one of Japan's most famous *Kaidan* (Strange Talk) *Botan Dōrō* (The Peony Lanterns) was adapted from

one of the stories of *Jiandeng Xinhua*, *Mudan Deng Ji* (The Peony Lanterns, 牡丹灯记) (2nd volume of *Jiandeng Xinhua*) (Qu, 2003, p. 40-46). In addition, Korean literature *Jiniao Xinhua* (金鳌新话) and Vietnam classical literature *Chuanqi Manlu* (传奇漫录) were also adapted from *Jiandeng Xinhua*. However, in the Chinese literary world, the value of *Jiandeng Xinhua* did not attract researchers' attention until the early 1990s. The stories of *Jiandeng Xinhua* belongs to *Luanshi Wenxue* (乱世文学), meaning literature in chaotic times. There are three types of stories in this book: "Love", "Literati's inside world", and "Ghosts and spirits", which were all based on the background of the warfare in the late Yuan Dynasty.

The second is *Liaozhai Zhiyi* or simply *Liaozhai* (Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio, 聊斋志异) (Pu, 2015), which was also influenced by *Jiandeng Xinhua* (Qu, 2003). It is no exaggeration to say that *Liaozhai* is the most incredible collection of ghost stories created by the renowned Chinese writer *Pu Songling* (蒲松龄, 1640–1715) in the Qing Dynasty, which contains nearly 500 kinds of marvel tales in the styles of *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi*. The author, Pu Songling, failed several times in his life to pass the imperial examination. He received a degree (Gongsheng, 贡生) at the age of 71 for his achievement in Chinese literature. Pu Songling had been preparing for the Imperial Examination all his life, serving as a private tutor and collecting stories to write *Liaozhai Zhiyi*. Although, his dream to be an official of the court did not finally come true. His masterpiece, *Liaozhai*, earned him a famous reputation. The artistic value of *Liaozhai* includes the beauty of language, the beauty of artistic conception (意境美), the beauty of tragedy, and the beauty of humanity. In addition, the stories of this book are also of folklore value and philosophical value.

2.2.5. Summary

Compared with the earlier *Zhiguai* genre stories, *Chuanqi* has a more elegant language, and the personality of the characters, dialogues and storyline are more vividly described. *Lu Xun* (1881-1936) once pointed out in his book *Zhongguo Xiao Shuo Shi Lue* (中国小说史略) (Lu, 1998) that *Tang Chuanqi* is different from *Zhiguai* Tales. The narrative of *Tang Chuanqi* is descriptive and exhaustive, and the language is beautiful, which is different from the simple description of *Zhiguai* collections (Lu, 1981, p. 70). The cultural value of *Chuanqi* stories is similar to that of *Zhiguai*, but it pays more attention to mortal life. Importantly, these stories could guide crucial elements and dichotomies in human existence, such as life and death, ghost and human, truth and false, war and peace, good and evil, rich and poor.

In Chinese folklore culture, there is no independent theme about ghost tales. Therefore, Chinese Ghost Tales are usually categorized into mythology. Chinese mythology expert *Yuan Ke* (袁珂, 1916-2001) was the first scholar to study Chinese mythology as a research field. In his book, *Chinese Ancient Mythology* (中国古代神话) (Yuan, 2017), Yuan Ke collected a ghost story called *Du Bo Bian Gui Bao Yuan* (杜伯变鬼报冤) (Yuan, 2017, p. 289) and stated that such ghost tales (which do not reflect

superstition culture) should be categorized into mythology (Yuan, 2017, p. 12). In 1934, he quoted Maxim Gorky's words in *Soviet Literature* to define what mythology is, which also explains why it is also considered as ghost tales:

"...But no historian of primitive and ancient culture has used the material of folklore, the unwritten compositions of the people, the testimony of mythology, which, taken as a whole, is a reflection in broad artistic generalizations of the phenomena of nature, of the struggle with nature and of social life."

Yuan Ke said that it is important to explore ancient Chinese myth stories because first of all, these stories could inspire people to view life from different angles. From these stories, people can understand how the ideologies of ancient peoples are formed, such as how to view the world, how to praise people with virtue, how to fight injustice and violence, and what kind of life one can expect. Similarly, by understanding the main points of ghost stories, people can better understand life and humanity, thereby encouraging them to take a positive attitude towards life. Secondly, Chinese mythology is full of imagination and has a huge impact on Chinese literature and handicrafts. Many ancient Chinese utensils were decorated with mythical animals, patterns and ghostly elements, which had aroused much interest in Chinese literature and art. Thirdly, mythology is not part of the official historical record, but another form of human history. Learning mythology can understand the truth of history from the clues and hints of myth stories. Lastly, local mythology is a reflection of the characteristics of different countries. Studying myths can make people more aware of their national origin and promote national spirit and virtue in their daily lives (Yuan, 2017, p. 13-14). The fables of Chinese myths and legends and ghost literature have far-reaching significance, and basic knowledge can provide a valuable background for understanding life. Yuan Ke's four reasoning will be applied to this project to organize the importance of Chinese ghost stories related to our contemporary society.

the Chart of Historic Development						
the Shang dynasty (c. 1600 - 1046 BCE)	the Zhou dynasty (1050 - 256 BCE)	the Six dynasties (220 - 589)	the Tang dynasty (618 - 907)	the Song dynasty (960 - 1279)	the Ming dynasty (1368 - 1644)	the Qing dynasty (1644 - 1912)
The Chinese character of ghost was created, primitive ghost concept was formed.	The ghost culture was evolved. The customs of ancestor worshipping still influenced modern people.	Zhiguai collections: <i>Lie Yizhuan;</i> <i>Sou Shen Ji;</i> <i>You Ming Lu;</i> <i>Shi Yi Ji;</i> <i>Yi Yuan;</i>	Chuanqi collections: <i>Xuan Guailu ;</i> <i>Chuanqi;</i> <i>Youyang Zazu;</i> <i>Shi Yi Ji;</i> <i>Yi Yuan;</i>	Chuanqi & Zhiguai collection: <i>Tai Ping Guang Ji ;</i>	Chuanqi collection: <i>Jiandeng Xinhua ;</i>	Chuanqi collection: <i>Liaozhai Zhiyi ;</i> <i>Zi Bu Yu;</i> <i>Yuewei Caotang Bijii;</i>

Chart 2.2.5. The main development of Chinese ghost literature.

2.3. Chinese Ghost Paintings

The painter drew a portrait of the King of the Qi. The King asked him: “What is the hardest and simplest thing to draw?” He replied that dogs and horses are the hardest, and spirits and ghosts are the simplest. Dogs and horses are things that everyone knows and because they appear in front of our eyes until we can hardly distinguish them, so they are difficult to draw. Spirits and ghosts have undefined forms, they do not actually appear in front of our eyes, so it is easy.

– Han Feizi · Wai Chu Zhuan (韩非子 · 外储传)

This conversation is the earliest record of drawing ghosts in Chinese history. It shows that dogs and horses as common painting objects are harder to paint because they should be realistically painted. Ghosts and spirits are easier to draw because no one sees them and hence regardless of painting styles, people will not criticize the painter’s technique. However, this is only the personal opinion of the author thousands of years ago. In fact, painting ghosts requires more imagination and skill, which is not easier than other painting subjects. The above conversation also indicated that people used ghosts as a subject of paintings, which originated from the Warring States period (475-221 BC). Before that, ghost culture already existed, but people did not consider visualizing ghost images on paper. The ghost as the subject of painting became mature and widespread in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Chinese art historian, calligrapher and painter Zhang Yanyuan (张彦远) proposed in his anthology that ghosts are the same painting subjects as human portraits, flowers and mountains (*Gang & Yu, 2009, p. 49*). The earliest ghost paintings can be traced back to ancient cave paintings in Inner Mongolia, China, 6000 to 4000 years ago (*Ma, 2012, p. 22*). Researchers have discovered skeleton paintings inside caves in Inner Mongolia. These skeleton paintings are considered to be the earliest ghost paintings in China to date. In addition, in the Han Dynasty, some ghost characters also appeared in mural paintings, such as the *Walking Nuo Gods Exorcising Ghosts* (行傩驱鬼图). It was created in the late Tang Dynasty and is one of Dunhuang’s famous mural paintings about ghosts and gods. Since the mid-Tang Dynasty, exorcism has become a popular painting theme because people believe that the portraits of Zhong Kui (钟馗) can drive away the devil. Giving his portraits to officials became an essential gesture during the Chinese Lunar year at that time (*Shi, 2010, p. 251*). Gradually, more and more painters added in their emotions and understanding when creating Zhong Kui’s portraits, so the functions of these portraits are not limited to dispersing ghosts. They can be a tool to convey the painter’s artistic expression or reflect social problems.

The following section introduces the unique characteristics of the works of two famous Chinese ghost painters, and how these paintings create inspiration for this project.

Luo Pin (罗聘, 1733-1799) was a famous painter of the Qing Dynasty, known as one of the “Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou” (扬州八怪). “Eight Eccentrics of Yangzhou” is

a group of eight Chinese painters in the eighteenth century and was famous for opposing tradition in the Qing Dynasty. Their style of painting is considered expressive and individualistic. Luo Pin's masterpiece – *Ghost Amusement Scroll* (鬼趣图), has attracted extensive attention from academia. There are eight ghosts in the painting, which is considered to be one of the early comics in Chinese art (see Figure 2.3.1-2.3.8). There are many versions of Ghost Amusement Scroll in history. It survives in three principal versions. The Huo family of Nanhai in Hong Kong collected the earliest version. The other two versions are generally considered to be copies of the earliest version. Thus, the images of the earliest version are presented here for discussion.

Luo Pin believed that ghosts do exist and are a reflection of human beings, and they behave in the same way as humans. Therefore, although Luo Pin's paintings are based on ghosts, he actually painted human beings (Farrington, Wang & Ostrowski, 2008, p. 24). Due to his innovations in the use of wet paper painting techniques, his painting technique in the Ghost Amusement Scroll is considered very novel. The Qing dynasty scholar, Wu Xiu (吴修) wrote a poem entitled *Qing Xia Guan Lun Hua Jue Ju* (青霞馆论画绝句), explaining Luo Pin's painting technique: "There are eight images in the *Ghost Amusement Scroll*. Luo Pin wets the paper, and then as he paints, the ink spreads quickly on the paper." This method not only shows advanced painting techniques but also shows a unique oriental artistic connotation, bringing mysterious beauty to his paintings.

The essence of Chinese painting is the unity of "spirit", "form" and "emotion". Luo Pin understood this essence well and used it skillfully in his paintings. Although the ghost images of the *Ghost Amusement Scroll* do not look scary at first glance, it is somewhat attractive, yet these paintings still make the audience feel eerie. This is because the texture "wet paper and smoky effect" and the application of "spirits and forms" (形与神) work together in these paintings. The illustrations of this project are not intended to present the horror of the selected stories, but to convey their cultural meanings. *Ghost Amusement Scroll* provides inspiration for depicting the characters appearance and facial expressions. Luo Pin did not directly depict the ghost with a scary appearance, but the viewers can feel eerie and understand their identity by capturing facial expressions. For example, the character in Figure 2.3.4. has obvious dark eye circles and it looks like there is no human energy. In Chinese culture, when a person is going to die, the official underworld called Bai Wuchang (白无常) will appear and bring people to the underworld. In Figure 2.3.3, Bai Wuchang was drawn to show that the man in the painting will soon die and he is saying goodbye to the woman next to him. In this painting, Bai Wuchang smiles cunningly, because he will complete his mission and bring one more ghost to the underworld. On the contrary, this dying man has a helpless expression. As another example, even if there is a skeleton in Figure 2.3.8, the skeleton does not look scary. This is about "spirits and forms". The wet paper technique may not be applicable to digital illustrations but

what this project has inspired is to master the quality and value of the story and integrate it with poetry, mood or emotion.



Figure 2.3.1. 1/8 Ghost Amusement scroll



Figure 2.3.2. 2/8 Ghost Amusement scroll



Figure 2.3.3 3/8 Ghost Amusement scroll



Figure 2.3.4. 4/8 Ghost Amusement scroll



Figure 2.3.5. 5/8 Ghost Amusement scroll



Figure 2.3.6. 6/8 Ghost Amusement scroll



Figure 2.3.7. 7/8 Ghost Amusement scroll



Figure 2.3.8. 8/8 Ghost Amusement scroll

Another great Chinese undisputed painter, Wu Daozi (吴道子, 680-C 760), is famous for painting ghosts. He painted more than 300 murals throughout his life. Unfortunately, only a portion of his work has survived till today. His painting techniques were later named “Wu’s Breeze” (吴带当风). It means that his brush seems to be flying, and when people look at his painting, they will feel a breeze. He created this line of painting as “Water Shield Leaves” (莼菜条) (see Figure 2.3.9-2.3.11). The feature of this painting technique include rich and powerful line changes and “painting gently at the beginning and end of the brush” (虚入虚收) (Liu, 2016, p. 31). The paintings of Wu Daozi also focus on the application of “spirit and form”, but here only his line drawing techniques are discussed.

“Line” is one of the common Chinese painting techniques in traditional Chinese portrait painting. It is considered to be an “emotional and conscious expression” in paintings and is one of the typical features of Chinese painting. Wu used different lines to express different emotions. For instance, curves express vitality, relaxation and change; straight lines represent speed and cleanliness. Lines were used by the painter to balance the rhythm of the painting and visualize internal emotions (*Yin, 2015, p. 9*). There are two critical points in Wu Daozi’s paintings. Firstly, he absorbed Buddhist elements (the painting method of the immortals clothes is similar to the paintings of the Thousand Buddha Caves), and transformed them into his own artistic style of painting. Secondly, Wu used the powerful functions of lines to shape the characters in the painting, emphasising their movements, actions and layers of clothing. “Water Shield Leaves” (菹菜条) created by Wu Daozi (吴道子, 680-C 760) is a type of brushstrokes with apparent variations. The strokes were full of changes and vigour, making the painting more stereoscopic. Therefore, in this project, the application of the lines of Wu Daozi was explored to stimulate the style of illustration and artistic expression, to express the inner world or feeling of subject matters. The illustrations of this research are not about the application of calligraphic styles of Wu Daozi, but his paintings and techniques greatly inspired the formation of the illustration style of this thesis.



Figure 2.3.9. A part of The Eighty-seven Immortals attributed by Wu Daozi.



Figure 2.3.10. The Flying Demon: coal copy of a temple engraving.



Figure 2.3.11. God Sending A Son attributed by Wu Daozi.

2.4. Five Virtues

In ancient Chinese society, Ren (benevolence, 仁), Yi (righteousness, loyalty, 义), Li (propriety, 礼), Zhi (wisdom, 智), and Xin (trustworthiness, 信) were regarded as the Five Constant Virtues (五常). This section will discuss cultural values and how they are connected to contemporary society through the exploration of the Five Virtues. The Five Virtues played an important role in social development and human civilisation. In today's society, people call them as Traditional Virtues (传统美德) because they are still relevant to people today.

The concept of the Five Virtues was shaped and integrated into philosophical discourse in the Han Dynasty (206-220). Prior to this, these virtues underwent long-term development respectively (*Jing, 2012, p. 188*). Through reviewing the history of the formation of the Five Virtues, the progress of human philosophy can also be traced.

2.4.1. Ren (Benevolence)

The original definition of Ren (benevolence, humanity, sympathy, 仁) was love (仁, 爱也), which was described in the book *Daxue Zhangju* (大学章句) (*Zhu, 1983*), compiled by the Song historian, philosopher and writer, Zhu Xi (朱熹) (1130-1200). The fourth-century book *Guoyu·Jinyu* (Discourses of the States, 国语·晋语) (*Guoyu, 2014*) stated: “A man who loves his family and relatives can be considered benevolent. A kingdom ruler can also be called benevolent if he does his best for the benefit of the country” (为仁者爱亲之谓仁, 为国者利国之谓仁). Confucius (孔子, 551-479) further elevated the definition of Ren to the paramount importance of human virtues. He said that Ren includes three primary meanings: Firstly, loving people means not only loving family and relatives but also loving all humankind. Secondly, it is reciprocity. If a man wants to establish himself in the world, he also seeks to establish others (己欲立而立人, 己欲达而达人). Confucius indicated that to achieve success, one should let others succeed as well. Thirdly, it is “live and let live”, one should not treat others in a way that they do not want to be treated. As stated in the great teachings of Ren in the *Analects* (论语) (*Kong, 2016*): “Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire” (己所不欲, 勿施于人). Ren is the basic principle of all good virtues, and it is also the source and basis for promoting Li (propriety). Propriety is the external form of benevolence, so the essence of Li is truly Ren (*Jing, 2012, p. 189*).

Ren is one of the common topics in Chinese Ghost Tales, presented here are two essential examples. The first example is the story of *Wang Liulang* (王六郎) (*Pu, 2015, p. 47-58*). It describes the deep friendship between the water ghost Wang Liulang and the fisherman. The most valuable thing in the story is their pure friendship, which remained the same with the change of time, place and status. This story includes four virtues, namely benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and trustworthiness. Benevolence is shown in two parts of this story. Firstly, the fisherman poured wine

into the river as a ritual and was appreciated by the water ghost Wang Liulang, who loves drinking. His unintentional kindness made them start a friendship. Then he invited Wang Liulang to drink with him every night, and he continued to do so even after he knew that Wang Liulang was a ghost. The fisherman's act indicates that the Confucian concept of benevolence. Secondly, Wang Liulang showed his kindness to a young woman who must drown and take his place (In Chinese ghost culture, people who commit suicide cannot "automatically" enter reincarnation to return to the world of mortals. The ghost must search for people in a state of depression and encourage them to commit suicide to take their place). Wang Liulang took pity on the woman and her infant child and gave up this rare opportunity for reincarnation. Thus, he prevented the woman from committing suicide. The most challenging thing in life is whether we still insist on benevolence to others when we have to make a difficult choice. For Wang Liulang, kindness is always his first choice. His benevolence saved the life of his replacement, and he was promoted to the position of local god.

The second example, in the story of the *Ghostly Army* (亡灵军团) (Ji, 2014, p. 233-234), the protagonist Liao Shi summoned the villagers to raise funds to build tombs for unknown burned corpses. Liao did this because he sympathised with strangers who died in a foreign land, and not for any return. He never imagined that this kind act would save him and the whole village. One night, a ghost appeared in his dream, telling him that a plague was coming, that the dead he helped bury would fight the plague devil to repay the goodwill of him and the villagers. Several days later, at midnight, people heard loud sounds of fighting, and all the villagers have survived the plague. For Liao Shi, the burial of unknown bodies is considered necessary, even if these dead people are irrelevant or unrelated to him. Benevolence comes from the heart and is a natural behaviour, not for repayment. As an old Chinese proverb states: "Do not give up good deeds though they may be minor matters. Do not do evil things though they may be insignificant" (勿以善小而不为,勿以恶小而为之). This story tells us that no matter how trivial a thing is, we must do good instead of evil, even if we don't know whether this kind act will save or help us one day.

2.4.2. Yi (Righteousness, Loyalty)

According to the interpretation of *The Analects*, Yi has two meanings, Yi (righteousness, loyalty, 义) and Yi (propriety, fitness, 宜). Philosopher Mencius (孟子, 372-289) was part of Confucius's fourth generation of disciples. The definition of "Yi" in his collection *Mengzi-Jinxinxia* (孟子·尽心下, c. 300 BC) is stated as: "Benevolence is more like a residence of the heart, righteousness is the right path to get there" (仁是内心之安宅, 义是所由之正路). Whether to be a righteous and loyalty person is a choice, it determines whether we can be a better person. Yi also means things that people don't have to do, but because of their personal emotions, morals, or beliefs, they insist on doing so. The following are two significant ghost stories that illustrate what righteousness is. The first story, *Yiquan Fuhun* (义犬附魂) (Yuan, 2016, p. 115), is a story about a faithful dog who is determined to save his master even after being killed by rogues.

Its spirit possessed another dog to continue its mission to rescue its owner from the bad people. After the owner was rescued, the dog appeared in his dream to tell him what had happened, and although it was dead, it was happy because the dog finally had the chance to repay his owner's kindness. Then the owner understood how his dog did his best to save his life and dignity. Yi is not only a human virtue but also exists among animals. From this story, we learned that we must treat people and animals equally. In fact, stories about dog repayment are not unusual. Dogs will remember your kindness and thank you in its own way. This story also represents animism, which is a popular movie theme in recent years. Famous movies about the righteousness of dogs are *Eight Below* (2006), *Hachi: A Dog's Tale* (2009), *Red Dog* (2011), and *Quill* (2014). Such movies usually make the audience cry and call upon people to treat animals kindly.

The second story, *Guo Liu* (郭六) (Ji, 2014, p. 163-165), is a story about a woman who assured her husband that she would take care of her parents-in-law, and in the end, sacrificed her chastity and life in order to fulfil this promise.

This story happened during a plague pandemic. Many people had to leave home to beg for food elsewhere, including Guo Liu's husband. Her husband knelt in front of her and asked her to take care of his old parents. After her husband left, Guo Liu's meagre income could not sustain the lives of three people, and no one was around to help her. She was forced to become a prostitute to support her parents-in-law. She also kept a lot of money for her husband. When her husband came back, she committed suicide because she believed that her behaviour was a betrayal. This story is included in another ghost collection *Xu Zi Bu Yu* (续子不语) (Yuan, 1998), the author Yuan Mei (袁枚, 1716-1797) praised Guo Liu's righteousness and promoted equality between men and women. There is no doubt that in the feudal society thousands of years ago, his view was significantly progressive. The story of *Guo Liu* is also included in another famous collection, *Yueweicaotang Manuscripts* (阅微草堂笔记) (Ji, 2014), which means that it may have directed extensive discussions on the

status and equality of women at the time. For modern society, gender inequality is still a global problem. The HeForShe Global Gender Equality Movement is a defence of women's rights and calls on all genders to take action against negative stereotypes and behaviours. It is the progress of time.

2.4.3. Li (Propriety)

Li (propriety, courtesy, ritual, 礼) usually is connected with Ren (benevolence) and Yi (righteousness) together. Mencius strengthened the internal meaning of Li, and he advocated that the essence of “Li” should serve human morality (*Jing, 2012, p. 189*). The traditional meaning of Li is more focused on the ritual aspects, including the scriptures and texts of ritual instruments, the ritual utensils, the ritual etiquette, and the ritual grooming. This meaning does not apply to contemporary society, so the meaning of propriety representing Li becomes more important. Historically, China has been called “The Nation of Greatness and Courtesy” (礼仪之邦), but the culture of Li (propriety, courtesy) has not been valued and received much attention during the development of China. People believe that it will take several more generations to restore this title. Nevertheless, Chinese people have been paying more attention to the education of propriety and courtesy, which means that modesty and courtesy have played an important role in Chinese daily life. Li already has contemporary social significance, such as equality, respect, tolerance and understanding (*2012, p. 193*).

The stories about Li include *Ji Kang* (嵇康) (the 317th volume of *Tai Ping Guang Ji*) (*Li, 1961, p. 2509-2510*) and *Lu Pan* (陆判) (*Pu, 2015, p. 278-296*). The story of *Ji Kang* is about the ghostly encounters of Chinese writer, musician and Daoist philosopher Ji Kang during the Three Kingdoms period. One day, Ji Kang played the Guqin (古琴, a seven-stringed Chinese musical instrument of the zither family) in the pagoda under the lamplight. A ghost cheered for his performance in the air and told Ji Kang that he used to like playing Guqin. The ghost praised Ji Kang's musical skills and said he felt as if he was alive again. Ji Kang insisted that the ghost made an appearance, however the ghost was worried that his ruined body would scare Ji Kang, and so they spent the whole night discussing the techniques and theories of Guqin together. The ghost also taught Ji Kang how to play *Guang Ling San* (广陵散), which is a famous musical work in ancient China. Before dawn, they sadly bid farewell to each other. We can learn two things from this story. First of all, Ji Kang was already a famous musician at the time, but he was not arrogant. He learned an unfamiliar song from the ghost humbly and studiously. Secondly, Ji Kang did not mind how the ghost looked like and insisted that the ghost reveal himself. It means that when Ji Kang makes friends, he would not judge their appearance and status. In his view, he cherished the short friendship with the ghost because they both love music, and it doesn't matter whether he was a man or a ghost. In today's society, people can be quick to judge a person according to their appearance and may treat them with different attitudes. However, people's appearance should not be one's definition.

Current social media inappropriately guides young people by defining beauty in terms of designer clothes and beautiful faces. The story *Ji Kang* provides a different view of human nature, and this is the Li (propriety) that should be applied in social interaction and establishing any relationship. In the other story of Li, *Lu Pan* (陆判), also proves that similar concepts of getting along with others should consider the inner heart of the person, rather than defining it through appearance.

Lu Pan (陆判) (*Pu*, 2015, p. 278-296) is a ghost story about a young man, Zhu Erdan (朱尔旦), who made friends with the Judge of Hell. The story began with Zhu's friends who wanted to embarrass him, so they dared him to carry the status of the Judge of Hell back from a creepy temple. It is worth noting that the statue of the Judge of Hell has a grotesque and fearful face. Exceeded the expectation of his friends, Zhu Erdan returned with the statue of the Judge of Hell and told the statue to visit his home anytime. That night, the Judge of Hell visited Zhu Erdan, and they drank together and had a pleasant conversation. After that, the Judge often visited him, and they became close friends. The Judge appreciated their friendship, and in order to make Zhu Erdan a talented person, he gave a good heart to Zhu Erdan. This is because in ancient Chinese concepts, the organ heart corresponds to people's mind that determines how smart he is. *Mengzi-Gaozi I* (孟子·告子上) (Publication date: c. 300 BC) stated that the office of thinking belongs to the heart. By thinking, it gets the right view of things; by neglecting to think, it fails to do this. It is not just the ancient Chinese who believe that the heart is the organ of human thinking. Aristotle (384-322 BC) was a Greek philosopher and he knew a lot about many different subjects during the Classical period in Ancient Greece. He was Plato's student. In Aristotle's work "*De Partibus Animalium*" (a revised edition of the translator's version published in 1882), he proposed that the heart plays the role of common sensorium, and the heart is the centre of the sensitive soul. Back to the story, Zhu Erdan's friends were jealous of his encounter and also wanted to make friends with the Judge. They asked Zhu Erdan to introduce Lu Pan to them, and Lu Pan agreed. However, during the banquet, when they made eye contact with Lu Pan, they were frightened by his appearance and ran away. The Judge of Hell and Zhu Erdan were close friends for life. Later, Lu Pan changed Zhu's wife's head to make her a beauty. In this story, Zhu Erdan's friends represent the views of many mortals that appearance is the most important. However, people cannot choose their appearance.

Back in our society, more and more people choose superficial beauty to meet social standards. As shown by the data in 2020 Aesthetic Medicine White Paper of a Chinese aesthetic medicine APP: Xin Yang, (*Han*, 2020), 54% of the superficial beauty consumers are under the age of 25 years old, 92.6% are between 14-30 years old (*Han*, 2020). In another article, four young female participants shared their thoughts on superficial beauty decisions (*Lan*, 2020). Because of their appearance, they have all suffered verbal abuse or unfair work treatment. The two stories about Li in this subsection are good examples of not judging people by appearance.

2.4.4. Zhi (Wisdom)

Zhi (wisdom, knowledge, intelligence, 智) is mainly reflected in modesty, prudence, contentment, flexibility, and diligence. Mencius stated this in the book *Mengzi·Li Lou Shang* (孟子·离娄上): “The essence of Ren (benevolence) is to respect and serve parents, the essence of Yi (righteousness) is to obey the brother, the essence of Zhi (wisdom) is to understand the essences of Ren and Yi, and always keep this in mind” (仁之实，事亲是也，义之实，从兄是也，智之实，知斯二者弗去是也). The statement of Mencius indicates that wisdom is usually explained together with other virtues, and the study of other virtues also requires wisdom as a guide (Liu, 2017, p. 97). In today’s sense, it implies more meaning such as rational thinking, knowing others and knowing yourself.

We can understand the definition of wisdom from the following two famous ghost stories: *Cai Shusheng* (蔡书生) (Yuan, 1995, p.157) and *Mudan Deng Ji* (牡丹灯记) (Qu, 2003, p. 40-46). The first story, *Cai Shusheng* (蔡书生), tells the story of a humorous scholar who was not afraid of ghosts. He kept calm and wise, so he avoided falling into the female ghost’s trap. In the story, the Scholar Cai bought a house at a low price because no one dared to live there as it was haunted. One night, a beautiful female ghost came to the scholar, tied a rope to the roof beam, and pulled the rope to her head. Then, the ghost tied another rope and invited the scholar to join her. However, the scholar pulled the noose over his feet. The female ghost told him that he had made a mistake. The scholar laughed and criticised her suicide: “I am surely not wrong. You are the one who made mistakes in the past, so this is why you are now a ghost.” The female ghost was surprised, and then she laughed. She bowed to the scholar several times, then left, and never showed up again. This story comes from the *Zhiguai* collection, *Zi Bu Yu* (What the Master would not Discuss, 子不语) (Yuan, 2016) by the Qing Dynasty writer Yuan Mei. His ghost stories are usually short but comical. This story attempts to convince people not to commit suicide and never make mistakes that you may regret. It also applies to today’s society. Every year 800,000 people commit suicide worldwide, and the number of young people also increases (Rashith, 2019).

According to the report of World Health Organization (2019), it has become the second leading cause of death among young people worldwide. The story *Cai Shusheng* does not use a preaching tone to talk about a heavy topic. It is a wise move in this story.

The second story of Zhi, *Mudan Deng Ji* (牡丹灯记) (Qu, 2003, p. 40-46), also known as *The Account of the Lanterns*, is a negative example of wisdom. This story has already been mentioned in Chapter 2.2.4, which comes from the *Chuanqi* collection of the Ming Dynasty, *Jiandeng Xinhua*. This story is about a scholar Qiao who fell in love with a beautiful young woman. In fact, she was a ghost. Qiao’s neighbour knew this and warned him to stay away from her, but Qiao liked the woman’s beauty, and he didn’t believe his neighbour’s words. Eventually, when the woman revealed her

skeleton form, he discovered the truth. Realising that the woman was dangerous, he accepted the neighbour's suggestion and asked the Daoist priest for help. The Daoist priest used alchemy to force the ghost to leave Qiao, and warned Qiao not to go to Huxin Temple; otherwise, he would be in danger. Qiao didn't go anywhere for a long time until one day he thought he was safe. That day, he drank a lot of wine with friends to celebrate his freedom. He insisted on going home alone and lost his way near Huxin Temple. Finally, the ghost found Qiao and blamed him for breaking her heart and being ruthless, and then she killed him. This story includes two aspects of wisdom, and can also be connected with today's young people. Firstly, Qiao fell in love with the strange woman and refused to believe what the neighbour said. If he conducts any investigations as suggested by his neighbours, he may not die. This is related to the psychological effect: "Halo effect". The halo effect is a cognitive bias that happens when a person makes a positive impression of another person, thereby positively impacting his or her evaluations of that person's specific traits. It is also a common mistake between loving couples. When their relationship reaches a stable state or gets married, they will feel that the other party has changed. The fact is that when they fall in love, they may have a "Halo effect", and consider their partner from a positive perspective, they would rather ignore their shortcomings (*Standing, 2014, vol. 1*). Secondly, Qiao did not handle this relationship wisely. We can imagine that if we were Qiao, is there another way to correct Qiao's mistakes and persuade the ghost to leave in a proper and courtly way. In addition, the female ghost chose to kill him because of his negative attitude towards their relationship. A similar thing happened in social news; for example, the boyfriend killed his ex-girlfriend in revenge. This kind of news is like a copy of the *Mudan Deng Ji*. Maybe there are thousands of Qiao among us, and we can learn from this story and deal with relationships in a more sensible way.

2.4.5. Xin (Trustworthiness)

According to the early-2nd-century Chinese dictionary, *Explaining Graphs and Analysing Characters* (说文解字), the original meaning of Xin (trustworthiness, belief, 信) is honesty, which is to gain the trust of others. Honesty and trustworthiness have become a universal communication principle between gentlemen (Junzi, 君子) and can be extended to the general standard of interpersonal communication. Relation and affair of fathers and sons, superiors and employees, husbands and wives, old and young people, towns and neighbours, politics and economics, and diplomatic relations must all follow the principle of trustworthiness (Li, 2012, p. 44-48).

Xin also means belief or trust in a solid love relationship. The following will discuss two ghost stories representing belief. In the first story, *Painted Skin* (画皮) (Pu, 2015, p. 239-248), a married scholar fell for a beautiful young lady and invited her to live with him. Before he discovered the terrible secret of the woman he loved, a Daoist priest warned him that he might encounter a ghost. Later, he discovered that the young lady was a ghost, and she became a beautiful woman by putting on a painted female skin. Terrified by this finding, he begged the Daoist priest to save him. However, the priest underestimated the ghost, and the amulet did not control the ghost. Instead, the ghost killed the scholar and tore his heart. Eventually, the priest subdued the ghost and told the scholar's wife to find a maniac with the description he gave to resurrect her husband. After finding the maniac, the maniac told the wife that she had to swallow the loathsome pill from his throat before her husband could be saved. The scholar's wife had to overcome rage and shame to manage the request. This pill became a human heart, which filled the one her husband lost, and brought the scholar back to life.

This famous story has been adapted many times in movies and TV series. These adaptations are only focused on the theme of love between the scholar and the ghost. In fact, there is no real love between them. The scholar simply fell for the ghost's charming appearance, and the female ghost just wanted the scholar's heart to strengthen her evil power. The only true love exists in the scholar's wife. After all, she did many impossible things to save her husband. The wife's love involves trustworthiness and belief, which enables her to get through a difficult time. Her character is worth promoting. However, in ancient Chinese society, a husband could marry several wives. From the perspective of contemporary readers, her sacrifice made for her cheating husband is not fit for the relationship between modern couples. In this story, there is another metaphorical meaning that is easily overlooked. It is about people choosing to look at things or problems on the surface instead of looking at the nature of things.

The second story of Xin, *Gui Mu Zhuan* (鬼母传) (Zhang, 1954, p. 154-155) is about a mother's maternal love. A pregnant woman died far away from her hometown, and her husband had to bury her roughly. The next day, a woman came to buy cakes from a local hawker and continued to do so at dawn every day. The peddler wondered why

the woman came to buy cakes so early every morning. The woman looked sad, saying that her husband had left her and their newborn baby. She had no breast milk to feed her baby, and when she heard her baby crying because of hunger, her heart broke. Therefore, she came early to buy cakes for the baby. However, one thing confused the peddler. Every night he checked his account and always found a joss paper (spirit money) among the money. He traced the source of joss paper and found that they came from that woman. One day, he followed the woman to find out who she was. He noticed that the woman walked lightly like a bird, and she suddenly disappeared in front of a tomb. The peddler gathered some villagers and opened the coffin in that grave. They were surprised to see a healthy baby eating a cake lying next to his mother's body. Seeing so many people, the baby looked panicked, and he even tried to open his arms to seek the protection of his mother. The peddler saved the baby and found the baby's father. The father was going to take the child back, and he heard someone crying in the night. The next day, the father discovered that his son's clothes were wet with tears. When the baby grew up, when people asked him about his mother, he always wept bitterly. It is the power of a mother's love. Many Chinese people often ignore communicating with their mothers, and they find it difficult to express love to their mothers. This story conveys a mother's firm belief that she always does the best things for her children and not even death can prevent her, which may inspire people to understand and appreciate their parents better and care more for them.

Overall, the five virtues of Chinese ghost tales are still important to contemporary society and young people. Ren (benevolence) means not being cruel and loving other people. The story of *Ghostly Army* shows this generous love to strangers, which also reflect our reality. For example, Rob Kenney is a father and a Youtuber, and has created a channel "*Dad, How I?*". His videos went viral on Twitter. In his videos, he shares life skills to help people without fathers solve daily problems. His videos are about "How to unclog the sink", "How to shave your face" and so on. The contents of the videos are not special, but it is very helpful. People praised Kenny for his advice and information. For Kenny himself, he is also happier than before by sharing all these useful tips. To be benevolent does not mean that everyone is required to be a saint with perfect virtues. It means encouraging people to try to do some good deeds, even on a small scale, because these good deeds may be of great help to others.

In addition, the story of *Guo Liu* (Ji, 2014, p. 163-165) illustrates the Yi (loyalty) of a woman taking care of her parents-in-law, and also shows that ancient Chinese people began to consider women's unequal social status and people's stereotypes about them. Yi (loyalty, righteousness) includes not only being a loyalty person like Guo Liu, but also includes making appropriate decisions and choices (Yi, 宜, fitness). In the story, it shows that the reason why Guo Liu did not make an appropriate choice is because she only thought of others, kept her promise, but forgot to think for herself. Linking it back to our society, with the country's population aging rapidly, China is trying to improve the population structure through policies such as second-child birth and

delayed retirement. However, women must face conflicts between career and family. Based on *The Global Gender Gap Report of 2017*, the proportion of female unpaid work per day is 44.6%, while the proportion of male is only 18.9%. At the same time, Chinese women also need to face the pressure from getting married and having children. They are also restricted by the double standards of society. For example, successful working women who want to focus more on their career than family are often tagged as “not a good mother/wife”, but men do not have this kind of concern and issue. In present Chinese society, women should marry and have children at the “appropriate age”, if not they are considered as “incomplete”, but no one will judge men in this way. To some degree, women need more courage for “making appropriate decision and choice” (宜) in their career and daily life.

Furthermore, the definition of Li (propriety and courtesy) in contemporary society is evolving. It includes observing the appropriateness of social communication rules, as well as judging a person not by appearance. We cannot deny that people with beautiful appearance have more advantages in society (*Gruys, 2019*), we need to ensure that we treat others equally and make rational decisions. Similarly, Zhi (wisdom) is also closely connected with contemporary young people. It means to have unique insights without being confused by appearances. Zhi also includes a sense of humour to face challenging problems in our lives. In recent years, the increase in the number of young people committing suicide has become a global trend. The reason why young people try to end their lives is mainly related to social pressure (2019). The purpose of the story *Cai Shusheng* is to draw attention to young people’s suicide and understand how ancient people used a unique way to persuade people to value life instead of preaching. Last but not least, trustworthiness includes honesty, keeping promises, and having firm beliefs. The story of *Gui Mu Zhuan* shows us how powerful mother’s love is. It makes us pay more attention to family relationships. It means to inspire young people to understand their parents’ love and give them more response and attention. Chinese ghost tales include not only virtues but also inspirations for people who may encounter similar problems.

2.5. Generation Y

The most successful existing example of a well-preserved and developed ghost culture is the Japanese monster. In Japanese culture, the definition of *yokai* is very broad, but it usually refers to a creature, existence or phenomenon that can be described as mysterious or weird (Kazuhiko, 2017, p. 12). According to the famous collection “*The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons*” by Toriyama Sekien (1776), the history of *yokai* culture – from birth to development to flourishing and reveals possible connections to Chinese ghost tales (Nicolae, 2015, p. 24). Nicolae also believes that *yokai* culture enables people to understand the diversity of darkness. Later, Kazuhiko’s book (2017) advanced the knowledge of Japanese *yokai* culture by providing structure, classification, development process and motivation for forming this culture, as well as its relationship with modern lifestyles. When the Chinese smartphone multiplayer online video game featuring the main character *Onmyoji* (aka Master of Yin and Yang) was launched in 2016, the Japanese ghost culture gained popularity among Chinese young people. The game “*Onmyoji*” was inspired by two novels about humans and ghosts: “*The Tale of Genji*” by Murasaki Shikibu (978-1016) and “*Onmyoji*” by Baku Yumemakura (1951-). Yang element is called *Kami*, which means facing the sun and light, while Yin element is named *Oni*, which represents the black demon silhouette and the blocking of the sun (Nicolae, 2015, p. 24-25). The concept of Yin and Yang is an essential part of Japanese culture. It originated in China and reached full development in the late Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). With the popularity of the online game, the representative Japanese culture “*Onmyoji*” began to gain ground in China. It successfully attracted many Chinese young people to be interested in Japanese cultures, including *yokai* culture.

In hindsight, Chinese young people did not realize that the origin of these cultures and spirits can be traced back to their own Chinese culture and heritage. For instance, mysterious creatures in *Onmyoji*, such as the Japanese legendary creature *Tengu* (heavenly dog) and *Tamamo-no-Mae* (a fox-woman with peerless beauty and supernatural power), originated in an ancient Chinese book called *Shan Hai Jing* (Classic of Mountains and Seas, 山海经) (Liu, 2013). *Tengu* originated from the demon *Tiangou* in China, while *Tamamo-no-Mae* originated from the legendary creature Nine-tailed Fox. Furthermore, when the movie “*Legend of the Demon Cat*” shows the background and culture of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), Chinese young people were shocked as they were expecting a Japanese style movie. This film is adapted from the famous Japanese novel *Samana Kukai* by Baku Yumemakura. The character of the demon cat can be traced back to the “Book of Sui” (隋书) (Wei, 636 AD), which introduced the official history of the Sui Dynasty (581-618) and was completed in 636 AD. In addition, although some classical ghost tales have become award-winning films, such as “*Painted Skin*” (画皮) (Pu, 2015, p. 239-248) and “*The Assassin*” (聂隐娘) (Li, 1961, p. 1456), the cultural value of the original ghost story may not be clearly communicated to the audience. The feedback from these movies indicates that it is necessary to investigate, interpret and reintroduce the origins of ghost cultures to the younger generations to prevent the loss of this Chinese heritage

and culture. According to an article on the Chinese website of The New York Times, “*Why the movie ‘The Assassin’ is not a good story*”, the new adaption of the movie mainly strengthens the darkness of political and power struggles in the middle of Tang Dynasty. However, it is not the point of the original story of *The Assassin*. The original *Chuanqi* story does not directly depict politics. On the contrary, the main character chose to join her master’s enemy not because she prefers to choose the righteous as the movie presented. She betrayed her master just because she wanted to join a stronger person. In the original story, the behaviour of the character has no obvious logic. The author of the original story wanted to describe an extraordinary person, just like the main character had to ignore the righteousness and loyalty with deep hopelessness to survive in the chaotic period. This is the reflection of most politicians in the middle of the Tang Dynasty, depicting the political darkness in a very metaphorical way (Liu. 2015).

Chinese ghost tales and folklore have not only literary value, but also have relevant cultural values, which can allow current young people to reflect on their lives and behaviours. For instance, in a public discussion activity on the theme of love and marriage of young people, the famous Chinese actress, singer and writer Chang Ai-chia (张艾嘉) shared her understanding of the classic literature *Liaozhai Zhiyi* and described it as a great love encyclopedia, which is still groundbreaking and not outdated, such as the female characters in a *Liaozhai* story, *A Touch of Zen* (侠女), which shows thinking of a modern woman. She also said that Pu Songling repeatedly told readers an eternal truth through the stories of *Liaozhai*, that is, if one cannot change oneself, the rest is regret and embarrassment, no matter how powerful the spirit of the fox, ghosts and gods (Shi, 2019). Wang Yaoqing (王耀庆), Chang Ai-chia (张艾嘉)’s partner of the performance “*Why We Chat?*” inspired by the literary collection *Liaozhai Zhiyi*, stated that the stories of *Liaozhai* are actually about how people get along with others and how to get along with themselves (Wu, 2018). Therefore, Chinese ghost tales convey a considerable amount of information about history and humanity. This information may provide different perspectives for young people to face problems in their lives. The ultimate goal of this project is to increase young people’s interest in Chinese ghost tales and to inspire them to find ways to cope with emotional problems and social dilemmas, just as ancient Chinese literati did in ghost literature thousands of years ago.

2.6. Intent of the Study

Chinese ghost tales have an abundance of symbolism and cultural meaning. They reveal the darkness of humanity, as well as promote good human characteristics. The literature review shows that cultural value is one of the important components of the different genres of Chinese Ghost Tales introduced in Chapter 2.2.

For example, *Wang Liulang* in the collection of *Liaozhai* emphasises the cultural value of Ren (benevolence), Li (propriety) and Yi (righteousness) toward others and friends. In addition, *Scholar Cai*, a story of *Zi Bu Yu* (What the Master Would Not Discuss, 子不语), which conveys Zhi (wisdom) about life and death, and the tale *Painted Skin* of *Liaozhai* shows readers Xin (trustworthiness) of the protagonist's wife. The review also indicates that knowledge of the Five Virtues is invaluable and may be relevant to our current society. However, obscure traditional Chinese languages may be difficult to understand and may not interest the younger generations. Perhaps, following the path of the well-established Japanese *yokai* culture, visual approaches can be explored further in this project to attract young people to be interested in Chinese Ghost Tales. Seeing that the way of *yokai* culture successfully preserved the old culture in current society, and the monsters dismissed by Chinese young people thrived in Japan. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to reimagine Chinese Ghost Tales to the millennial generation and explore its cultural value through expressive graphical illustrations.

The objectives are listed as follow to meet the main aim:

1. to collect ghost stories that reflect cultural values
2. to analyze the meaning, analogy or motivation of allusions and metaphors
3. to explore fresh perspectives and interpretations, and discover the connection between the past and contemporary society

The literature review provides readers with a better understanding of the background of Chinese ghost stories and lays a foundation for determining the criteria for selecting stories in this thesis. Cultural values of the stories will be studied and reimagined through modern perspectives and metaphorical objects to create the illustration outcomes.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology and Design

3.1. Research Method

This project aims to provide a vivid visual interpretation of the historic, religious and moral aspects of the ten essential stories of Chinese ghost stories. It does not intend to conduct in-depth anthropological research on the Chinese Ghost Tales but creates a visual component that can be seen as complementary to the selected Chinese ghost stories. This project employed Interpretation Design approach to investigate cultural and aesthetic values, explore illustration styles and reimagine Chinese Ghost Tales. According to Soares and Pombo (2010), the Interpretation Design approach is an interpretation of the natural, cultural or historical value of places or objects. It is based on the principle of rationality to enhance the designerly ways of thinking. This method bears intelligence and dialectics, always referring to something and questioning the various stages of understanding.

The next three sections discuss the visual creation phases of this thesis:

- 1) Collection and analysis of Chinese Ghost Tales
- 2) Illustration Style Test
- 3) Visualization of Chinese Ghost Tales

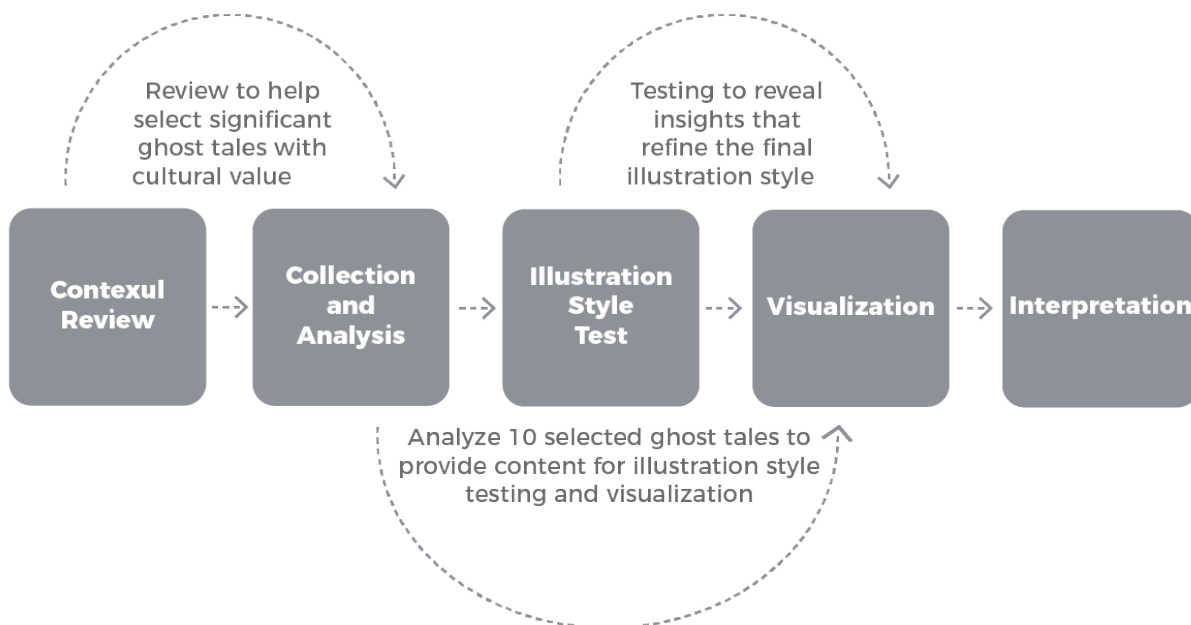


Chart 3.1. The process of Interpretation Design Approach.

3.2. Collection and Analysis of Chinese Ghost Tales

Through the literature review in Chapter 2, ten ancient Chinese ghost stories were selected according to these criteria to explore new perspectives and interpretations, and to discover the connection between the past and contemporary society:

1. The ghost story must come from *Zhiguai* or *Chuanqi* Tales between the Six Dynasties and the Qing Dynasty
2. The story should reflect one of the Five Virtues
3. The meaning of the story still applies to contemporary society

During the creation process, cultural values were analyzed to provide interesting key points for visualization. Then, the cultural key words were reimagined with modern viewpoints and metaphorical objects.

3.2.1. List of Chinese Ghost Tales with Cultural Value

Title	<i>Wang Liulang</i>
Story	The story describes the deep friendship between the water ghost Wang Liulang and the fisherman. The fisherman witnessed Wang Liulang's benevolence toward other people. Later, Wang's behaviour touched the officials of Heaven and he was appointed as a local god from a local deity (<i>Pu, 2015, p. 47-58</i>).
Main Character	The water ghost Wang Liulang and the fisherman
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fisherman befriended Wang Liulang and invite him to drink together. After learning that Wang Liulang was a ghost, he continued to do so. This shows the sympathy and benevolence of the fisherman, because even though Wang Liulang was a ghost, the fisherman did not refuse his friendship. • Wang Liulang had waited for many years to have a chance to reincarnate. But he gave up the rare opportunity of reincarnation, because he could not accept the exchange of his life by ruining the lives of others. This reflects Wang Liulang's Ren. Benevolence is always his first choice even if he faces difficult choices. • Wang Liulang became a local deity and got rid of the identity of the water ghost. The gap between their human and God identities did not affect their friendship. Wang still valued their relationship and invited the fisherman to visit him and help the fisherman in

	his own way, that is benevolence and loyalty. Wang Liulang did not change his attitude towards his friend just as his friend did not reject him as a friend when he was a ghost. Wang was also a person of Yi. Not only did he always remember the kindness of the fisherman, but also because he was loyal to their friendship from beginning to end.
Key Relationships	Wang Liulang and the fisherman are soul mates.
Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy and be considerate of the situation of others in trouble and try to help them with benevolence • Value true friendships that are unaltered and affected by external factors
metaphor meanings	Wind. In this story, the wind as a medium represents Wang Liulang's emotion and communication after he became a deity. This is because as a deity, he can no longer speak to mortals unless there is a medium. In Chinese <i>Zhiguai</i> and <i>Chuanqi</i> novels and even Asian movies, it is often seen that wind represents deities, ghosts or strange atmosphere. In the classic Japanese movie, <i>Rashomon</i> , wind becomes an evil icon to promote the development of the plot and create the tone of a supernatural phenomenon.

Title	<i>Ghostly Army</i>
Story	The protagonist Liao Shi sympathized with those who were killed but not buried, and called on the villagers to raise funds to build graves for these unknown bodies. As repayment, the ghosts buried by Liao Shi and the villagers helped get rid of the evil and saved the lives of all the villagers (<i>Ji, 2014, p. 233-234</i>).
Main Character	The protagonist Liao Shi, and the ghostly army
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liao Shi and the villagers raised funds to build graves and bury unknown bodies – this reflects that Liao Shi and the villagers are benevolent. The villagers and the ghosts did not have any intersection at first until they helped the ghosts with kindness. • Liao Shi dreamed of a ghost telling him to burn ten flags made of papers and one hundred of machete made of papers. They would use these things as weapons to help the villagers to fight against the devils of the plague – this reflects the Yi (loyalty) of the ghosts because they appreciate the benevolence of Liao Shi and the villagers, so they voluntarily protect the villagers from the

	hurt of the devils of the plague.
Key Relationships	Liao Shi, the villagers and the ghostly army are both helpers and recipients.
Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Do not give up good deeds although they may only be minor matters. Do not do evil things although they may be insignificant” (勿以善小而不为,勿以恶小而为之). The old Chinese proverb is still relevant to contemporary society. • Try to be benevolent and kind to others, even if they are strangers.
metaphor meanings	In Chinese traditional literature, dream as a medium can usually help the communication between the dead and the living.

Title	<i>Guo Liu</i>
Story	A woman assured her husband that she would take care of her parents-in-law during a plague pandemic. In order to fulfill her promise, she had no choice but to become a prostitute to support her family. In the end, she committed suicide because of unreasonable rules of feudal society (<i>Ji</i> , 2014, p. 163-165).
Main Character	The wife (Guo Liu)
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guo Liu fulfilled her promise of looking after her parents-in-law and made a great sacrifice for this, which reflects the Chinese traditional virtues: the trustworthiness to her husband and the filial piety to her parents-in-law. • Guo Liu refused the villagers’ malicious temptations and chose to work very hard to support her family until she could no longer support her parents-in-law any more – this reflects her very strong self-esteem and independent personality • Guo Liu had to ask the villagers for help and no one lend a helping hand to her. Then she had to choose to become a prostitute to support her family – she knew she had to make a choice between <i>Yi</i> (loyalty) and chastity. She chose <i>Yi</i> decisively. This is not only because she hopes to keep her promise, but also hopes to save the life of her parents-in-law’s life during the plague pandemic. This also reflects Guo Liu’s kindness.
Key Relationships	Guo Liu paid a huge sacrifice for supporting his-in-laws. The indifference of the villagers and the inaction of her husband plunged Guo Liu into a tragedy and eventually died.

Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for gender equality and more rights for women • Encourage contemporary women to pursue their dreams and self-awareness
metaphor meanings	Guo Liu represents the women who are experiencing injustice and desire freedom and equality.

Title	<i>Yiquan Fuhun</i>
Story	A faithful dog was determined to save his owner even after being killed by rogues who had caused harm to his owner. The spirit of the dog possessed another dog to get rid of rogues and saved his owner (<i>Yuan, 2016, p. 115</i>).
Main Character	The loyalty dog named “Hua Er” and the dog’s owner
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the young man took his beloved dog, Hua Er, on a spring flower appreciation tour and they met three rogues who wanted to rape the young man (they are homosexual, and the young man is good-looking). The dog tried to protect his owner and was killed by the rogues. The dog’s behavior reflects bravery and the Chinese idiom: “to keep going resolutely despite knowing the task is impossible” (知其不可为而为之). • After the dog Hua Er died, his spirit possessed an old dog and came back to attack the rogues and seriously injured them. His owner was saved from danger, this reflects the dog’s loyalty and strong love. As the famous romantic tragicomedy play in Ming dynasty, <i>The Peony Pavilion</i> (牡丹亭) stated “Once love begins it never ends. Lovers may die for love. The dead in love may revive.” (情不知所起，一往情深，生者可以死，死可以生). It can describe not only the love between men and women, but also the touching love between animals and humans. • The dog’s owner buried the dog’s body the next day. Then he dreamed his dog came to say farewell. The dog explained what happened to the owner and said he appreciated the owner for his love and care over the years. The dog had repaid the owner’s kindness and left in sorrow – the dog valued their relationship, which again reflects Yi (loyalty).
Key Relationships	The young man is the dog’s owner
Contemporary cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind people to treat animals kindly

values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always harbour kindness to the nature
metaphor meanings	Again, dream as a medium of communication convey messages between the dead and the living.

Title	<i>Ji Kang</i>
Story	Chinese musician and Daoist philosopher Ji Kang encountered a ghost, and they had one night of wonderful conversation on music. They also regarded each other as soul mates (<i>Li, 1961, p. 2509-2510</i>).
Main Character	Ji Kang and the ghost who was a Guqin master (a seven-stringed Chinese musical instrument)
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One night, Ji Kang was playing Guqin, and a scary monster suddenly appeared in front of him. Ji Kang stopped playing and stared at the monster for a while, then he blew out the oil lamp and said to the monster: “To share the light with you is a shame.” – this description reflects that Ji Kang is a righteous man (Yi) because he cannot bear being close to a devil. Ji Kang was called one of “The Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove” (zhulin qixian, 竹林七贤). Ji Kang refused to be an official at the court and chose to live in the wild to keep a clear distance from the events and conflicts in the court. The words he said to the monster reflected that he was ashamed to talk to the vulgar people who only pursuit power, politics and money. The monster represents this group of vulgar and greedy people. • Ji Kang went to a pavilion called Yuehua (月华) and lived there. People told him that many people were killed there in the past, and ghosts might appear around the pavilion. Ji Kang was not afraid of ghosts and played Guqin at midnight – He is a righteous and confident man, so he is not afraid of evils. As the Chinese saying goes: “If one does not do evil things during the day, he will not be afraid of ghosts knocking on his door in the middle of the night.” (不做亏心事，半夜不怕鬼敲门). • One night, when Ji Kang was playing his Guqin. A ghost who was a music enthusiast was attracted by his music. Ji Kang insisted that the ghost made an appearance. He did not fear the ruined appearance of the ghost and learned a new song from the ghost – in this story, the depiction of Ji Kang and the ghost is important because it reflects Li (propriety) in their interactions. Firstly, it reflects Ji Kang’s modesty of Li (courtesy). He is already a famous Guqi musician, yet he still learns techniques

	from an unknown ghost. Secondly, Ji Kang does not care about the appearance of others, he only cares whether they are like him and whether they love music. This reflects the propriety and courtesy of Li.
Key Relationships	Ji Kang and the ghost are both Guqin enthusiasts, and they became soul mates because of music.
Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay humble • Do not judge a person by his/her appearance and status.
metaphor meanings	The monster represents people who are different from us.

Title	<i>Lu Pan</i>
Story	<i>Lu Pan</i> is a ghost story about a young man, Zhu Erdan who made friends with the Judge of Hell called Lu Pan. Lu Pan repaid Zhu Erdan's friendship by doing several things, which definitely changed Zhu Erdan's destiny (<i>Pu, 2015, p. 278-296</i>).
Main Character	Zhu Erdan and the Judge of Hell, Lu Pan
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhu Erdan was a hard-working person, but he was not very clever, thus, he failed to achieve the status of a scholar. Zhu Erdan's friends often teased him, including instigating Zhu to carry the status of the Judge of Hell – the behaviour of Zhu's friends reflects the opposite of Li (courtesy and propriety). They should not laugh at others and use their weakness to attack them. • The status of Lu Pan looked scary, but Zhu Erdan was not worried about it. He even toasted the Judge of Hell and invited Lu Pan to visit his home – this reflects Zhu Erdan's Li, who is not afraid of Lu Pan's grotesque and fearful face like his friends. On the contrary, Zhu Erdan showed hospitality and made friends without judging their appearance. • Lu Pan and Zhu Erdan became friends and he often visited Zhu's home to drink. To repay Zhu's friendship, Lu Pan replaced Zhu Erdan's heart with a "smart" heart. He also replaced the ugly appearance of Zhu's wife with a beautiful head. Zhu Erdan and his family's fate were changed by the help of Lu Pan – this indicates the Li of Lu Pan. Lu Pan appreciated Zhu Erdan's friendship and helped Zhu Erdan's family live a better life. • After Zhu Erdan's death, his son became an official with good

	reputation. The spirit of Zhu Erdan appeared in front of his son, and gave his son a knife engraved with the words: “To be brave but be cautious, to be smart but with righteous behaviours” (胆欲大而心欲小，智欲圆而行欲方). The spirit of Zhu Erdan told his son to preserve this knife, which could help him have a good future – The words on the knife still could inspire contemporary people as a few words of wisdom.
Key Relationships	Zhu Erdan and Lu Pan are friends
Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship requires sincerity and propriety • Do not judge a person by his/her appearance and status • “Be brave but be cautious, be smart but be rightful”
metaphor meanings	The knife that Zhu Erdan gave his son could not really bless his son with a better future, but if his son followed the words of the knife, his son could.

Title	<i>Cai Shusheng</i>
Story	The story is about the scholar Cai avoiding falling into the trap of a female ghost. He points out in a humorous way that it was wrong for people to commit suicide. The female ghost failed to seduce Cai to commit suicide, but she appreciated Cai’s intelligence and left him alone (<i>Yuan, 1995, p.157</i>).
Main Character	Scholar Cai and the female ghost
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholar Cai pressed for a low price for a haunted house because he was not afraid of ghosts – this reflects Cai is an intelligent and brave young man. He did not believe the rumors relating the house was haunted. He believed he can handle it even the ghosts really existed in the house, and he should not be afraid. • At midnight, a beautiful female ghost came to scholar Cai and seduced him to hang himself with a rope. Cai did not refuse her demand but instead pulled the noose over his feet – this reflects Zhi (wisdom). Cai was clever with quick reactions and avoided conflict between him and the ghost. Cai expressed his attitude towards suicide in a surprising and interesting way. Cai also seized the initiative because the ghost was confused and curious about his behaviour. • The female ghost told him that it was wrong to pull the noose over the feet instead of his head. The scholar laughed and

	<p>criticised her suicide: “I am surely not wrong. You are the one who made mistakes in the past, so that’s why you are now a ghost.” – this also indicated scholar Cai’s wisdom. He mischievously pointed out that the female ghost should not commit suicide. This is also a kind of “Proof by Contradiction”, which refer to in logic and mathematics, to prove something through contradiction, assuming that the proposition we want to prove is not true, and then show that the consequences of doing so are impossible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The female ghost was surprised to hear this answer, and then she laughed. She bowed to scholar <i>Cai</i> several times, then left, and never showed up again – the female ghost is also wise. Her suicide must be her scar, which was pointed out directly by the scholar, but she did not get angry. Her laugh also reflects her open-minded. The scholar and the female ghost are more like “to meet one’s match” (棋逢对手). The female ghost knew she failed to kill the scholar so she bowed to the scholar to show her respect for his wisdom and reminders. As a kind of courtesy in ancient China, she left forever.
Key Relationships	The female ghost wanted Cai to commit suicide and serve as her replacement. Then she can get rid of the identity of ghost and enter the reincarnation to become human again (the substitution theory is similar to the story of <i>Wang Liulang</i>), but the ghost failed to do so.
Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handle daily affairs with unique insight and optimism

Title	<i>Mudan Deng Ji</i> (The account of the Peony Lanterns)
Story	The story is about scholar Qiao who fell in love with a beautiful young woman (ghost). He unilaterally broke their relationship and avoided her. At the end of the story, Qiao was killed by the angry ghost. This story is a negative example of Zhi (wisdom) (<i>Qu, 2003, p. 40-46</i>).
Main Character	scholar Qiao, the female ghost Fu Liqing, Fu Liqing’s maid Jin Lian, a neighbor of Qiao, Daoist priest Wei (魏法师)
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholar Qiao met a woman Fu Liqing and fell in love with her. The woman and her maid visited him every night and they would leave at dawn. This visit lasted for half a month. Qiao’s old neighbor felt odd about the night time visiting and he doubted the woman’s background – this happening reflects Qiao lack of Zhi

	<p>due to his insensitivity to possible danger. Even Qiao’s neighbor noticed the suspicious behavior of the woman, but Qiao did not notice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The neighbor dug a small hole in the wall to observe the woman during the visit. He was surprised to see a skeleton with a lot of make-up sitting with Qiao on the bed. He told Qiao what he saw the next day, but Qiao did not believe him, and Qiao didn’t do any investigation on the woman – Qiao was easily seduced by beauty, he was affected by the “Halo Effect” and he believed that Fu Liqing was a good woman. As the Chinese proverb says: “The person on the spot is baffled, the onlooker sees clearly. The onlooker will see more of the game.” (当局者迷，旁观者清). This is why the neighbour can see the true appearance of the ghost but not Qiao. • The Daoist priest Wei gave Qiao two amulets so that the ghost Fu Liqing could never get close to him anymore. The priest also exhorted Qiao not to go to Huxin Temple where Fu Liqing’s coffin was placed. However, one month later, Qiao forgot the priest’s warning, he got drunk and went to Huxin Temple. The ghost finally seized the opportunity to kill Qiao – this indicated scholar Qiao lacks the wisdom to deal with his relationship with Fu Liqing. He repeatedly put himself in danger.
Key Relationships	The female ghost is the scholar Qiao’s lover
Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should not be affected by appearance and superficial things • Weight decisions carefully • Be wise and sensitive to the situation and possible dangers around us

Title	<i>The Painted Skin</i> (Hua Pi)
Story	A married scholar Wang fell for a beautiful young married lady (ghost) and invited her to live with him. Later, Wang was killed by the ghost, and his wife overcame many difficulties and brought Wang back to life (<i>Pu, 2015, p. 239-248</i>).
Main Character	Scholar Wang, the female ghost, Wang’s wife Chen Shi, the Daoist priest, the maniac beggar
Key event and cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholar Wang knew that the young woman was married and still invited her to live with him. They lived together for a long time, and Wang told his wife Chen Shi about this incident. Chen Shi

analysis	<p>doubted the woman’s background and persuaded Wang to leave the woman, but Wang refused – Wang lacked wisdom and also lost the loyalty of married couples. Wang made similar mistakes as scholar Qiao in the story <i>Mudan Deng Ji</i>, but Wang’s behavior was worse than Qiao. This is because Qiao was single, but Wang was already married. Although an ancient Chinese man can marry several wives, but Wang did not tell his wife before inviting the woman home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Daoist priest warned Wang that he was entangled by an evil ghost. Wang didn’t believe the priest’s warning until he saw the ghost took off her skin and painted it – Wang was easily seduced by the beauty, and he couldn’t see the truth beneath the surface. • Wang was scared when he learned the truth and hid in the room. When the ghost came to him, Wang asked his wife to see what happened. Wang was finally killed and his heart was torn apart by the ghost – Wang lacks the responsibility of a husband. He likes to enjoy beautiful things but he does not want to pay for it. • Wang’s wife Chen Shi entreated a priest to save her husband, and the priest told her to look for a maniac beggar on the street as only the maniac can save Wang’s life. Chen Shi found the maniac and she had to overcome rage and shame to manage the request. Chen Shi had to swallow the loathsome pill from the maniac’s throat. When she returned home, the loathsome pill became a human heart that gave her husband a new life – Chen Shi’s Xin (trustworthiness) is the most beautiful part of this story. She has experienced his husband betrayal and she still chooses to trust her husband and believes he is worthy of being saved. Chen Shi came from a noble family and she was able to accept humiliating requests to help his husband resurrect. Chen Shi is a great character, not because she tolerated her husband’s betrayal, but because she has such a firm belief in her love.
Key Relationships	Chen Shi is scholar Wang’s wife; the female ghost is Wang’s lover
Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grasp the essence and nature of things, not what is on the surface

Title	<i>Gui Mu Zhuan</i>
Story	A pregnant woman died unexpectedly and gave birth to a son in her coffin. Strong maternal love supports the spirit of the woman to take care of the son until the villagers found the baby (<i>Zhang, 1954, p.</i>

	<i>154-155).</i>
Main Character	The mother, the newborn baby and the cake peddler
Key event and cultural values analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cake peddler noticed a woman buying his cake at the break of dawn everyday. He asked the woman why she bought the cake so early. The woman sadly told him that she had a baby that needed to be fed, and that she didn't have breast milk to feed her baby. When she heard her baby crying from hunger, her heart broke – the mother's strong love for her baby made her spirit unwilling to leave her son alone, and continued to take care of the baby with difficulty. • The cake peddler discovered that the woman was not a human being. He took officials and villagers to open the woman's tomb. They found a living and healthy baby in her coffin. Later, they found the baby's father, who came to bring the baby home. That night, the father saw his son hugging someone in the air and he heard someone weeping. The next day, the father found the baby's clothes were "wet with his wife's tears" – it was a touching description of this story. The mother loved her son so much, but she had to say goodbye to her baby. She spent the last night singing the nursery rhymes for her baby and cannot stop crying for the coming separation. • After the baby grows up, he was very filial. He missed his mother very much, and when people mentioned his mother, he cried – The son fully understood his mother's love and he will always remember it. His mother's love also made him a filial person.
Key Relationships	The baby is the son of the ghost mother
Contemporary cultural values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand and appreciate our parents, and try to express our love to them, and give them more care and attention.

3.3. Illustration Style Test

Prior to the creation of the final illustration work, a test was conducted to verify the ultimate style of illustrations in this project. Four different styles of illustrations were created for the survey and posted on social media to collect data from 60 participants and “thumbs-up” clicks from the public. Selected social media channels included Wechat (微信), Email, WhatsApp, Facebook and Douban (豆瓣). The collected data was analyzed to determine the final illustration style for this project.

The four graphic illustrations were created with various techniques and styles, including pen-and-ink painting, digital painting, Chinese comic style and line drawing. It is because they are a contemporary style of illustration that is common on websites, advertisements or social media channels. The line drawing is inspired by the traditional Chinese painting style, “Water Shield Leaves” (mentioned in Chapter 2.3). The styles of four artworks are conceptual illustrations as shown in figure 12 – 15; they are metaphorical, and the goal is to convey mood, metaphor, and subjectivity of the selected Chinese ghost tales. Illustration-A describes the story of *Peony of Lanterns*. The illustration was made up by the key elements of the story, including peonies, lanterns, the disappointed female ghost and the protagonist who was eventually killed by the female ghost. Inspired by the painting techniques of Wu Daozi (mentioned in Chapter 2.3), Illustration-A (see Figure 3.3.1) adopted the style of “Water Shield Leaves”, which varying the thickness of lines and outlines to enhance the details, depth and colors of the artwork. Illustration-B (see Figure 3.3.2) is illustrated in the style of Chinese comics to describe the story of *Painted Skin*, where a man was greedy for the beauty of a ghost and died a violent death. Illustration-B illustrates many human heads behind the female ghost to show that she has killed many people and can paint any of the human skin to become anyone she wants. There is a man who curled himself up in a cage, representing that the protagonist of this story has fallen into the trap of the ghost. The mask the ghost is painting represents her strange identity. This is because in Chinese culture, masks have the function of connecting and attracting the power of deities and spirits (Guo & Zhang, 2017, p. 35). Illustration-C (see Figure 3.3.3) relates the story of *Wang Liulang*. It is the account of the great loyal friendship between the fisherman and the water ghost. In this artwork, the style of “Water Shield Leaves” by Wu Daozi again inspired the creation, but this time more drawing lines have been added to moving objects to add textures and make the artwork more vibrant and livelier. In Illustration-D (see Figure 3.3.4), hatching and cross-hatching lines are used as tonal shading to enhance the story of *Cui Wei*. The story is about a compassionate person treating everyone kindly and equally, his kindness saved his life and changed his fortune.

3.3.1. Sampling

Two groups of participants were identified through purposive sampling method and were tasked to select their favorite illustration from the four given examples. The first group consisted of forty participants, who are regular social media users, are interested in visual, and fit the profile of the intended sample population. Participants in the second group were selected through a sub-type of purposeful sampling: expert sampling, also known as judgment sampling. Twenty participants were selected, all of whom are knowledgeable art and design professionals in visual arts to provide expert advice. The total number of participants included 36 women and 24 men from China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, South Korea and Uzbekistan.



Figure 3.3.1. Illustration-A Mudan Deng Ji



Figure 3.3.2. Illustration-B Painted Skin.



Figure 3.3.3. Illustration-C Wang Liulang



Figure 3.3.4. Illustration-D Cui Wei

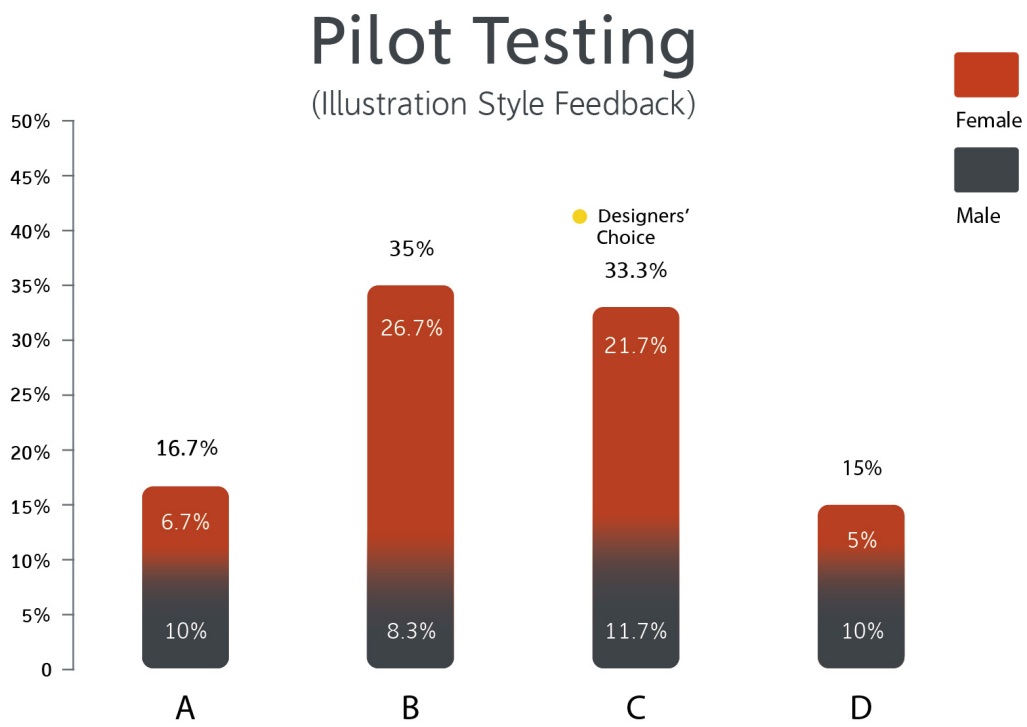


Chart 3.3. Illustration style test result.

The data of the test is shown in the above chart (see Chart 3.3). As seen in Chart 3.3, Illustration-B is the most popular illustration style, and 35% of the participants (21 people) agree with it. Generally, most participants think that Illustration-B is more pleasant and attractive.

For the second choice, about 33% of the participants (20 people) chose Illustration-C as their favorite. Of the 20 art and design professionals, eight of them selected Illustration-C, which is also the designer's choice. Approximately 16.7% (10 people) and 15% (9 people) of participants chose Illustration-A and Illustration-D, respectively.



Figure 3.3.5. Illustration style test feedback.

3.3.2. Test Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the test. The purpose of the test is to better understand which elements and formats are more popular and attractive to the target population, and how to absorb them to make the final illustration style of this project.

	Illustration-A	Illustration-B	Illustration-C	Illustration-D
Strength	The processed colors and contrasting styles are attractive to the viewers.	The style of Chinese comic is refined and readily accepted by the public.	It is more suitable for display in different digital platforms and it bears stylistic aesthetics.	Have more visual effect and imagination.
Weaknesses	The overly complex composition will limit the aesthetic appreciation for certain audiences.	It may not be suitable to present heavy themes.	The heavy linework may limit the expression of meaning.	The style created by technical pens and photoshop may be colder and lack organic feel.

Table 3.3.2 The strength and weaknesses of each illustration

Although Illustration-A has a low turnout rate of 16.7%, art and design professionals have expressed high ratings. They think the illustration is exceptional as the colors are properly processed, and the contrasting styles blend with each other.

P02: I love this type of artwork. It's exceptional. I think it's the colors and the detail that makes it stand out.

P06: The contrasting styles blend very well together (the painterly face, the line work and props).

For Illustration-B, participants appreciated the stylistic of the Chinese comic style as they thought the illustration was attractive, refined and readily accepted by the public.

P11: Stylistically B looks good to me.

P29: B is pretty. And I've been influenced by manga.

P16: B is a mature artwork.

P17: B is more acceptable for public, and the female ghost should be pretty.

P36: B is a bit Chinese manga style, which...meets the public's aesthetics.

Participants also commented that Illustration-B successfully depicts the narrative and ghostly grotesque of the “Painted Skin” ghost story.

P13: I am really scared by B, which makes me connect with a ghostly web series I watched. The beauty eats herself and only a head left.

P19: B makes me want to explore the story behind. An eerie atmosphere around...

P26: I prefer B, as the rhythm of the picture and narrative are stronger.

Useful suggestions from participants include adding more lines to highlight the main character.

P26: ...some places still can be improved, such as more strokes on the protagonist, to weaken the background.

Illustration C allows more participants to connect with the style of Ukiyo-e, and most designer participants regard it as their favorite.

P34: C is my favorite. I hope most people will choose C.

P36: C. ... C is a style more like mixing with an Ukiyo-e and woodcut, the lines and colors are better.

P33: It must be C. It looks like a kind of Chinese Ukiyo-e.

Participants commented that Illustration-C has the best aesthetic effect and is suitable for more platforms, such as digital exhibitions and mobile wallpaper.

P40: Regarding aesthetic, it is C. It depends on what is the purpose. Cell phone background image, C. For your dissertation, B or C. Digital exhibition? I vote for C.

P41: C is my choice. Looking forward to more mobile wallpaper.

Illustration-D is more popular among male participants, as 6 out of 9 male participants chose it. People who like Illustration-D feel that it gives them more imagination and distraction from the meaning of the image.

P46: Voting for D. Personally I feel like D gives me more imagination.

P45: I like D the most, followed by C. My primary reason for liking these two is that there is not a great deal of contrast in the colors, which to me personally distracts from the meaning within the photos. They are all quite beautiful though.

The findings indicate the challenges of illustrating complex and unknown ancient ghost stories. Firstly, most people like to get the main points directly from the images. Therefore, the complex composition of Illustration-A and Illustration-D is hard to catch the participant's interest in a short time. Secondly, people also tend to notice and choose things that are more familiar with them because of the Mere Exposure Effect. Such as the famous story of *Painted Skin* that illustrated in Illustration-B. In addition, the familiar Chinese comic style, which appears in website pages, advertisements and magazines, also contributes to the liking of the participants.

Based on these findings, this project considered all strengths and weaknesses of the four illustrations (see Table 3.3.2), and adapted illustration-C as the basis for the final illustration style of this thesis. This is because illustration-C is more convenient to apply in practice and is supported by public aesthetics. Importantly, illustration-C is

widely prevalent among art and design participants and has a keen aesthetic sensibility.

3.4. Visualization of the Chinese Ghost Tales

Through the review of the literature in Chapter 2, ten Chinese ancient ghost stories were selected based on these criteria:

1. The ghost story is from *Zhiguai* or *Chuanqi* tales ranging from the Six dynasties to the Qing dynasty. As the most significant and representative Chinese ghost tales were created and developed during this period.
2. The story should reflect one of the five virtues. As virtues are the main subject of many Chinese ghost tales. This criterion help to categorize selected stories and explore the cultural values of ghost stories.
3. The meaning of the story still applies to contemporary society. It is because only when people find a connection in the story, their curiosity can be piqued. Also, it can prove that Chinese ghost tales are still worthy of studying.

During the creation process, cultural values were analyzed to provide interesting key points for visualization. Then, through the integration of the style of illustration-C, the painting technique “Water Shield Leaf” and the author’s imagination, the key cultural points were reimagined with modern-day perspectives and metaphorical objects from the literature review and Chinese culture.

The final illustrations are an advanced version of Illustration-C, which absorbs the intensity of all the illustrations tested in the pilot test, and made the visualization look more decorative. The illustrations got the inspiration from “Water Shield Leaves”, one of Wu Daozi’s painting techniques. This illustration dilutes Chinese brush texture’s feature of “painting gently at the beginning and end of the brush” (虚入虚收), but short comic lines were added to make it more suitable for digital painting and more appealing to modern audiences. Thus, this line style will also be applied in the rest of illustrations.

3.4.1. Ghost Story 01 – *Guo Liu*

The story of *Guo Liu* is about a woman who kept her promise to take care of her parents-in-law during the plague. She was forced to become a prostitute to support her family, and eventually, she died due to unreasonable feudal social rules. Illustration-01, as seen in Figure 3.4.1, was developed based on “the plight of women” in the story, which is still prevalent in today’s society. By analogy with the Chinese idiom “*Shuishenhuore*” (水深火热), which means the abyss of suffering, the image of *Guo Liu* was portrayed as depicting women’s struggle, helplessness, and uselessness. Literally, the Chinese words mean “deep water and hot fire”, and therefore fluid and twisted shapes and tones of reddish-orange and blue were used to depict fire and water. The abstract forms of water and fire illustrate the concept of restraint in the story. And, gripping hands from different directions symbolize the difficulties in achieving true gender equality. Nevertheless, there is hope in every difficult situation. The meaning and symbolism of the hibiscus flowers is considered to be very feminine, while the white hibiscus flowers mean beauty, femininity, inner power and purity (P., 2020). Thus, in the background, white hibiscus flowers were added to represent the independence and strength of *Guo Liu*. In addition, in Chinese poems, the moon symbolizes sadness, loneliness and utopia (Min & Fu, 2006, p.344). All these represent *Guo Liu*’s feelings and the goal she strives for.

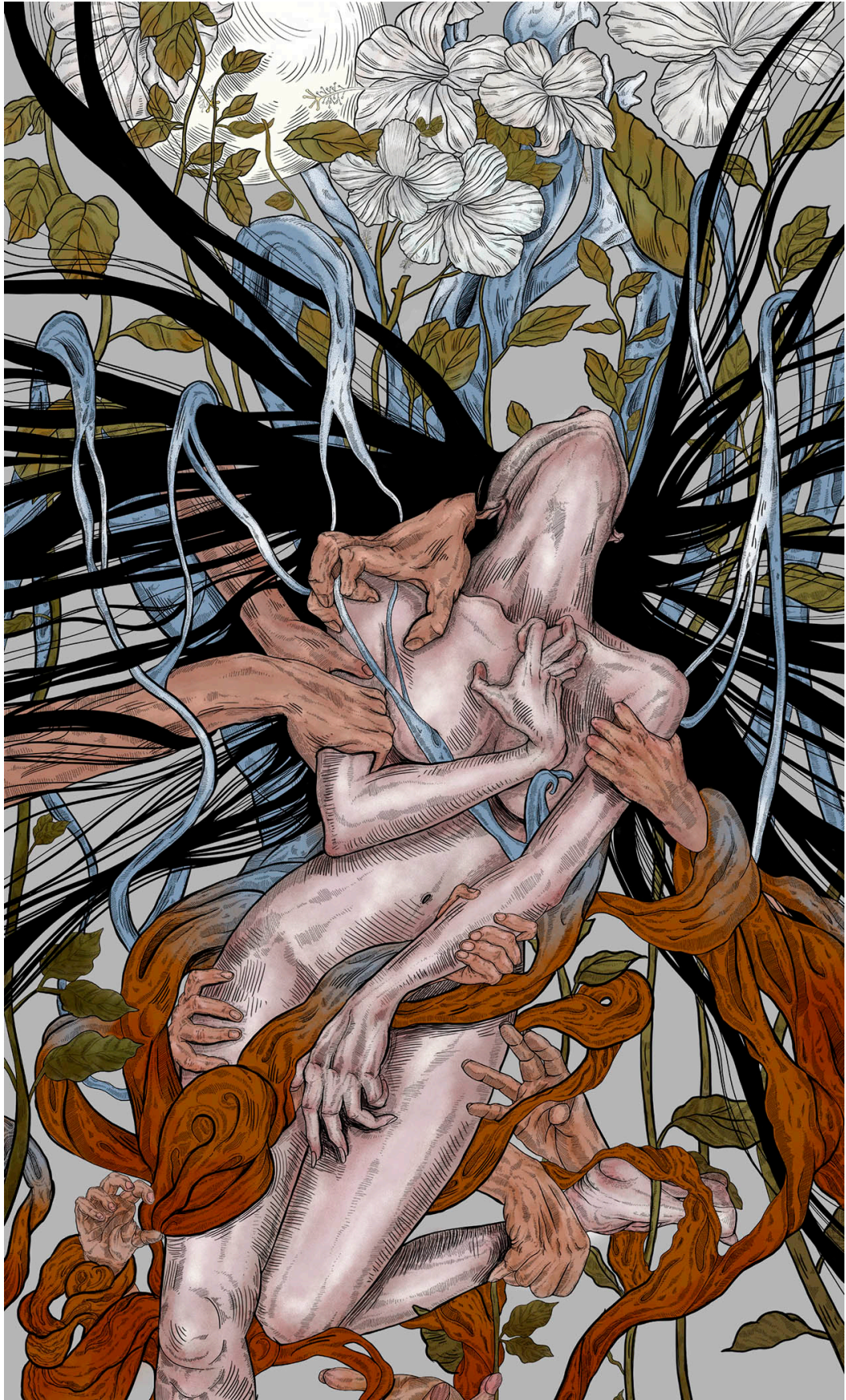


Figure 3.4.1. Illustration-01 Guo Liu

3.4.2. Ghost Story 02 – *Yiquan Fuhun*

In the story of *Yiquan Fuhun*, a very loyal dog wanted to pay back his owner's kindness by protecting his owner from harm, but the dog was killed by the rogues. Its spirit possessed another dog and continued to save his owner's life successfully. Illustration-02, as seen in Figure 3.4.2, depicts the main character in the story, a loyal and brave dog. Movies about the animal are popular in the contemporary movie market. Dog loyalty is also a familiar topic. Thus, even the story of *Yiquan Fuhun* is an old tale, it can still arouse the emotional resonance of contemporary people.

Illustration-02 is reimagined through the connection of similarity between the story of *Yiquan Fuhun* and the legendary dog, *Tiangou* (Hound heavenly, 天狗) in ancient Chinese culture and ghost tales. A mural-like texture is applied to the background of this illustration to increase the mythological atmosphere of the loyal dog. According to record of *the Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Shan Hai Jing, 山海经) created in the 4th century, *Tiangou* is an auspicious heavenly black dog that defends against danger and it is a symbol of peace and tranquility, and gives protection from all kinds of troubles and robbers. The ancient Chinese people believed that the *Tiangou* would eat the sun or the moon during an eclipse. In this illustration, the dog seems to have almost unbearable anger when it sees its owner being bullied by the rogues. On the upper right of the illustration, the red moon also symbolizes the fury and violence will happen. It symbolizes (变天), a Chinese saying that a situation has become unpleasant or has changed. The Tang Dynasty book *Treatise on Astrology of the Kaiyuan Era* (开元占经) (714-724 AD) records the ancient people's understanding of the bloody moon. In the 17th volume of this book, the red moon is depicted as: "Bloody moon appears, then followed by the monsters and ghosts (血月见, 妖魔现)" and "the red moon of an eclipse represents a coming war or fighting (月已蚀而赤者, 为兵)". Black birds were illustrated to represent death and a ghostly shadow behind the dog to represent the dog's spirit is trying to possess another dog. The ravens' cry was regarded as inauspicious or an imminent disaster (乌啼兆凶) (Qi, 2018, p. 27). Clouds were added to express the praise for the dog's brave behavior, because cloud is a common element in Chinese painting, and usually represents divinity, such as the Figure 2.3.11 of chapter 2.3, Wu Daozi's painting, *God Sending A Son*. In order to add the feeling of lifestyle and friendship between dogs and people, a cherry tree was added to reflect the appreciation of spring flowers by the dog and its owners in the story.



Figure 3.4.2. Illustration-02 Yiquan Fuhun

3.4.3. Ghost Story 03 – *Ghostly Army*

The story of *Ghostly Army* is about ghosts wanting to repay Liao Shi and the villagers who bury them and build their graves, and then they protect the villagers from the devils of the plague.

As shown in Figure 3.4.3, illustration-03 depicts the war between the ghostly army and the devils. The main character in the illustration can be regarded as the leader of the army. He came to Liao Shi's dream and told him that they would fight the devils to repay their kindness.

The bloody river and tattered clothes indicate that the war is difficult to win. In this illustration, the man was not wearing armor because the man and his army were not soldiers, they were ordinary villagers before death.

In Chinese culture, the bloody red eagle symbolizes war, hero and strength (*Sun, 2019, p.75-76*). In China, the pronunciation of eagle (*Ying, 鹰*) is the same as the pronunciation of hero (*Ying Xiong, 英雄*). In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), the emperor usually compared himself to the "*Hai Dongqing (海冬青)*" (Gyrfalcon), which was the highest totem in Manchu culture.

The dead trees and pink mountains represent the loneliness of the ghosts and this war. Trees and mountains are common elements in traditional Chinese painting. Swords and flags were mentioned in the story, and the ghost asked Liao Shi to burn paper swords and flags for them to prepare for the coming war. In Illustration-03, there is a dynamic and static comparison: a fierce battle is fought not far away, and the static man as the leader is preparing to hold his sword and win this war.



Figure 3.4.3. Illustration-03 Ghostly Army

3.4.4. Ghost Story 04 – *Cai Shusheng*

The story of *Cai Shusheng* is about a scholar Cai who used a humorous way to avoid falling into a female ghost's trap. The female ghost failed to seduce Cai to commit suicide, but she appreciated Cai's intelligence and she left forever. Illustration-04, as seen in Figure 3.4.4, depicts the main characters scholar Cai and the female ghost upside down.

Relating back to life and the story, a yellow moon and dark grey gradient clouds were illustrated to symbolize that no one lives a perfect life, and all of us have down moments during our lifetime. Such as the Chinese Song dynasty poem, *Water Melody* (*Shuidiao Getou*, 水调歌头), said: “.....Men have sorrow and joy; they part or meet again; The moon is bright or dim and she may wax or wane. There has been nothing perfect since the olden days” (人有悲欢离合，月有阴晴圆缺，此事古难全) (the famous Song dynasty poet *Su Shi* wrote this poet in 1076). Thus, the choice of perspective to deal with problems determines our lives. In contrast, the grey moon illustrates negative choices in life, such as suicide. The protagonist scholar Cai is not an immortal, but his outlook on life was upright, which leads the female ghost to reflect on her failures in her previous life. Therefore, bamboos were illustrated to represent scholar Cai's wisdom and righteousness. In Chinese culture, bamboo means “gentleman” with positive human characters and virtues, and this symbolism is very popular in Chinese poems (*Hong, 2016, p.60-61*). As a symbol of legend, mystical and happiness, the cranes were added to illustrate the noble behavior of scholar Cai and the female ghost, and the happy ending of the story.



Figure 3.4.4. Illustration-04 Cai Shusheng

3.4.5. Ghost story 05 – *Lu Pan*

Lu Pan is a story about a young man, Zhu Erdan, who made friends with the Judge of Hell, Lu Pan. Lu Pan appreciated Zhu Erdan's friendship and hospitality, so Lu Pan repaid him by changing the fate of Zhu Erdan and his family. Illustration-05, as seen in Figure 3.4.5, depicts the climax of the story of "exchanging the head of Zhu Erdan's wife".

The three main characters illustrated are the Judge of Hell Lu Pan, scholar Zhu Erdan (the shadow) and Zhu Erdan's wife. Lu Pan is an official underworld and his identity is special, so he was not illustrated on the same space as Zhu Erdan and his wife to distinguish his deity identity from the mortal. In traditional Chinese concepts, there are four Judges of Hell: We Zheng (魏征), *Zhong Kui* (as known as demon hunter, 钟馗), Lu Zhidao (as known as Lu Pan, 陆之道), and Cui Yu (崔珏). We Zheng records and rewards the deceased for his good deeds during his lifetime. Cui Yu is in charge of Life and Death Book (生死簿) which decides human lifespan. The two most famous characters are Zhong Kui and Lu Pan. They symbolize righteousness, but also have ugly and terrifying faces, threatening evil demons. Therefore, the image of Lu Pan was designed in the style of woodblock print, which is Zhong Kui's most famous folklore image. The new face of Zhu Erdan's wife appeared in the mirror, indicating that the beautiful face was fragile and illusory. The bleeding line on his wife's neck and the knife in Lu Pan's hand represent the "head changing" process just completed. In this story, Zhu Erdan asked Lu Pan to make his wife beautiful because he thought his wife was ugly. In the illustration, the expression of his wife was not excited, representing her complex emotions for her new appearance. In contemporary society, many women choose cosmetic surgery to change their appearance, but if they can't clarify what they are really pursuing but just follow the aesthetic standards of others, they may still feel unhappy.



Figure 3.4.5. Illustration-05 Lu Pan

3.4.6. Ghost Story 06 – *Mudan Deng Ji* (The accounts of peony lanterns)

Mudan Deng Ji is about a scholar Qiao who fell in love with a female ghost. He found out her true identity and unilaterally broke their relationship, but he made some mistakes during the process. At the end of the story, Qiao was killed by the angry ghost.

Illustration-06, as seen in Figure 3.4.6, illustrates the female ghost and the double-headed peony lanterns (双头牡丹灯), which is the most important iconic prop to enhance the storyline. The double-headed peony lantern represents the love between the female ghost and scholar Qiao, it was eventually burned by the Daoist priest, symbolizing the death of love between Qiao and the ghost. In this illustration, the female ghost *Fu Liqing* holds a double-headed peony lanterns with a sorrow expression for their death of love. There are several faces and a skeleton behind the female ghost. This indicates the “Halo Effect” that prevents people from seeing the truth and nature of a person. People cannot see a person’s nature under the psychological influence, just like Qiao cannot see through the woman he loved who was a skeleton behind her glowing beauty and advantages. In this story, scholar Qiao made repeated mistakes, and even his neighbor told him that the woman was a skeleton, Qiao did not believe him. In our society, this kind of psychological influence is still common among couples and fan clubs. This story and illustration want to express that it is necessary to know a person wisely. The “Halo Effect” may cause people to lose basic judgment and ignore the shortcomings of people they loved. The broken butterflies as a metaphor depict their love and tragedy.

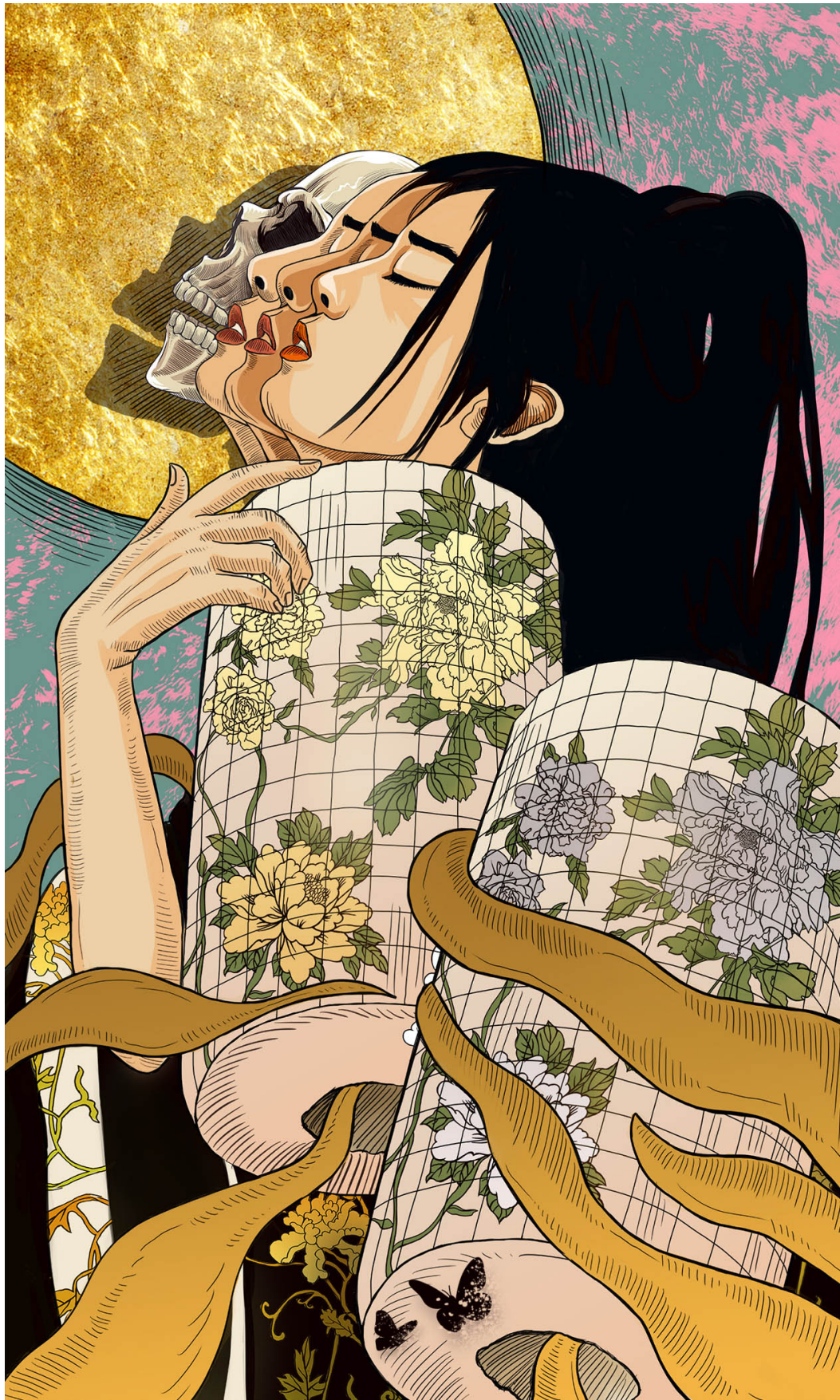


Figure 3.4.6. Illustration-06 Mudan Deng Ji

3.4.7. Ghost Story 07 – Ji Kang

The story of Ji Kang is about a man who encountered a ghost. They are enthusiasts of Guqin and maintain a humble attitude to each other. Therefore, they became soul mates through music.

Illustration-07, as seen in Figure 3.4.7, depicts the encounter of Ji Kang and the ghost one night. In this illustration, the location is set on a pavilion named Yuehua (月华). The ghost is shown as a slightly transparent body to distinguish it from Ji Kang. They are not illustrated in too much detail like the main characters in this story. It is because the appearance of the characters is not important any more, when they enjoy their favorite thing and beautiful scenery. Ji Kang insisted that the ghost made an appearance because he is not afraid of the damaged appearance of the ghost. In this way, they can become soul mates, and Ji Kang can learn a famous Guqin song from the ghost. What the illustration wants to convey is that when two people are immersed in music and beautiful scenery, the appearance and status of the characters become irrelevant. This is also the message that should be conveyed to contemporary young people: don't judge a person by their appearance and status, stay humble, you will get more than expected.



Figure 3.4.7. Illustration-07 Ji Kang

3.4.8. Ghost Story 08 – *Gui Mu Zhuan*

Gui Mu Zhuan is about a pregnant woman who died unexpectedly and gave birth to a son in her coffin. Her maternal love continued to take care of her son after her death until the villagers found the child.

As shown in Figure 3.4.8, Illustration-08 illustrates that the ghost mother cannot stop crying for the upcoming separation from her son.

This illustration depicts this touching story in cold tones. The sorrowful mother holding her baby and sitting between graves. The reeds swayed in the wind, which added to the depressing atmosphere of the story. The baby was illustrated in a warmer tone because he is the only human in this illustration. The mother's complexion was grey, indicating that she was exhausted from taking care of the baby as a ghost. The streamline in the background indicates that the mother's energy (qi) has disappeared, so she has to say goodbye to the baby. This illustration is designed to express a mother's love and inspire us to do something for our parents.



Figure 3.4.8. Illustration-08 Gui Mu Zhuan

3.4.9. Ghost Story 09 – Painted Skin (*Hua Pi*)

Painted Skin tells the story of a married scholar who fell in love with a beautiful young married lady (ghost) and invited her to live with him. Later, the scholar was killed by the female ghost, and his wife overcame many difficulties and brought the scholar back to life.

Illustration-09, as seen in Figure 3.4.9, depicts the female ghost painting herself with a brush. In this story, the scary ghost has to collect men's hearts and energy to continue her life. She can change her appearances by painting new skin, and in order to maintain her beauty, she must repaint the skin every few days. There are many blank faces in the illustration, indicating that the female ghost can change its appearance at any time by painting different appearances on the skin. Hidden in the background are the traditional Chinese circular patterns, which usually appear in ancient Chinese weddings. The phoenix and plant pattern symbolize a happy marriage, but here it represents irony (*Ren, 2014, p. 11*). This is because in this story, the scholar betrayed his wife and their marriage was not happy, but the wife still overcame many difficulties and saved the husband. Thus, the pattern is incomplete and unobvious in this illustration, indicating that the marriage was broken. There are also some yellow Daoist amulets in the background, one of which is held tightly by the wife's hand. The illustration wants to convey the message about appearance, which is not as important as people think, and to grasp the essence and nature of things that can prevent being deceived.



Figure 3.4.9. Illustration-09 Painted Skin

3.4.10. Ghost Story 10 – *Wang Liulang*

The story of *Wang Liulang* is about the deep friendship between a water ghost Wang Liulang and a fisherman. The fisherman's kindness and Wang Liulang's benevolence made them close friends. In the end, Wang Liulang's benevolent act moved the heavenly officials and made him a local god.

As shown in Figure 3.4.10, Illustration-10 shows Wang Liulang helping the fisherman catch fishes. In this illustration, Wang Liulang had become a local deity, so a hand was illustrated to show his immortal identity. The mortal fisherman stood on a small boat and looked at his friend Wang Liulang. It aims to convey that the gap between their human and God identities does not affect their friendship. As the Chinese saying goes: "Turning his hand palm up he gathers the clouds, turning his hand palm down he turns them to rain" (翻手为云, 覆手为雨). This idiom usually describes people become capricious, who are also powerful and capable.

Wang Liulang became a deity with immortal power, but he still treated his close friend as usual. As the metaphor meaning of this story, the wind as a medium represents Wang Liulang's emotions and communication. Thus, the illustration uses rain and smoke to represent wind. The Chinese guardian lions symbolize Wang Liulang was a good official with righteousness. Traditionally, guardian lion statues standing in front of Chinese Imperial palaces, tombs, government offices and temples, are considered to have powerful mythological protection. The cultural meaning could be conveyed by this illustration: true friendship will not change, nor it is affected by external factors.



Figure 3.4.10. Illustration-10 Wang Liulang

Chapter 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the reasons of using graphic illustrations as a medium to reimagine Chinese Ghost Tales. In addition, the four main themes: Relationship, Suicide, Womanhood and Homosexuality will also be demonstrated as the contemporary relevance in the subsequent sections.

4.1. Reimagining Chinese Ghost Tales Through Graphic Illustrations

Fresh perspectives and imagination are essential to bridge the gap between contemporary culture and traditional culture. Reimagining Chinese Ghost Tales refers to reshaping people's understanding and perspectives of traditional culture. Perhaps, the illustrations can help people understand the value of these ghost stories and apply them to their lives. Then, these Chinese Ghost Tales can be passed on from generation to generation based on their current understanding and connections. Illustration is one of the contemporary methods to reimagine traditional culture. The illustrations break down language and cultural barriers and engage people in the process of reimagining ghost stories. As Alan Male (2007) stated in the preface of his book *“Illustration: A Theoretical & Contextual Perspective”*:

Illustration practice is not judged purely by visual literacy and technical qualities, but is a discipline that is firmly established as one that engenders the best intellectual engagement with subject matter, problem solving and visual communication.

Illustration is becoming more and more important in our daily lives. In particular, in recent years, illustrations have become popular in network platforms, social media and marketing activities. According to Baldwin (2020), illustration is more important now than ever in the digital age as the illustrations make the story more impressive and give the audience more imagination. It inspires the next generation to make more visual presentations. It also enables traditional messages and brands to engage with consumers. Hence, this section discusses how illustration can help present an understanding of traditional Chinese ghost story through four themes (Relationship, Suicide, Womanhood and Homosexuality) and three creation ways (Expression, Imaginative and Connectivity).

Creation Ways	Themes			
	A. Relationship	B. Suicide	C. Womanhood	D. Homosexuality
Expression	A healthy friendship is essential to people's psychological growth and good personality shaping.	To be wise and humorous to face life, which is imperfect for most people, and to understand that cherishing life is a kind of self-responsibility we need to learn.	To take on more family responsibilities and take care of family members. In addition, to encourage women to explore self-worth and learn more about their own situation.	To be more receptive to sexual orientation and people who are different from us. Self-understanding can help people better understand themselves physically and spiritually.
Imaginative	Wind, dream, eagle trees, mirror and	Yellow moon and grey moon, cranes and	Fire and water, flowers and smoke	Red moon

	knife	bamboos		
Connectivity	Developing self-growth	Developing a sense of social responsibility	Developing a sense of family responsibility, self-awareness and self-value	Developing self-understanding

Table 4.1. The structure of themes and creation ways

4.1.1. Theme 01 Relationship

Of these ten Chinese ghost stories, four are about interpersonal relationships. *Wang Liulang* is about the friendship between a water ghost and a fisherman. *Ghostly Army* is about the loyalty of the relationship between ghosts and villagers. The story of *Lu Pan* demonstrates the sincerity and propriety of friendship between a Judge of Hell and a scholar. The story of *Ji Kang* represents the short but very precious friendship between the ghost and the musician. These four relationships can be summarized as friendship, but there are some differences between them. By analyzing these relationships, we can discover close connections with society. This is one of the purposes of the project, which is to explore fresh perspectives and explanations, and to discover the connection between the past and contemporary society.

Wang Liulang and *Lu Pan* are from *Liaozhai Zhiyi* (Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio, 聊斋志异). The author Pu Songling wrote many poems for his friends throughout his life. He cherishes friendship very much, which can be reflected in his writings. Friendship is one of the main literary themes of *Liaozhai*. In ancient and contemporary Chinese society, discussions about friends have always been important to people. In the third-century encyclopedic Chinese classic text *Lüshi Chunqiu* (also known in English as *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*, 吕氏春秋), there is an example of the importance of friends. In this book, a famous person is mentioned, who is good at reading human faces to tell his fortune. The king asked him how to read faces, and he replied that he didn't read faces, he just read people through their friends. He said if a person has friends with benevolence, filial piety and propriety, then this people's family would be prosperous in the future. If the friends of an official bore honesty and kindness, then this official is also good, and he will serve the king well.

The fortune teller's words can be demonstrated as a contemporary concept to prove that friends are very important to people's psychological growth and personality shaping. In the Ghost story 10-*Wang Liulang*, the water ghost Wang Liulang and the fisherman are benevolent (Ren), they are people of the same personality. In this story, the fisherman exhorted Wang to be a benevolent and righteous deity after he became a god, and Wang did. They were influenced by each other's kindness and benevolent behaviours and lead each other to become better people. In Illustration-10, it depicted that Wang Liulang still took care of his friend as usual even after he became a deity. The fisherman still felt Wang's friendship as Wang could convey his message through wind and dreams, even though Wang could not make an appearance. Illustration-10

also illustrated that friendship may affect people invisibly, and true friendship should not be changed due to external factors such as identity, wealth and time. This echoes Pu Songling's understanding of friendship. He commented the story *Wang Liulang* at the end of the story as: "This guy (Wang Liulang) has become a deity with superpower, but he still thought of his poor friends and valued their friendship as always. I think this is why he can be a deity!"

Today, friendship plays an important role in people's daily life. According to the research of Cadzow and Servoss, they found that people with insufficient perceived social support are more likely to suffer from mental health problems, such as physician-measured overweight/obesity, heart condition, previous heart attack, anxiety, and depression (Cadzow & Servoss, 2009). A good friendship can help people reduce stress, increase happiness and improve self-value. Good friendship can not only help people benefit from psychological growth, but also help people work on their favorite subject and make much progress together. It is beneficial to develop self-growth, which is what the online relationship cannot replace it, such as purpose and belonging. The story of *Ji Kang* can represent this.

A famous musician and a ghost both enjoy playing Guqin, which make them forget the gap between ghost and human identity. They exchanged ideas about Guqin techniques, and the protagonist Ji Kang learned a very famous song, *Guang Ling San* (广陵散) from the ghost. In this story, Ji Kang shows a completely different attitude towards two ghosts, which represent two kinds of people in life. One is people who have different pursuits from ours, and our behavior or thoughts may affect by their bad behaviors or thinking. For this first type of people, Ji Kang takes a very decisive attitude towards them, he refuses to be with them and is ashamed of them. The other type is people who have good characteristics and the same pursuits as us, and they can influence us in a positive way. Ji Kang values the second type of people very much. If he finds like-minded friends, appearance will become secondary. This story may inspire contemporary young people to make friends cautiously and value people's nature rather than appearance. Illustration-07 can also be understood as to how the atmosphere and scenery change when people are affected by a good, healthy friendship.

Lu Pan is also a story of Strange Tales from the *Liaozhai Zhiyi*. The scholar Zhu Erdan showed hospitality and made friends with the Judge of Hell. The Judge of Hell is an underground official with ugly appearance who frightens everyone else. Even the scholar's wife persuaded him to stop contacting the Judge of Hell, but Zhu insisted on inviting him to drink together at home. As repayment for Zhu's sincerity, the Judge of Hell changed the fate of Zhu's family, which could be viewed as Li (propriety) of friendship. Illustration-05 illustrated the famous scene of the story, the process of exchanging head, which could quickly remind the audience of this classical *Liaozhai* story. The mirror represents the thing we see may not be real, and we need to observe through nature. In the story, the scholar gave his son a knife and told him to preserve the knife, which can help him become a good official and have a bright

future. The author wants to say that the words engraved on the knife can help people improve themselves, but not the knife itself: “To be brave but be cautious, to be smart but with righteous behaviours”. Imagination can be shown here. The knife received by the scholar’s son may be the same as the knife the Judge of Hell used to exchange the head of the scholar’s wife. It seems that blessing the scholar’s family and his descendants is not the power of the Judge of Hell, but more like a wise admonition from a true friend. The scholar cannot get such changes in his life, if he still makes friends with people who laugh at him and have a negative influence on him as mentioned at the beginning of the story.

The *Ghostly Army* is a story about the Yi (loyal and rightful) relationship between the ghost army and the villagers. The villagers never thought that their kind act of burying the unknown bodies would in turn help them escape from disaster. The ghosts voluntarily help the villagers fight against the devil of plague because they appreciate the villagers’ good deeds. The ghost bravely participated in this war, because from the description of the story, it was a difficult war. The story mentioned that the war lasted all night, and the villagers heard the battle loudly. We can understand their relationship as a process of developing self-worth and self-growth. Due to the good influence (kindness) of the villagers, these ghosts are very brave. Even though they were nobodies when they were alive, they realized their personal value and growth after death. Illustration-03 depicts this tragic and arduous war to show the bravery and loyalty of the ghosts to their friends. The eagle represents their bravery, while the dead tree symbolizes their long-term loneliness, like ghosts with no self-values.

When we discuss these stories, they are still closely related to our lives and today’s society. The friendship of these four stories is a good example of building a good and healthy friendship with others. Friendship, as one of the important interpersonal relationships, needs to be studied and cultivated. The selected stories and illustrations are designed to guide people to cherish meaningful friendships, so that people can develop self-value and self-growth.

4.1.2. Theme 02 Suicide

According to a report by the World Health Organization, suicide has become the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 in 2019 (2019). The report mentions the link between suicide and mental illness (such as depression and alcoholism). Many young people commit suicide because they cannot cope with life stress, such as financial problems, broken relationships or chronic pain and illness. As mentioned earlier, friendship provides strong support for each other. Good friendship can help young people maintain their mental health, but sometimes the root cause of suicide is not a lack of healthy interpersonal relationships, but a lack of Zhi (wisdom) when facing difficulties in life.

The story *Cai Shusheng* is about suicide. The scholar Cai criticizes the female ghost’s suicide as an unwise decision and an impulsive behaviour. Cai expresses his attitude

towards suicide in a humorous way, which also represents the author's attitude. He accepted the noose to commit suicide as ordered by the female ghost, but he pulled the noose to his feet instead of his head. He then explained this behaviour to the ghost through Proof by Contradiction wisely. He pointed out that she was the one who made the mistake and turned her into a ghost. He would not make the same mistakes. Illustration-04 depicts two characters upside down. This is because the illustration seeks to convey that people can change their perspectives and find positive solutions to problems and difficulties in life. Cai's positive attitude and wisdom helped him get rid of the predicament, which was represented by the auspicious cranes in the illustration. As cranes in Chinese mean longevity, nobility and peace. The cranes represent the noble behaviour and characteristics of scholar Cai and the female ghost, and the happy ending of the story. The bamboos symbolize his virtue, and he can judge right from wrong. The yellow and grey moon symbolizes that life is not perfect and we need to face it wisely.

The story *Cai Shusheng* not only indicated that people need wisdom and a sense of humour when facing difficulties, but also able to judge right and wrong. In recent years, some popular suicidal online games have spread among young people, such as "blue whale game" (Adeane, 2019). The game is a 50-day challenge, which includes a series of tasks for the player. The tasks include various forms of self-harm, such as "stand on the ledge of a tower block", "cutting a whale into your arm", and the final challenge is to ask the player to commit suicide. More than 130 Russian teenagers were killed in this game, and the game has spread in many countries. These suicide games encourage young people, especially those with mental illness and want to commit suicide, to increase their negative emotions and encourage them to deal with problems in a destructive way. Some of them even started playing deadly games out of curiosity and excitement. Therefore, preventing youth suicide requires the efforts and attention of the whole society, which is one of the motivations for choosing this story. Young people need to increase their sense of responsibility to cherish their lives and themselves. Educators should strengthen the self-responsibility of school youth through the help of stories and illustrations like *Cai Shusheng*. After all, life is imperfect for most people. We need to learn to face life, be wise and humorous, and understand that cherishing life is a self-responsibility.

4.1.3. Theme 03 Womanhood

In this project, there are four stories about the theme of "Womanhood", which can be expressed from two aspects: love and injustice. The stories *Gui Mu Zhuan* and *Painted Skin* are about love, and the other two stories *Guo Liu* and *Mudan Deng Ji* focus on women who have suffered unfair treatment. *Gui Mu Zhuan* is a touching story about the deep love of the ghost mother for her human son. People can understand the love of the ghost mother and reconnect this relationship to their parents. Parents will do the same for their children as the ghost mother of the story. This story was chosen to allow people to understand and appreciate their parents by

describing the love of the ghost mother in this story. The ghost mother had passed away, but due to her maternal instinct, she gave birth to a baby. She was worried that her son will not survive because she could not breastfeed the baby. We can imagine her sense of conflict. On the one hand, she hopes that the villagers can find her child to get a chance to live; on the other hand, after people discover her secret, she has to say goodbye to her son forever. Illustration-08 depicts the mother deeply saddened by the upcoming farewell. The flowing smoke symbolizes that the ghost mother does not have much time left because her energy (qi) is disappearing. Back in our society, many parents send their children to study abroad, or many children choose to work in different cities. The feeling of conflict also applied to our parents. Parents want their children to have a better future and more opportunities, even if they must be separated from their children. As children, we should be patient with our parents' nagging, because it is a way to express their love and care to us. The purpose of this story is to remind people that as a caring family member, you need to develop a sense of family responsibility.

Painted Skin is also related to love, but it is about a wife's love for her husband and family. Chen Shi, the scholar's wife, had to face her husband's betrayal. She chose to forgive and insisted on overcoming many difficulties to save her husband's life. This is because of the love of a wife. The background of the scholar is mentioned at the beginning of the story: "Wang of *Taiyuan*" (太原王氏). It was a very famous big family in ancient China. Marriage usually takes place between two large families or poor families. Therefore, we can speculate that Chen as the scholar's wife, she also comes from a wealthy family with a good reputation. This means that Chen does not have to rely on her husband and his family for a living or being force to stay in a broken marriage. She was a noble lady, but was able to swallow the loathsome pill from the maniac's throat as a condition to save her husband. She forgave her husband and the scholar was saved because of love. According to data released by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 9.471 million registered marriages and 415.4 million registered divorces in 2019 (Zhang, 2020). Another report also stated that the cost of divorce is very low in China, and many of them are impulsive short marriages. This is why the divorce rate in China has been rising for the past twelve years. In terms of divorce among those who have been married for less than three years, 45% of them were born after the 1980s (Zhang, 2018). Couples increasingly lack tolerance and patience for each other. *Painted Skin* kindly reminds contemporary people that it takes love and patience to cultivate a long-term happy marriage. Betrayal will not only harm the marriage, but also the person himself. Illustration-09 depicts the illusion of a beautiful female ghost. The wife was only illustrated with her hand holding an amulet to indicate that the wife is the only person who has the right to stop all chaos, because she has saved her marriage and the life of her husband. The illustration also hopes to convey that the Xin (trustworthiness) of Chen is necessary for marriage, and that it is more important to value the essence of marriage than being seduced by beautiful women. Through *Painted Skin*, hopefully

readers can reflect about their love life and reconsider how to better maintain their marriage.

Guo Liu is a story about a faithful woman (Yi and Ren) (loyal and kind) who committed suicide after completing the task of supporting and caring for her parent-in-law. People talked about her identity as a prostitute and attacked her with rumours, even though they knew that she had to be a prostitute to support her husband's old parents. If people show some kindness and understanding towards her, she will live. Time has changed, but women are still struggling for human rights and improving the situation. As mentioned in Chapter 2.4.5, women are also restricted by social double standards. Sometimes women even have to choose between career and family.

Here, we use some examples to talk about the status quo of women. There is a feminist Korean film "*Kim Ji-young, Born in 1982*" (2016) that re-examined many feminist arguments. This film clearly presented the unfair situation of Asian women. Some female singers and actresses said that when they read the same title book, they were attacked and bullied by male fans. Jung Yu-mi, the lead actress of the film, said that she received thousands of hate comments on social media. In order to prevent the release of the film, there is a petition asking the South Korean president to cancel the release of the film. Even before the film was released, people opposed the film by giving negative reviews. The film mentions equal pay and gender equality, which is not acceptable to Patriarchy.

We must say that gender equality still has a long way to go. Lin Yihan (林奕含, 1991-2017) is a Taiwanese writer and a victim. She was sexually abused by a tutor when she was a teenager. After she finally committed suicide in 2017, it was discovered that her experience was adapted into her first and only novel – *Fang Si-Qi's First Love Paradise*. She denied that she had been sexually abused before her death because Asian culture is not friendly to women like her. As Lin Meixun (林美熏), CEO of the Modern Women's Foundation of Taiwan, said, there were 13,000 reported sexual assault cases in 2016, but only about 4,000 cases were handled by the police. Of these 4000 cases, only about half will be prosecuted (Cai, 2017). The law is not to protect the justice of these victims, which may make more tragedies like Lin Yihan happen. Another example is the allegation of Liu Jingyao (刘静尧), a college student, who accused Liu Qiangdong (刘强东) of rape. Liu Qiangdong is a tech billionaire in China. Netizens showed great interest in this girl. After the news broke, they wanted to know everything about Liu Jingyao's appearance and background. A fake portrait of Liu Jingyao quickly spread on social media. Some male netizens even insist that this is a trap by the girl, because she wants to get money from the CEO, so the CEO is the real victim. This is unreasonable, but it does happen, and it is not uncommon in today's society. Liu Jingyao was opposed by the Chinese Internet, who called her a "slut" and "disgusting". Even Liu Qiangdong's wife was insulted by netizens. Liu Qiangdong ultimately failed to prosecute because he insisted that the incident was voluntary. Illustration-01. mainly depicts the struggle, helplessness, uselessness and distortion of today's women, guiding the audience to reflect on the

unjust women suffered. The elements of water and fire symbolize the Chinese idiom “*Shuishenhuore*” (水深火热, deep water and hot fire), which means the abyss of suffering.

Mudan Deng Ji tells the story of a woman (ghost) who dared to pursue love and tried to break through the unfair experience of ancient feudal society. The story is chosen to show that the protagonist lacks Zhi (wisdom), but it also shows feminism. *Mudan Deng Ji* is different from other stories, which describe women as victims or sacrifices. In this story, the female ghost bravely pursues her love. This encounter with the protagonist scholar Qiao is not accidental. Supposedly they have love affairs five hundred years ago. She established the encounter and adopted a destructive approach to his betrayal, which is killing the scholar. Here, we are no longer talking about her destructive methods of handling affairs, but about her spirit of rebellion, a sense of self-awareness. The story *Mudan Deng Ji* is part of the Ming dynasty collection *Jiandeng Xinhua* (New Stories Told while Trimming the Wick, 剪灯新话), which we discussed in Chapter 2.2.4. This story and the entire collection of stories have been banned for a long time in Chinese history because they show women’s unjust situation and instigate women to resist unjust feudalism. Illustration-06 seeks to encourage women who have suffered unfair experiences or lack of self-confidence to be brave to pursue their rights and realize their self-values.

4.1.4. Theme 04 Homosexuality

The theme of homosexuality is common in ancient Chinese literature, which means that homosexual culture was very popular at the time. There are also many stories in *Liaozhai Zhiyi* describing the love between the same sex. Pu Songling did not conceal his sexual attraction and desire for the characters in *Liaozhai*, he even pointed out the homosexual relationship between the characters in the beginning of the novel or in the story (Yu, 2019, p. 56). At least, ancient Chinese scholars were open to accepting homosexual culture.

This project has two stories related to this theme, *Yiquan Fuhun* and *Wang Liulang*. The story of *Yiquan Fuhun* is about a loyal dog being killed by rogues while protecting its owner from harm. The story mentions that the owner of the dog is a very beautiful man, and three rogues flirt with him and want to rape him. This story is about the Yi (loyalty) and it is also a reflection of homosexuality. It indicates that the acceptance of homosexuality in ancient society was very high, because the description was direct, and the rogues dare to rape a man in a public place during the day. The other story, the homosexuality of *Wang Liulang* is still controversial. Some people think that if the story is really about homosexuality, Pu Songling would not cover up the story that the character is homosexual. This is because he has portrayed many erotic details between same-sex love in other stories. The author of this article prefers that the relationship of this story is an obscure homosexuality. The relationship between the water ghost and the fisherman goes beyond friendship. The story depicts

the reflection of the fisherman after he knew Wang Liulang was a ghost: “He was frightened at first, but he felt they had been intimate with each other, then he was no longer afraid”. The most obvious evidence is the use of the Chinese character 狎 (Xia, to be intimate and improperly familiar with) in the story. Although the character has a different meaning from the meaning of eroticism, it still indicates an obscure expression of the relationship between them.

Nowadays, although more people bravely declare their sexual orientation in public, homosexuality is not accepted by the mainstream of Chinese culture. Some influencers even recorded Vlogs to share their cohabitation life with same-sex partners on social media. After all, not everyone can understand and accept it, so most people cover up their sexual orientation. There are about 70 million gay groups in China, but most of them just express their homosexuality in a secret way (Zhang, 2016, p. 1). It is reported that a 15-year-old boy left a suicide letter and ran away from home. Fortunately, the police finally found the boy, but the letter he wrote broke people’s hearts. He wrote: “I am gay. Surprisingly, I have never dared to say it in my life... my teachers have expressed their disgust and irony towards “gay”, I have enough for all of these. My trusted family broke into my room and asked if I was a freak...” Through the boy’s letter, we can know how society has an unfriendly attitude to people’s sexual orientation. People may not be able to express their true sexual orientation because they may be subject to insulting comments or violent attacks from people. Young people need to develop their own self-understanding abilities and be brave enough to accept and express their own differences. Thus, homosexual groups can live better in the current society and enjoy the same rights as most people. All these will cause more changes in the public’s attitudes and laws in protecting the human rights of the gay community. The public revolution in the future will be more like the red moon depicted in Illustration-02.

4.1.5. Expression, Imaginative and Connectivity

The complex ancient Chinese ghost story could not be simply interpreted and illustrated by a simple image. Therefore, a theme was selected in each story, and key points were created to illustrate the core and value of the story. In this project, the most impressive scene in the selected stories was chosen for the reimagining process. For example, in the story *Guo Liu*, the protagonist is a good wife with traditional virtues. However, these strict standards of being a good wife are not easily comprehended by contemporary audiences. In order to connect the story with the target audience, the illustration provides audiences with another point of view, that Guo Liu was a victim of the unfair feudal rule of that era. In her situation, Guo Liu has no choice but to commit suicide because she was restricted by people’s prejudice and unfair social system. The picture magnifies Guo Liu’s social constraints and pressures to reflect the desire of contemporary women who demand freedom from injustice and persecution.

In Chinese culture, there are many metaphors that convey human emotions and concepts both in literature and painting. Therefore, the use of metaphors in illustrations can better convey the meaning of the text and can also demonstrate the beauty of artistic conception (意境美) of the texts. For example, butterflies usually represent solid love or dreams in Chinese culture. These two meanings are originated from “*Liang Zhu*” (Butterfly Lovers, 梁祝), a famous tragic love story and “*Zhuangzhou Mengdie*” (The Butterfly Dream, 庄周梦蝶), the most famous story in the second chapter of *Zhuang Zi* (a 3rd century philosophical collection). The cultural value of the story of Illustration-06, *Mudan Deng Ji*, was demonstrated through the use of broken butterflies as a metaphor to depict their love and tragedy.

The illustration makes a story more impressive and gives the audience more imagination. This is because visual could quickly convey the meaning of the text, including the metaphorical meaning behind the text (Baldwin, 2020). The cultural value of a Chinese tale is abstract with literary significance. Thus, it is best to visualize the message through illustrations. Take the story of *Yiquan Fuhun* as an example, imaginative illustration allows me to reinterpret its cultural value and additional meaning artistically. Illustration-02 not only depicted the plot of the story, but also absorbed the character of the famous Chinese legendary of “Tiangou eats the sun or moon during an eclipse”. As Chapter 3.3.2 stated, people tend to notice and choose things that are more familiar with them because of the Mere Exposure Effect. Thus, even people are not familiar with the story itself, but their interest would be increased by the image. Furthermore, the image would be left in their head. The red moon symbolizes violence and (变天), a Chinese saying that a situation has become unpleasant or has changed. This is could be understood as the difficulties homosexual groups suffered and changing public’s attitude has to experience a lot.

The project categorized ten selected Chinese ghost stories according to the traditional five virtues (Ren, Yi, Li, Zhi, Xin), and it further analyzed the ghost stories with contemporary cultural values (Relationship, Suicide, Womanhood and Homosexuality) to establish a strong connection between young people and traditional culture. The illustrations provide them with a direct way to understand these virtues and themes as one of the functions of illustration is to weaken the barriers of history and language. It may make old stories more interesting and meaningful for contemporary young people.

For example, the story *Cai Shusheng* was selected not only to reflect the traditional virtue “Zhi” (wisdom), but also to contemplate on the issue of youth suicides, which is still an urgent problem in the world today. The purpose of selecting this story is to encourage people to develop a sense of social responsibility, and to be wise and humorous to face life, which is imperfect for most people and failures of life with different perspectives. It is just like the content and the upside-down manner presented by the illustration. For young people who prefer visualization over text, illustrations will be more effective than persuasive text. Importantly, its acceptance

and popularity of illustration with young people have enabled the information to spread rapidly in this digital age.

4.2. Implications for Graphic Illustrators

This project applied graphic illustration to reimagine Chinese Ghost Tales. Greater awareness of the illustration production process will help improve the development of illustrations with cultural value or traditional themes. Three of the 10 illustrations of the project won the Bronze Award of the JIA Illustration Award 2020 in August. The JIA Illustration Award is organized by the Japan Illustrators Association, the most popular professional illustrator organization in Japan. This award indicates and assures the quality of the illustrations. This subsection discusses three ways that may be applicable to graphic illustrators who wish to reshape or reimagine traditional culture.

Expression	Use visual expressions (such as graphic illustrations) to convey key ideas
Imaginative	Use metaphors to describe the cultural value of selected topics or profile ethnic groups, nations, clusters
Connectivity	The connection between the theme and contemporary people, brand and society

Table 4.2. Three creation ways of reimagining traditional culture

Expression – the key ideas of the selected topic should be expressed or enhanced through various visual expressions. Graphic illustrators can systematically explore potential elements in the topic to develop interesting visual effects or story. Well-thought-out storylines and themes can be illustrated through a series of visual expressions to convey a stronger story theme. Adding a title or slogan to the visual expression can better help the audience understand the key ideas of the topic, but the placement of the text must be carefully considered because it may destroy the atmosphere of the visual expression. In addition, painting styles, painting techniques, or patterns of past works related to the topic should also be thoroughly studied to gain potential visual exploration. In this project, I was interested in and inspired by the painting techniques of Luo Pin and Wu Daozi. Consequently, their line characteristics were studied, absorbed and applied in the ten illustrations. Last but not least, the application of colors and patterns in visual images requires careful consideration. This is because even if the audience knows nothing about the content of the illustration, they may have a first and direct impression of the illustration.

Imaginative – metaphors can effectively demonstrate the cultural value of a specific topic or description of different categories (ethnic groups, nations, clusters). Graphic illustrators can use metaphors to help them complete abstract descriptions or expressions of cultural values that cannot be directly expressed in illustrations. Applying appropriate metaphors in the illustrations can enable the audience to better

understand the meaning conveyed by the topic. Metaphor can enhance the deep meaning of illustrations and increase the audience's interest, but this requires illustrators to have a wealth of knowledge and cultural background on themes and metaphors used. Thus, illustrators must conduct further research to understand the context and identify keywords and metaphors related to the topic. I applied metaphors in this project, because I found that they are closely related to the meaning of the story and conform to the artistic conception (意境美) of the text, such as bamboos, cranes, and butterflies. They not only deliver the metaphorical meaning but also have a strong traditional national culture.

Connectivity – Graphic illustrators need to consider how to immerse their target audience in their artwork. A connection should be established between the theme and the audience, especially in traditional culture. Illustrators may want to tap connectivity through their unique perspectives and understandings. This means that the illustrator needs to consider these connections through contemporary themes from the perspective of the observer. Traditional Chinese Five Virtues (Ren, Yi, Li, Zhi, Xin) inspired me at the beginning of this project, but this connection was established by discussing the four themes of today's society. They are “Relationships”, “Suicide”, “Womanhood” and “Homosexuality”. Illustrators should guide audiences to think about themselves and follow strong connectivity to achieve the purpose of their artwork. In addition, graphic illustrators may consider how to combine traditional culture with the establishment of cultural brands. Take this project as an example, the characters in these Chinese ghost stories can be depicted separately with different personalities, more relevant cultural backgrounds and motifs. The Chinese Palace Museum (also known as the Forbidden City, 故宫博物院) can be successful in the market and attract many young fans. This is because the team at the old museum found an exciting way for young people to appreciate traditional culture. They have created new patterns in cultural and creative products inspired by traditional Chinese elements such as calligraphy, painting, and seals. They provide young people with another innovative way to appreciate the culture of thousands of years. They also inspired young people to connect with museums.

In summary, a graphic illustrator as an illustration creator can consider how to use visual art to express sensitive themes. They need to establish a connection with society by choosing appropriate topics, which have been significantly proposed and discussed in contemporary society. Illustrators should have an artistic sense to convey harsh topics and consider how these topics can contribute to society or help specific groups to live better.

4.3. Contribution to the Literature

The project conveys the main ideas of the traditional text through graphic illustrations, thus contributing to Chinese ghost literature. The ten illustrations not only express the author's feelings and understanding of classic Chinese ghost stories, but also propose a way of thinking from the perspective of young people. In addition, they are deeply rooted in the understanding of the original text, including historical background, cultural value and moral aspects. As a visual art form, illustration can also effectively promote Chinese literature, which can be proved through this project. According to Chinese mythology expert Yuan Ke's (2017) viewpoints on the importance of exploring Chinese mythological stories (including ghost stories) in Chapter 2.2.5, the contribution of graphic illustrations to the Chinese literature will be discussed here. Firstly, by increasing people's understanding, illustrations can inspire people to consider their relationship with their parents, spouses and even themselves or their attitudes towards life. Secondly, visual images enable people to enjoy aesthetic appreciation and at the same time immerse themselves in imagination through illustrations. In addition, illustrations provide people with new perspectives, enabling them to understand literary works, and let them know where to start when reading stories. Thirdly, visual art helps to show more discoveries and hints about the history behind the text. For example, after we learned about *Cai Shusheng* and *Wang Liulang*, we knew that homosexuality had begun in ancient Chinese society. The illustrations help the story convey the violence that happened in the story. Fourthly, the illustration style of this project contains many Chinese elements and features of Chinese paintings and Chinese comics, which are the embodiment of unique Chinese art. Both Chinese art and Chinese literature have strong national and unique historical characteristics, which can enhance people's understanding of national origin and national virtues.

According to Dr. Nicolae's (2015) research in Chapter 2.5, there may be a connection between Chinese ghost culture and Japanese *yokai* culture from its development to flourishing. Nowadays, *yokai* Culture attracts many fans from all over the world, and it continues to follow with its artistic and literary innovations. After completing this project, I found that Chinese Ghost Tales has potential like *yokai* tales, which can make people understand the cultural diversity and humanity reflected. The visualization of *yokai* culture makes traditional stories and characters more attractive to young people. I applied more modern themes that young people are interested in and discussed the features of characters behaviour to make text and characters more attractive through illustrations. After this project, I also confirmed that the success of *yokai* Culture is due to the visualization of the story, and its development depends on various art forms in the market (for example, online games, cartoons and movies, etc.). This is why I designed the Illustration Style Test to understand the preferences of the target audience (the younger generation), because it is of great significance for the promotion of culture and visual arts. Chinese ghost tales have a long way to go, but they have great potential to be studied. This project proves that cultural values are still relevant to contemporary people and society, and that aesthetic values are worthy of

further exploration. Regarding Chinese ghost literature as part of Asian ghost literature means that the project also contributes to Asian ghost literature like *yokai* Art.

4.4. Conclusion

The underlying significance of the project lies in highlighting the importance of ghosts as themes and carriers of creative and cultural expression. Since ghosts are considered taboo or unpopulated in the area of Chinese visual art, what makes this research unique is the subversion of this concept.

Chinese ghost culture is part of Chinese folklore culture. Ghost literature is the way people explain the world in ancient Chinese society. It is also a belief that evolved from Chinese primitive religious consciousness (Shamanism, Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism). Chinese ghost tales cannot become the mainstream culture of China because they are regarded as superstitions and the Chinese government does not encourage them. This project attempts to demonstrate the importance of Chinese ghost stories and the close connection with contemporary readers. The promotion of Chinese ghost literature is not to promote superstition, but to show readers the philosophy of life and the way to live in harmony with nature. Overall, the significance of the project can be divided into four aspects. The first aspect is to change people's perception of traditional Chinese ghost stories and show the cultural meaning and connection between ghost stories and daily life. The second aspect is to use digital graphic illustrations as a medium to reimagine Chinese ghost stories and provide readers with more perspectives and artistic value to appreciate the stories. The third aspect is to increase young people's engagement in reading Chinese ghost literature and stimulate their interest in traditional Chinese culture. The fourth aspect is to provide graphic illustrators with more creation ways, allowing them to explore traditional and cultural themes.

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