

Building up from her own personal memories, Zheng Lu Xinyuan composed her first feature as a subtle study of the representation of character interiority in cinema, centred on a 22-year-old girl whose inner world becomes accessible through the film's visual reveries.

When Muzi returns home to Hangzhou for New Year, the place at she arrives in the middle of winter is a ghost town: a dim picture of her childhood and adolescence, a place to which she no longer belongs. Avoiding her father's bright, tidy house, a world beneath which secret wounds persist, and her mother's more hospitable home, which represents abandoned womanhood, Muzi obsessively seeks refuge in the now-derelect apartment where she grew up.

Muzi's uneasy initiation into adulthood is mirrored by her return to her childhood memories, which never become palpable but are somehow projected through landscape and other characters. The opening credits are accompanied by a free-floating camera in the middle of the greenery that surrounds the family's old apartment, a reconstruction of her departure; Muzi takes her boyfriend to the old family house, trying to relive her parents' conjugality in their own bed; her young half-sister, whose innocent face is framed by the camera while she models in the school show, evokes what would have been Muzi's awareness of her leading role as the family's only child.

In fact, Muzi's identity is reimagined in other female characters: most importantly her mother, who is depicted either as lonely and out of place, or as a beautiful young woman to which the camera dedicates the attention for which she yearns. But Muzi is the one at whom the spectator looks most often, although not much is to be learned from her apparently quiet face: neither actions nor words should be taken at face value. The frequently heartless statements Muzi addresses to her lovers reveal only her fear of abandonment.

But it is in the face of Muzi's opaque look that Zheng Lu's experimentation with the camera becomes bolder as it reaches baffling dimensions. Like the film sequences reversed into negative images, the girl's interior life is turned into thunderstorm skies, night lights, the outside world seen through a car window, cave walls covered by crystals that sparkle under the light.

*The Cloud in Her Room* is an aquatic passage that Muzi traverses, like the long silent nights through which she walks alone. The veil that envelops her mind is shattered throughout the film, changed by different states of water: the ongoing rain that covers Hangzhou, the pond-like ceiling that drips, the bathtub where she lets her femininity float, the swimming pool inside which bodies turn into foetuses and are doubled up by the surface.

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