

愛在工業發展的年代

——李翰祥的《冬暖》（1969）及其自然環境的再現

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摘要

〈愛在工業發展的年代：李翰祥的《冬暖》（1969）及其自然環境的再現〉運用生態論述的分析技巧探討李翰祥藝術性極高的《冬暖》一片。李翰祥在此片中對於與人類密切相關的生態環境的描寫有著超乎尋常的複雜度與細膩，以一個高度關懷的生態整全觀看待正快速城市化的台北市區外圍的生活。這樣的美學觀其來有自，李翰祥曾經是一個畫家，他的經驗為這部片引入一股特殊的氛圍，直指佛教思想的影響。在六〇年代晚期，這部片能著眼於今日眾所關懷的人與自然界互相依存的關係，但也意味著指涉這部片與閱聽者的世界間的關係——實屬不凡。果不其然，李片所述的“自然”無可懷疑地是整部片的敘事安定感的泉源。這篇文章考量歷史的語境，論及台灣因工業化所產生的社會變遷如何廣泛地影響到人與正在轉變中的自然界的關係，以及人與人之間的關係。

關鍵詞：台灣、李翰祥、電影、生態論述、一九六〇年代

Love in the Time of Industrialization:

Representations of Nature in Li Hanxiang's *The Winter* (1969)

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Abstract

“Love in the Time of Industrialization: Representations of Nature in Li Hanxiang’s *The Winter* (1969)” uses the lens of ecocinema in order to examine Li Hanxiang’s artistic film *The Winter*. Li’s engagement with the non-human environment is exceedingly complex and nuanced, revealing a holistic ecological consciousness in his depiction of urban life on the fringes of Taipei’s urban sprawl. The aesthetic moves that Li uses both reveals his experience as a painter and imbues the film with a Buddhist ethos that offers an appealing symbiosis between human interactions and the non-human world -- and cinema’s relationship with the world -- in late 1960s Taiwan. Indeed, representations of nature provide a seemingly unquestionable source of stability to the film. By contextualizing the film within its historical context, this article demonstrates how broad scale industrial changes in Taiwan would affect the way people interacted with the rapidly changing natural environment and with one another.

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Keywords: Taiwan, Li Hanxiang, Cinema, Ecocinema, 1960s

Love in the Time of Industrialization:

Representations of Nature in Li Hanxiang's *The Winter* (1969)¹

Li Hanxiang's 1969 film *The Winter* 冬暖 was the most artistic, sophisticated, and delightful film made in Taiwan film history up until its point of release.² Yet the film achieved only modest acclaim when screened in theaters. Standard art house fare featuring impressive production values, this melodramatic love story was overshadowed in the late 1960s by the megalomaniac director's other large scale Grand Motion Picture Studio projects such as *Beauty of Beauties* (1965) that contained over 12,000 extras,³ by the Taiwan government's well-oiled film-machinery (173 Taiwan films were produced the year *The Winter* was released)⁴, and by the powerful appeal of Hollywood's skin-deep glamour. Li's film might seem to be yet another footnote in a slew of pop-culture bombardments launched throughout Asia during the cold war.



Figure 1: A promotional article for *The Winter* published in Li Hanxiang's studio publication *Movie Salon*.

- 1 The author is grateful for the inspiration and direction provided by Stephen Rust, Ping-hui Liao, Larry Lin, Angie Chau, Stephen Goforth, and for the blind reviewer's counsel. All errors are my own.
- 2 The film is based on a short story entitled "Dong nuan" 冬暖 by Taiwan writer Luolan 羅蘭.
- 3 Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis. *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): p. 44.
- 4 Lu Feiyi 盧非易. *Taiwan Dianying: Zhengzhi, Jingji, Meixue, 1949-1994* 台灣電影: 政治, 經濟, 美學, 1949-1994 (Taiwan Film: Politics, Economics, and Aesthetics). (Taipei: Yuan liu chuban gongsi shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1998). 1969 also marks the year that *guoyu pian* exceeded *Taiyu pian* for the first time in terms of total films produced.

Yet *The Winter* deserves much wider recognition. Encounters with the film today by nostalgic Taiwan film aficionados and academics demonstrate that *The Winter* contains or projects a certain affect, ethos, or aura that leads viewers to single out this particular film among the rest when viewing Taiwan cinema from the 1960s and 1970s. Peggy Chiao's authoritative text on Li Hanxiang records *The Winter* as one of Li's finest films.⁵ Eminent Taiwan film journalist and critic Huang Ren writes that *The Winter* is moving and exquisitely crafted.⁶ And in their book *Taiwan Film Directors*, Emilie Yeh and Darrell William Davis briefly describe the film as a "sad, sweet story about a mainland émigré" in which Li "exhibits a stunning, fluid studio craftsmanship in his re-creation of a vernacular, parochial Taipei."⁷ Here I analyze the film and its mystique by using an ecocritical 生態論述 approach, taking the film's representation of nature as focal point. Doing so is fitting since the film's representations of the Buddha, riverside vistas, and a notable establishing shot late in film, continually re-center the film's focus on the interrelationship between the human and non-human worlds. Moreover, the ways in which *The Winter* presents nature provides a remarkable model for both ecocinema film productions and films analyses today due to the ways it links the film's urban centers with non-human phenomena.

First, a brief summary of the film's rather straightforward love story. The film takes place in a densely populated neighborhood on the outskirts of Taipei, replete with Japanese colonial era architecture of wood and brick, and the story is initiated when Ah Chin, played by the stunning, wonderful actress Guei Yalei 歸亞蕾, arrives in town to work at a local pharmacy. Ah Chin lives among family, friends, and

5 Chiao, Peggy 焦雄屏. *Gaibian Lishi de Wunian* 改變歷史的五年 (Five Years that Changed History). (Taipei: Wanxiang tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 1993): p. 271. See also pp. 133-142.

6 Huang Ren 黃仁. "Li Hanxiang de chuanguozuo zhi lu (yi)" 李翰祥的創作之路(一) (Li Hanxiang's Road of Creations, Part 1) in *Shijie dianying* 世界電影 340 (1997): p. 132.

7 Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh and Darrell William Davis. *Taiwan Film Directors: A Treasure Island* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): pp. 44-45.

neighbors within a working class⁸ night market culture⁹ in which everybody knows everyone. It is here that Ah Chin encounters her love interest, Old Wu (Tianye 田野), who runs a small restaurant alongside the narrow bustling streets. Due to both traditional cultural boundaries and Old Wu's personal inhibitions which prevent him from openly expressing his admiration for Ah Chin, the film's two main characters *nearly* fail to express their devotion to one another.

The tension that Li Hanxiang generates despite the clear parameters of the genre -- after all, there is little question that Ah Chin and Old Wu will find true love in the end -- is remarkable. Early in the film, upon Ah Chin's arrival, Old Wu fixes his hair in a tightly framed shot that, just as we might expect in an Alfred Hitchcock film, captures Old Wu in the mirror perfectly. The scene is less a gimmick and more a gesture that conveys the director's absolute control over the filmic medium, while at the same time projecting narrative information: Old Wu is enthralled by Ah Chin. Repeatedly, Old Wu looks for Ah Chin when he sees her approaching while struggling to appear



Figure 2: Li Hanxiang captures Old Wu as he gazes into the mirror.

8 The city dwellers are described as “小市民” in Peggy Chiao 焦雄屏, *Gaibian Lishi de Wunian* 改變歷史的五年 (Five Years that Changed History), (Taipei: Wanxiang tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 1993): p.135, and as “小人物” in Huang Ren 黃仁, “Li Hanxiang de chuanguo zhi lu (yi)” 李翰祥的創作之路(一) (Li Hanxiang's Road of Creations, Part 1) in *Shijie dianying* 世界電影 340 (1997): p. 131.

9 *The Winter* fits into a tradition of films that take place in Taiwan's lively night market scene; certainly, the 2011 comedy *Night Market Hero* 《雞排英雄》 comes to mind as a recent film; more fittingly, the night market scenes in the first segment of Hou Hsiao-hsien's 2005 film *Three Times* 《最好的時光》 resonate with *The Winter* in terms of character movement, atmosphere, and tone.



Figure 3: The film's double voyeurism: 1) audience & screen, 2) actor & actress.



Figure 4: Separation, emotionally and materially.

nonchalant since he lives in an apartment attached to Ah Chin's aunt's residence. Meanwhile, Ah Chin takes pleasure in listening in on Old Wu's conversations with others. Yet the two remain separated from each other. Whenever Ah Chin and Old Wu share the camera together early in the film, there is always something that prevents their union. Taking these shots as examples (see Figure 4), a supporting pole visually divides the screen, while in the second image, a window frame bifurcates the image. Yet, not to worry. Ah Chin and Old Wu are united in the end. As they embrace, light from an alley doorway envelopes them within light while they are surrounded by darkness.

So, on the one hand *The Winter* is an artistic, albeit quaint, story of empathy and missed opportunities among its human counterparts. On the other hand,

Figure 5: *The Winter's* final scene.

Li's engagement with the non-human environment is exceedingly complex and nuanced, revealing a holistic ecological consciousness in his depiction of urban life on the fringes of Taipei's urban sprawl. Indeed, representations of nature provide a seemingly unquestionable source of stability to the film. In this study I follow film scholar Sheldon Lu's definition of ecocinema, namely: "cinema with an ecological consciousness. It articulates the relationship of human beings to the physical environment, earth, nature, and animals from a biocentric, non-anthropocentric point of view."¹⁰ At the same time, Lu's definition provides an apt description of director Li Hanxiang's depiction of nature in *The Winter*. Li's film reveals that a "biocentric approach" towards nature existed in Taiwan film as early as the late 1960s.¹¹ Since Sheldon Lu and Jiayan Mi's edited volume *Chinese Ecocinema: In the Age of Environmental Challenge* establishes a "genealogy of Chinese cinema" by presenting

10 Sheldon H. Lu, "Introduction: Cinema, Ecology, Modernity." In *Chinese Ecocinema: In the Age of Environmental Challenge*, edited by Sheldon H. Lu and Jiayan Mi. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009): p. 2. In addition, Lu writes: "the study of Chinese ecocinema specifically should be placed within the specific intellectual and socio-historical Chinese contexts that may be different from Euro-American settings in significant ways." See also: Pietari Kääpä and Tommy Gustafsson, *Transnational Ecocinema: Film Culture in an Era of Ecological Transformation*. (Bristol, UK: Intellect Ltd., 2013).

11 Ibid, Sheldon H. Lu. Note: "biocentric approach" is a term Lu uses on p. 7. Also note: Lu and Mi's volume focuses on Chinese ecocinema, including the "cinematic traditions of Greater China: mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong." Following this categorization of "Greater China," I include Li' Hanxiang's Taiwan film *The Winter*.

films made after the 1980s, I hope to contribute to this genealogy by describing a film made more than a decade earlier.¹² After all, *The Winter* depicts Taiwan's environment at a moment that could not be more pivotal in Taiwan's ecological history. Namely, the late 1960s marked the transition in Taiwan from an agrarian economy to an increasingly industrial economy, the repercussions of which are still being dealt with today. Nearly everything portrayed in *The Winter* was about to change, or was in the process of changing, in significant ways.

Peter C.Y. Chow writes, in his edited volume, *Taiwan's Modernization in Global Perspective*, that Taiwan's economy transitioned from an:

“agrarian economy dominated by rice and sugar exports in the 1950s, to exports of labor-intensive manufactures in the 1960s and 1970s, and to technological and capital-intensive products since the 1980s. By the early 1990s, Taiwan was the third largest exporter and producer of information industry products.”¹³

Furthermore, Richard Louis Edmond's article in *The China Quarterly's* special issue *Taiwan in the Twentieth Century: A Retrospective View* cites 1965 as the year in which industrialization outpaced agriculture in Taiwan's economy,¹⁴ and Dung-Sheng Chen writes in the same volume that “from 1960 to 1980 Taiwan transitioned to export-oriented, small & medium-sized enterprises, as it moved towards being a newly

12 To be clear, Lu states clearly that the “historical range” of films in *Chinese Ecocinema: In the Age of Environmental Challenge* does not “suggest that there is no ecocinema prior to the 1980s in the region of the world that has been called, perhaps problematically, ‘Greater China,’” leaving space for additional scholarship to present ecocinema works produced prior to the 1980s.

13 Peter C.Y. Chow, “Taiwan's Modernization: Its Achievements and Challenges.” In *Taiwan's Modernization in Global Perspective*, edited by Peter C.Y. Chow. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002): p. 7.

14 Richard Louis Edmonds, “Aspects of the Taiwanese Landscape in the 20th Century,” in *The China Quarterly* 165 (2001): p. 11.

industrialized country.”¹⁵

The Winter demonstrates how these broad scale industrial changes would affect the way people interacted with the rapidly changing natural environment and with one another. Chin-Chun Yi, in an article entitled: “Taiwan’s Modernization: Women’s Changing Role,” writes:

The demand for female labor by export processing manufacturers between 1966 and 1973 brought unmarried females from rural areas to join the labor-intensive factories ... These unmarried daughters tended to send back their earnings to help their brother’s education or other familial demands ... During the same period of time, the launch of the small business sector -- especially the home-based enterprise -- in Taiwan took place ... It is clear that the economic contribution of the female labor force at that time was significant both at the familial and at the national level.¹⁶

Yi’s historical account effectively describes, and helps us understand, the motivations of the fictional character Ah Chin in the opening scene as she travels from a rural setting to an urban setting in order to find employment in her Aunt’s pharmacy in the city.



Figure 6: Ah Chin travels to the city in the film’s opening sequence.

15 Dung-Sheng Chen, “Taiwan’s Social Changes in the Patterns of Social Solidarity in the 20th Century,” in *The China Quarterly* 165 (2001): p. 62.

16 Chin-Chun Yi, “Taiwan’s Modernization -- Women’s Changing Role.” In *Taiwan’s Modernization in Global Perspective*, edited by Peter C.Y. Chow. (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2002): p. 333.

So, just as the film generates a particular kind of emotional tension between Ah Chin and Old Wu, similarly the film generates tension in the opening sequence between an automobile and natural vistas; yet while the characters may be separated from one another emotionally and materially, I would like to demonstrate how people and nature are integrated cinematically in an organic, pleasant, and harmonious manner throughout the film. To be clear, if one defines representations of nature in cinema in general to solely be depictions of untouched, non-human environments, then the film actually has none: people and/or their residences inhabit every scene. With one exception, the film's single establishing shot, scenes that do not include people in the frame occur within the city, where a majority of the film takes place.¹⁷

The total number of scenes in which the non-human environment dominates the frame is only three. First, Ah Chin travels through natural scenery while sitting in the back of a delivery truck in the opening sequence; second, Old Wu walks along the river outside of town in order to find solace and contemplate his fate; third, the film presents its first establishing shot late in the film. Unlike a perfunctory landscape shot, this establishing longshot reiterates the film's subtext: people in the city are inextricably linked to the rhythms of nature, and this awareness is what inflects Li's cinematic strategies, rhythm, and pacing.



Figure 7: Ah Chin passes by a statue of the Buddha, while holding a similar statue in her hands.

17 The city is far from being presented in a singular, monolithic manner; rather, it too is divided into distinct quarters. For example, the bustling truck depot near lively traffic intersections contrasts with the night market streets and back alleys.

Semantic codes embedded in the film's opening scenes disclose that the Buddha that is in the country is also in the city. The statue both traverses and links these two spaces. In the first scene depicting the Buddha, the truck Ah Chin is travelling within passes by a large statue. After a cut, a close-up depicts Ah Chin cradling a smaller version of the same statue, a gift for her friend and love interest, Old Wu. The statue thus links the two dominant thematic spaces: the urban night market with its tight, fragmented quarters in which the camera is placed close to its subjects, and the natural environs with their open vantages in which the camera is placed further away from its subjects. Just as the Buddha exists in both spaces of the film, similarly the bifurcation between the urban and the rural is not clearly delineated -- one here and one there -- but nature permeates the space of the film and the lives of the characters within the frame.

For example, when Old Wu struggles to sell noodles in the evening during winter, Ah Chin advises Old Wu to sell onion cakes in the morning instead, since people tend to stay indoors during cold evenings. As usual, Ah Chin is correct, and customers purchase Old Wu's onion cakes in droves. And Old Wu is fond of an expression, which Ah Chin echoes late in the film to describe their relationship, which literally states: "Fish help the water, and water helps the fish" (*yu bang shui, shui bang yu* 魚幫水, 水幫魚). This chiasmus succinctly describes how everything in nature is connected in order to sustain life; thus, it is fitting that human relationships should similarly be mutually beneficial. Overall, the idea of the film is not so much that if nature is in harmony with people then things will work out fine, or that an audience should be startled into a "surprising" awareness that the human and non-human worlds are linked -- rather, quite unequivocally: the world of the urban is always already linked to the world of the natural.

Old Wu gratefully receives the miniature Buddha statue Ah Chin brings to him, and, when he prays, prays to it in his room. Later in the film, his residence and restaurant, indeed the entire block where Old Wu and his neighbors live and work,

is torn down by the state because the borough does not meet new urban planning standards. City workers arrive with their destructive machinery, and the people have no recourse.¹⁸ Old Wu walks among the rubble, and there among the ruins, among dusty half-broken bricks and shattered rafters, lies the statue of the Buddha. The statue remains intact, and Old Wu picks it up, a keepsake of what came before. The pathos of the scene contrasts with state-sanctioned healthy-realist films of the era that championed modernization projects in spite of their impacts, emotional and physical. Consider depictions of construction sites in director Li Xing's 1967 film *The Road*,¹⁹ while large scale projects, such as the creation of a dam, provide the setting for pivotal scenes in Bai Jingrui's 1970 film *Home, Sweet Home* without entirely resolving the clash between natural spaces and modernization.²⁰ *The Winter*, foregrounds its love story, yet not at the expense of the relationship between people and nature.

In moments of stress or conflict in the film, Old Wu ventures to the river on the outskirts of town. First, he meets a gang of thugs there in the dark of night to resolve



Figure 8: Old Wu's contemplation along the river.

18 Urban demolition in the film reminds one of Maoli County protesters in Taiwan today (July, 2013).

19 Stating that these films champion modernization projects is not to suggest that the films entirely lack ambiguity. For a clear, contextualized, and nuanced account of *The Road* see Guo Jun Hong, "Healthy Realism in Taiwan, 1964-80: Film Style, Cultural Policies and Mandarin Cinema" In *The Chinese Cinema Book*, edited by Song Hwee Lim and Julian Ward. (London: BFI published by Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): pp. 95-102.

20 Also see James Wicks, "Projecting a State That Does Not Exist: Bai Jingrui's *Jia zai Taibei/ Home Sweet Home*" in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 4 (2010): pp. 15-26.

the fact that they refuse to pay when they go to his restaurant; the result is a severe beating at their hands. Fortunately, Ah Chin nurses him back to health. Old Wu returns to the river later in the film (see Figure 8) to gather his thoughts after Ah Chin leaves the city in order to get married in her hometown. It is after she has left him alone that Old Wu realizes just how important Ah Chin is to him, and he regrets not expressing his feelings earlier. His thoughts are audible, presented in voice-over, as he walks along a path as the sun sets and a series of telephone poles mark his progress.

So the river is where Old Wu goes to resolve conflict. The placement of river scenes in the film conforms to the narrative pattern as a whole: nature, then urban spaces, then a return to nature, back to the city, cut back to nature to portray the passage of time, and then back to the city where the film ends with the lovers in each other's arms.²¹ The means of representation in *The Winter* is consistent: nature is encountered in the way it envelopes the human world (which is inherent to film in general, but this film maintains an awareness of this aspect), intersects with the human world, and inflects its rhythm on the human world. Thus, the way the river is edited into the film's narrative is consistent with the pacing of the film as a whole, a pacing that could be described as smooth and natural. For example, when night market stall and restaurant owners close their stalls and wheel their carts home, a tracking shot moves at the same pace as those in the frame: neither fast-paced nor slow, but in rhythm with its subject's movements. Likewise, conversations within the narrative seemingly do not move the narrative forward as if some Hollywood-style end-goal is driving the plot; rather, the dialogue creates an atmosphere, a tone, or an understanding. It's an art house mode of communication. The rhythms of time move in the film from day to night, heat to cold, summer to winter; there is time in this film for the cycles of death and new life, pain and healing, depression and joy.

Late in the film Li Hanxiang finally provides an establishing shot (and by "late"

21 See Raymond Williams, *The City and the Country*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).



Figure 9: Establishing shot, late in the film (it is a shame that the print is in such a poor condition).

I mean extremely late -- it forms the segue between the film's final two sequences). While the film previously records the journey by truck from the country to the city, and an appropriate array of establishing shots in the city document night market culture and the close quarters in which the main characters live, and while a silhouette of the local temple displays the surrounding topography as well, there is no scene that shows exactly where all of the film is taking place in longshot until this scene. In this shot, nature is not the Other. In contrast, nature is present, normal, even mundane. The images functions in terms of the narrative by displaying the setting, and it functions in terms of the emotion of the film by conveying a sense of ease, relaxation, and stillness. In the foreground, bamboo leaves slightly sway in the breeze. Neither flashy nor exoticized -- two errors prone to Taiwan's typical state apparatus that promoted either archetypes of perfection to promote Taiwan modernization, or archetypes of destitution in order to show people advantaging from state intervention in order to reenter society as successful contributors -- Li's shot presents the casual via the illusion of cinema: that what we are seeing is natural and realistic. André Bazin once wrote, in his article on *Bicycle Thieves* (De Sica, 1948), that if a film is to convey a "quality of necessity" rather than a forced, agenda-laden meaning, that "the slightest doubt cast on the necessity of the events in the scenario of a propaganda film renders

the argument hypothetical.”²² Li’s film may or may not arguably be “realistic,” but what is important to stress here is that the events presented in his film do not appear to be necessitated by a state-endorsed promotion of modernization. The establishing shot, in contrast, effectively conveys the film’s setting, emotion, and the envelopment of nature.

This leads us to perhaps the most profound quality of Li Hanxiang’s film, a rare exception in the debris of state films released in Taiwan at the time: Li’s film includes still life shots. Absolutely stunning and atypical in its era, Li’s use of this technique interestingly provides one of the closest links between Taiwan cinema of the 1960s and the Taiwan New Cinema of the 1980s with directors like Hou Hsiao-hsien who used still life shots to perfection. James Udden wrote a wonderfully entitled article: “‘This Time He Moves!’ The Deeper Significance of Hou Hsiao-hsien’s Radical Break in *Good Men, Good Women*,” which describes Hou’s mid-1990s transition to a more mobile filming style. Yet in the case of *The Winter*, one might exclaim: “This time he stays still!” In Li’s film, after a rainstorm causes Old Wu’s roof to leak, Old Wu places buckets, glasses -- whatever he can find -- to stop the water from dripping into his home. Ten consecutive static shots measure the transition from late- night shower to early-morning sunrise; first rain flows off of the rooftop in torrents, yet slowly the



Figure 10: Old Wu’s dishes collect rainwater in his home, next to a baby rattle.

22 Andre Bazin, *Bicycle Thieves*, directed by Vittorio De Sica, 1948, booklet. (New York, NY: Criterion Collection DVD, 2007): p. 44.

rain subsides, and with the absence of a musical score midway through the sequence, the sound of falling rain fades into silence as the camera captures the objects used to prevent the leaks in Old Wu's roof from damaging his belongings. Each static shot is held for approximately 3 seconds, allowing adequate time to appreciate the images. The sequence brings to mind a quotation from Ashvagosha's *The Life of Buddha* regarding right mindfulness and the middle way: "full understanding is displayed with this thought; be like the earth, and you should develop a state of mind like water, for people throw all manner of clean and unclean things in water and it is not troubled or repelled or disgusted." The water follows the course of gravity, and Old Wu simply and naturally takes steps to keep his modest quarters dry.²³

Director Li Hanxiang's (1926-1976) accomplishment with still lifes in this film might be what one would expect from a director who was trained professionally as a painter.²⁴ Li, a transnational director of more than 80 films in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China, studied painting aesthetics with Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895-1953), the world renowned artist who creatively integrated and expanded the possibilities for both Chinese and Western painting techniques. Li studied under Xu in 1946 at the Beiping University Art Academy. In order to achieve what one might describe as a still life, "painterly affect," in *The Winter*, the production of the film mandated meticulous attention to detail,²⁵ demonstrating both what is required of film crews when presenting nature and a much more general principle: that the

23 In this way, this article might not only place *The Winter* within a genealogy of Chinese ecocinema films, but also more specifically, the film can be categorized, as Lu notes, as a film that demonstrates a "return to (Buddhist) holistic thinking" -- or perhaps, this film does not "return" to Buddhist holistic thinking; rather, it captures this point of view before the increase in ecological destruction that would follow. In addition, while I recognize that Daoist aesthetics are influential within this film as well, I remain focused on the influence of Buddhism in keeping with Li Hanxiang's interjection of the statue of the Buddha.

24 Keeping in mind director Li Hanxiang's professional training as a painter, such a reading was inspired in part by considering the artistic theories in painter Mark Rothko's work *The Artist's Reality: Philosophies of Art*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

25 The film was shot in 32 days. See Li Hanxiang 李翰祥. *Yinhai qianqiu* 銀海千秋 (A Thousand Years of Moviedom). (Xianggang: Tian di tu shu you xian gong si, 1997).

understanding of nature requires careful attention, and slowing down one's pace of life, in order to conform to the rhythms of the non-human world.²⁶ The synthesis of representation strategies in *The Winter* do not serve to describe the non-human world as necessarily the antithesis of the human world, but rather the film presents a unified aesthetic in terms of what, when, and how the subjects of the camera are presented.²⁷

This essay has intended to describe *The Winter's* historical and contemporary relevance by drawing attention to the film's technical and stylistic achievements, but it is important to note that the film also maintains hegemonic attitudes and ideological positions prevalent in the restrictive socio-political era of late-1960s Taiwan. In addition, this essay is far from exhaustive -- so much remains to be explored.²⁸ Thus, the following comments are presented in the spirit of providing a foundation for further academic inquiry by first noting the film's hegemonic collusion, and second, by presenting two initial conclusions that are themselves connected to further research questions.

Li's film is far from ideal. For example, the film would advantage from a feminist or ecofeminist perspective which would challenge the subservient "natural" position women are encased within in the film. Old Wu casually mocks -- a statement taken in the film to be normative -- Ah Chin for being a woman who "typically" hangs her laundry in inopportune places. And, despite always having the upper hand in her relationship with Old Wu, Ah Chin must return home when her family asks for her return, she has to be a part of an arranged marriage that occurs off-screen, and

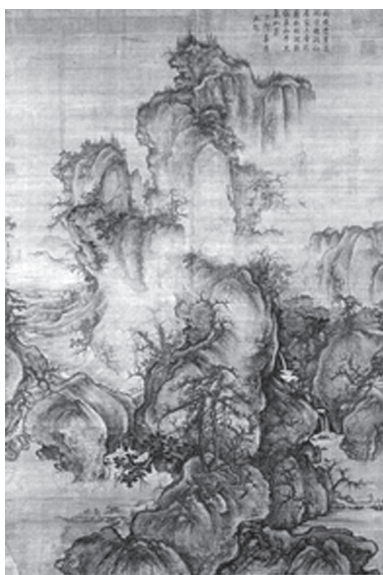
26 Scott MacDonald finds that "instances of an 'ecocinema'" can be located in works that "[offer] audiences a depiction of the natural world within a cinematic experience that models patience and mindfulness -- qualities of consciousness crucial for a deep appreciation of and an ongoing commitment to the natural environment." See Scott Macdonald, "The Ecocinema Experience." In *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, edited by Stephen Rust, Salma Monani, and Sean Cubitt. (New York: Routledge, 2013): p. 19.

27 Such a strategy also has the benefit of revealing that each environ influences the other.

28 The film's aesthetic techniques and narrative nuances could certainly be analyzed further; for example, issues surrounding the representation of *waishengren*外省人 and *benshengren*本省人 are fascinating yet not addressed in this study.

then, in the film's most melodramatic moment, when we learn that her husband was killed by a car accident, she must take care of her baby with little societal support. This patriarchal, heteronormative, helpless female motif was further pursued by Li Hanxiang, the strangest of all world cinema auteurs, who went on to make soft porn 風月 films in Hong Kong for the Shaw Brothers after his studio in Taiwan went bankrupt. The film's aesthetic and narrative shortcomings cannot be ignored, and may very well provide an even more fruitful inroad into the nature of ecocinema and its antitheses in Taiwan cinema of the time than the observations presented in this article.

Yet *The Winter* is part of a phase in Li's filmmaking when, like *Rear Entrance* (後門, 1959, Hong Kong), an emphasis on social harmony was seemingly the motivation for his filmmaking. Thus, *The Winter* is an essential film within Chinese ecocinema history for two key reasons. The first involves the film's use of perspective. By initiating his film with the journey of a truck through a natural landscape, Li brings to mind the relationship between humankind and nature inherent to traditional Chinese landscape



painting, paintings that Xu Beihong lectured on during his career.²⁹ A representative painting of the Northern Song period by Guo Xi, "Early Spring" (Figure 11), shows this relationship between people and nature. One must look very closely, even when encountering the full-scale original, to find a person in the painting: in the lower-right hand corner, one locates a fisherman. Rather than dominating the work, people comprise

Figure 11: Guo Xi's painting "Early Spring."

29 See Xu Beihong's lectures: "*Zhongguohua gailiang zhi fangfa*" (中國畫改良之方法) 1918, and "*Gujin zhongwai yishu lun*" (古今中外藝術論) 1926. I thank Chinese scholar Angie Chau for bringing these works to my attention.

one small part of a much larger universe. Similarly, the truck, early in *The Winter* (Figure 6) is a fraction of an overall composition with mountains in the background.

By viewing Li's perspectives through an ecocinema lens one encounters a "new kind of film experience."³⁰ The film offers an appealing symbiosis between human interactions and the non-human world and cinema's relationship with the world in late 1960s Taiwan.³¹ People are a part of the overall rhythms of nature which encompass and supersede the processes of the current political regime. Much like the so-called 5th generation filmmakers in mainland China who presented the appeal, permanence, and changelessness of the environment to stand in contrast to concurrent political repression in sophisticated ways, Li's film seems to abandon the stereotypical intentions of the state apparatus and presents nature as the source of stability in the film.³²

The second reason the film remains essential is its emphasis on harmony. The film is simply a pleasure because the mundane is made pleasing for the eye, and seemingly commonplace psychological experiences are stretched to a point of tension that cannot be maintained indefinitely, necessitating the types of resolution that the film provides. Most importantly, and uniquely, the film demonstrates a holistic integration of nature with humankind -- while focusing on a simple love story and without a particular ecological agenda -- in which a biocentric ethos permeates the film. Thus, *The Winter* is a significant text, created at a precipice of ecological destruction, before the state was to fall into a series of ecological crises which are being met by Taiwan's scholars and environmental activists today.

30 Macdonald writes: "The job of an ecocinema is to provide *new kinds of film experience* that demonstrate an alternative to conventional media-spectatorship and help to nurture a more environmentally progressive mindset," Scott Macdonald, "The Ecocinema Experience." In *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, edited by Stephen Rust, Salma Monani, and Sean Cubitt. (New York: Routledge, 2013): p. 20.

31 Stephen Rust and Salma Monani. "Introduction: Cuts to Dissolves -- Defining and Situating Ecocinema Studies." In *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, edited by Stephen Rust, Salma Monani, and Sean Cubitt. (New York: Routledge, 2013): p. 3.

32 See Jerome Silbergeld's work on this topic, including "Facades: The New Beijing and the Unsettled Ecology of Jia Zhangke's *The World*." In *Chinese Ecocinema: In the Age of Environmental Challenge*, edited by Sheldon H. Lu and Jiayan Mi. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009): pp. 113-128.

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