

A survey of chinese fifth generation filmmaking:blue kite and center stage movie ...

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The advent of the 1990s saw a revitalization of Chinese cinema not only within the motherland, but also in the international film landscape. It began with Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (1984), as well as Zhang Junzhao's *One and Eight* (1983), and was characterized by a unconventional storytelling methods and non-traditional approaches to cinematography, editing, mise en scene, and sound design. Among these filmmakers were Stanley Kwan and Tian Zhuangzhuang, with their films *Center Stage* and *Blue Kite*, respectively. In these productions, both directors utilize the cinematic frame to pose questions regarding the past, through enlightened use of filmic techniques.

It is first important to note that both Kwan's *Center Stage* and ZhuangZhuang's *Blue Kite* are narratives that are located within distinct eras in Chinese history. For *Center Stage*, 1930s China, while for *Blue Kite*, the 1950s and 1960s. Both films' mise en scene are informed by this peculiarity. In *Center Stage*, ZhuangZhuang utilizes authentic films from the oeuvre of Ruan Lingyu, as well as recreations, starring Maggie Cheung as the actress. In the latter, the costumes and dresses of the characters are distinctly from the 1930s, and the settings are informed by 1930s sentimentality. Likewise, in *Blue Kite*, the 1960s is fertile ground for the mise en scene, as the costumes are informed by the fashion and styles of that era.

Although the mise en scene is manipulated by Kwan and ZhuangZhuang to fit the temporal locations of their respective narratives, the cinematography is distinctly informed by Fifth Generation Chinese filmmaking. The mobile camera, for example, is used extensively in both films, moving around their principal characters non-traditionally. The lighting is also distinctly

naturalistic, and long takes are not uncommon in both *Blue Kite* and *Center Stage*.

In utilizing these filmic elements, both Kwan and ZhuangZhuang make subtle commentary on China's past, and how it significantly informs its future. This creates a post-modern slant on the history and legacy of China, as well as the intricacies of a nation that has so often found itself in contradiction.