

Film movement: china's 5th and 6th generation essay sample

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Out of all the China films, the films from the fifth generation was most well received and have clinched recognition from international film festival. Two of the acclaimed film works were Farewell, My Concubine and Raise the Red Lantern. The fifth generation of China filmmakers has also made a great advancement in China's film industry. Directors of this generation include Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuang Zhuang etc;

Being the first group of students to graduate from the Beijing Film Academy after the Cultural Revolution. This is a group of filmmakers that have gone through the most dramatic turns of lives. They lived through the Cultural Revolution, times of conflict and social upheaval.

People of the time are very much "controlled"; they have lived through an era of suppression, deprived of the right to truly express themselves. It is clearly shown that this suppression is well channel into their films. Zhang Yimou said that: "with the Cultural Revolution as the background, I want to show the fate of people... and the most valuable things in human nature that survived this recent period of Chinese history" (Cardullo, 2007).

While the batch 'suppressed' directors are so eager to tell their story, the fifth generation films bear a common element that is their controversial relationship with the past. Films are mostly based on the hardship of people in the times of the Cultural Revolution. (Paul, 2005)

Agreeing to Tang Yuankai (China Today, 2002) with regards to his point that the fifth generation filmmakers are not concern with serving the general

audience with conventional story plots but is keener on with expressing their idea of artistic human expression.

The fifth generation filmmakers were found to be more interested in making films that were targeted at delivering their idealistic form of human expression than to make films that relates and serves the audience better. The filmmakers have overlooked the considerations of whether the films will performed in the market, faulted for their obsession with modernist aesthetics at the expenses of the box-office.

All director has different notion towards their films, however the fifth generation sees a batch of directors that shares a common rejection of socialist realist tradition during the communist period. Clearly, that was often the kind of films, which tackled sensitive political issues or government's policy that are highly possible to be banned.

Film has always been a powerful medium to spread ideas and influence the mind. Films have to be scrutinized carefully before release for the general audience. The Central Film Bureau was founded in Beijing as early as December 1949, and the CCP censors supervised all films from screenplay to post production.

Filmmakers have to face the challenges of withstanding censorship and finding their true self. One great example is *The Blue Kite* directed by Tian Zhuang Zhuang, is a story about a boy name Tietou and the fate of his family in the early 1950s going through the Rectification movement, the great leap and the Cultural Revolution. A family that tries to pull themselves

together in the difficult times of china, and the whole family died tragically in the end. The movie "refuses to heal the trauma of the communist revolution". It was a personal movie that the director felt that he has to make despite knowing that it will get him into trouble. Indeed, the film bans him from filmmaking for a period of ten years. Despite the fact that The Blue Kite has won the Tokyo International Film Festival and Best film at the Hawaii International Film Festival it was being banned in China.

The Blue Kite was a movie ban in China because it was too 'real' to be featured. The period of the movie was set in the early 1950s, when the Cultural Revolution takes place. It paints a tragic picture of a family living in that era. On the other hand, To Live (1994) was another movie also set in the period of sensitive times, despite it being a story of an optimistic couple, who managed to survive the difficult times. It was also banned due to its critical portrayal of the communist government's action.

Films being banned means they will not be allowed to show in the cinemas much say being distributed and reaping profits in China. For a film to be successful it has to work beyond satisfying the director. It also have to take in other considerations such as how it can tackled the sensitive issues to speak the truth and to avoid getting banned at the same time so as to reach a wider target audiences.

The films of the sixth generation of filmmakers suffered similar fate, some of their films can only be release through pirated DVDs or online downloads reaching to a small group of audience. Movies like Summer Palace, Suzhou

River, Blind Shaft are great works but were dismissed by the CCP. Films that the audience get to watch in theatres is still under the control the economic driven desires.

As time goes by we see that filmmakers of the China film industry have come to understand the importance of striking a balance between serving the audiences and the filmmaker at the same time.

The World (2004), a film directed by the sixth generation filmmaker, Jia Zhangke. It was his only film out of the 7 that was shown nationwide in China. It is a story that speaks to the global audience, a discovery on the impact that urbanization and globalization have on the youths of China. The story revolves around The World Park in Beijing, a miniature park that has the replicas of the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel Tower.

The rapid process of urbanization have drawn people from the rural parts of China to the city in search of a better life, but it turn out that they are trapped in an estranged world. The youths work as performers, security guards in a theme park where tourists come to experience a tour of The World. Yet it is an irony that these people are being "trapped" in The World theme park, as they will never get to travel the real world. Tao, a dancer of the theme park feels that her life is stagnant and longs to go somewhere out of her workplace. Yet she finds herself confined within her mundane routine.

The movie pokes at China's young generation, how their lives are being affected in this rapid pace of urbanization. Does the fast pace of economic come with a price to pay? The previous generations work their lives in

sweatshops, padi fields now a new batch have come to the city and wears uniform and costumes to occupied the replica of a modern world.

This is a film that bears resemblance to a documentary and re-examined the rapid pace of urbanization in the modern days. The film takes a subtle and mild tone, it is not highly entertaining but it succeeded in conveying the filmmaker's message on urbanization and its effect. And most importantly it was not banned by the authority.

Zhang Yimou's latest film *Flowers of the Wars* is a film that draws man controversy. It has a budget of \$100 million, half of its dialogue was in English and it has A-list actor Christian Bale to star in it. At the end of the day we question if it should be considered a western or Chinese film. A cross-over project that shows the keen interest of director Zhang Yimou setting foot in the American box office after the *Heroes* (2004) successful box office attempt.

Grossing nearly a \$100million in China making it one of the highest gross films in the country's history. The film was well received in China but not so in the American box office. The film fared badly at the American box office, Christian Bale was not enough to charm the movie goers and raking in only \$311, 000.(Alex, 2012)

The film was undeniably a hit in the Chinese cinema. Looking at the many aspects of the film, it differs from the previous works of Zhang Yimou.

Collaboration with American make it a high budget movie that targets at the global audiences. Choice of cast also raises one's brow with use of a well

know A-list Western actor, Christian Bale accompanied by a group of unknown cast. The choice of language in the film, despite the event being a part of Chinese history was made to appeal to the global audience.

We could tell that the film was a commercial success in China and it gave one's perspective into how Zhang Yimou's film has changed throughout the years. It have moved away from the fears of being banned and more to appealing to the global audiences.

It makes us ponder how much would Chinese films evolve in the future to appeal to the global audience; will it be a form of compromise to art of Chinese filmmakers?

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