

## The Construction of Subjectivity of Chinese Cinema: An Approach from the Reciprocity Between Chinese Films and International Criticism

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**Abstract:** International film criticism reflects the current state of global reception of Chinese cinema and projects an orientalist imagination rooted in Western discourses. In this article, co-constructiveness refers to the reciprocal processes through which the development of Chinese cinema and international film criticism shape and influence each other amid cultural exchange and value conflicts. The dynamic impacts Chinese cinema's creation orientations, dissemination strategies, international image, and the construction of its subjectivity. This study analyzes representative Chinese films from different periods through content analysis based on international film criticism, to interpret their critical focuses and aesthetic expectations. It further explores how international criticism frames Chinese cinema through an orientalist perspective, while Chinese cinema maintains its subjectivity through imitation and ultimately shifts from cultural insecurity to cultural confidence. Therefore, this article employs textual analysis and historical research methods to investigate the evolving relationship between Chinese cinema and international film criticism. The findings reveal that this mutual interaction fosters integration between Chinese and global film cultures. Fundamentally, such co-constructiveness signifies a transformation of Chinese cinema's position in the global artistic and cultural order,

from passively receiving evaluations to actively participating in shaping the rules and constructing its own subjectivity.

**Keywords:** Chinese cinema; international film criticism; dissemination strategies; creative orientation; national image; co-constructiveness; subjectivity

## 1. Introduction

Chinese cinema has begun in Shanghai in 1896 thanks to the western influences. In 1905, *Mount Dingjun* (《定军山》), China's first film, was released, marking the birth of Chinese cinema. In 1921, *Ten Sisters* (《红粉骷髅》) was screened in Vietnam and other places, exploring themes of survival against adversity. In 1922, *A Lotus Rhyme* (《莲花落》) was shown across Southeast Asia, sparking a wave of Chinese cinema's expansion into the region. In 1935, *Song of the Fishermen* (《渔光曲》) won awards at international film festivals. Subsequently, films such as *One and Eight* (《一个和八个》), *Yellow Earth* (《黄土地》), *Red Sorghum* (《红高粱》), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (《卧虎藏龙》), *Hero* (《英雄》), *House of Flying Daggers* (《十面埋伏》), and more recently *The Wandering Earth II* (《流浪地球2》) which ranked among the top ten at the North American box office, as well as *Ne Zha 2* (《哪吒2》), as of May 5, 2025 ranking fifth in global box office history, have not only witnessed the century-long growth, progress, and transformation of Chinese cinema, but also demonstrate the increasing internationalization and overseas influence of China's film industry. This explosive growth has reshaped the global film market landscape and signals a new era in which Chinese cinema is moving from "survival against adversity" to "borrowing ships to go out" and finally to "building ships and sailing afar," becoming an important medium for cultural exchange.

Existing research has examined international film criticism's phased exploration of Chinese cinema. Pang (2023) found that the early film *The White Rose* (《新茶花》) was labeled as "novelty" in Southeast Asia. Lu (2016) pointed out that films such as *Song of China* (《天伦》) during the Republican era attracted attention for their depiction of Oriental ethics and spectacles. Wang (2016) revealed that films like *The White-haired Girl* (《白毛女》) after the founding of the PRC were politically interpreted at international film festivals. After the Reform and Opening-up, although films such as *Red Sorghum* gained prominence at international festivals, they fell into the dilemma of "Orientalist" misinterpretations (Zhang, 2024; Zhang, 1993). Li (2016) further analyzed the cultural decoding bias of Zhang Yimou's films in North

American dissemination. Lau (2007) and Liang (2021) focused on the commercial strategies and over-typification critiques of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Yin & Tao (2021) emphasized the industrial aesthetic breakthroughs and cultural discount challenges in *Ne Zha*. Xie & Jin (2021) found that public attitudes towards China differ between developing and developed countries; in the latter, viewers focus more on the values and belief systems expressed in films. This finding suggests that Chinese movies need to take into account local cultural and political contexts when entering different countries and regions in order to adapt to the expectations and preferences of different audiences. In the study of narrative techniques, Western scholars pay attention to how Chinese cinema conveys cultural and social information through storytelling. Choudhary (2019) proposed a multi-modal film style model including visual, auditory, and compositional attributes beyond mere other than features.

Most existing studies adopt a unidirectional perspective, focusing on the influence of international film criticism on Chinese cinema while overlooking their mutually constitutive relationship. They have yet to systematically reveal the dynamic evolution of Chinese cinema from passive cultural output to the construction of cultural confidence in the international film criticism environment. Based on this, this study focuses on two core issues: first, how to break through the traditional unidimensional perspective of international film criticism and trace the co-constructiveness between Chinese cinema and international film criticism throughout the century-long history of Chinese film; second, how Chinese cinema strategically adapts to transition from passively accepting Western evaluations to actively constructing cultural subjectivity.

The dimensions of international film criticism involved in this study include the professional film critic system, the technologized evaluation system of streaming platforms, and non-professional critics. It encompasses film festival criticism at international A-level festivals such as the Berlin International Film Festival and Cannes Film Festival, reviews in mainstream international media like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, streaming platform reviews influenced by YouTube comments and big data algorithm recommendations, as well as grassroots discourse on platforms like IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes.

However, the study's sample focuses on internationally influential blockbuster films, which can outline the macro trajectory of Chinese cinema's global outreach, but

neglects niche art films outside the international mainstream, leading to an insufficient explanation of the strategies of "underground films" in independent overseas festivals. Moreover, the study's focus on Western mainstream media discourse for international review analysis is insufficiently to deconstruct the regional differences in Southeast Asian Chinese-language media and Central and Eastern European socialist bloc film criticism, potentially weakening the multidimensional representation of the co-constructive relationship between Global South film criticism perspectives and Chinese cinema.

## **2.The Beginnings of Chinese Cinematic Subjectivity under International Criticism**

In 1840, following its defeat in the Opium War and the signing of *the Treaty of Nanjing*, China was transformed into a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society and integrated into the global capitalist system. This period saw an influx of foreign capital and Western colonial culture. In 1896, the first "Western movie theater" opened in Shanghai's Xuguan Garden, marking the advent of the Chinese film industry. Cinema quickly gained popularity as a new form of entertainment, and the liberalization of markets and growing consumer demand attracted both domestic and foreign investment. This influx of capital fostered the growth of Chinese cinema, leading to the emergence of companies such as the Commercial Press and Tianyi Company, which propelled the industry's early development. However, despite strong market potential, foreign enterprises monopolized theatrical resources. The evolution of early Chinese cinema thus reflects the broader struggle between local cultural expression and Western hegemonic influence within a colonial context. As Gramsci observed, ruling classes often secure ideological dominance through subtle cultural assimilation rather than overt force. By the mid-1920s, foreign capital had consolidated its control over China's film market, establishing six cinema operating companies, managing over thirty theaters, and maintaining more than forty foreign film distribution agencies. Hollywood studios like Warner and Paramount set up distribution networks in China, integrating production, distribution, and exhibition into a nationwide system.

International film criticism significantly influenced Chinese cinema by encouraging localized creative adaptation. *The Malaya Tribune* observed in its 1915 review of *The White Rose* that "The Chinese idea of a play differs considerably from

the Western notion of tragedy.” This critique prompted *The White Rose* to reshape the French novel *The Lady of the Camellias* into a narrative centered on the Sino-Russian War and patriotic themes, culminating in a happy ending that aligned with traditional Chinese aesthetics. On the distribution front, international critics’ emphasis on “Chineseness” led film promoters to reinforce national identity in marketing strategies. Blasey’s release of *The White Rose* emphasized “Chinese capital investment,” “Chinese actors,” and “Chinese storytelling,” using bilingual subtitles and an English title to facilitate cross-cultural accessibility. Similarly, Tianyi prioritized “promoting Chinese civilization” and established a network of 18 theaters in Nanyang, where ticket prices for *The Sorcerer and the White Snake* (《白蛇传》) surpassed those of contemporary Western films.

Regarding international image construction, positive foreign critiques helped position Chinese films as distinctive cultural expressions. *The White Rose* was hailed by *The Straits Daily* as “a new departure in the cinematograph world,” while *West Chamber* (《西厢记》) received praise from *The Times* as a “quiet, fresh, and special work of China” during its screenings in Britain and France. Such evaluations satisfied Western expectations of Chinese cultural uniqueness and simultaneously reinforced the national identity of overseas Chinese audiences through Chinese-language press narratives emphasizing Chinese participation in these productions.

### 3. International Criticism and Ideological Narratives in Early PRC Cinema

In April 1956, the state officially adopted the policy of “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend” to promote scientific and cultural development. In response, the Film Bureau declared that, while maintaining policy guidance, production studios and creators would be granted greater artistic autonomy, reducing prior excessive interference and fostering creative initiative. This more open environment spurred the first boom in Chinese cinema, resulting in representative films such as *The White-haired Girl*, *The Lin Family Shop* (《林家铺子》), *The New Year's Sacrifice* (《祝福》), *Battle on Shangganling Mountain* (《上甘岭》), *Li Shuangshuang* (《李双双》), *The Opium Wars* (《林则徐》), *The Song of Youth* (《青春之歌》), and *Five Golden Flowers* (《五朵金花》). These works reflect the effective encouragement of creative enthusiasm through state cultural policies.

Marxist ideological theory points out that culture and art, as an important part of the superstructure, are essentially ideological tools used by the ruling class to

protect their interests and consolidate their power. Their dissemination process inevitably reflects the class struggle and power struggles of a specific historical period. The formation of the Cold War intensified global political confrontation, and ideological output became the dominant force in the overseas dissemination of Chinese films. International film reviews thus interacted with Chinese films in a complex manner against this backdrop.

In the early years of the People's Republic of China, international film festival awards prioritized positive artistic and ideological expression. The socialist camp's favorable reception of Chinese films' political themes encouraged filmmakers to emphasize ideological content and socialist values. Soviet media promotion further legitimized Chinese cinema internationally, reinforcing this focus. However, market demands also shaped creative choices. For instance, the 1936 New York screening of *The Song of China* featured a revised happy ending—replacing the original tragic conclusion—to appeal to Western audiences, highlighting themes like filial piety and family harmony. This adaptation illustrates how early Chinese cinema negotiated cultural content to suit foreign markets, revealing a reciprocal influence of international audiences on Chinese film production.

Early Chinese films were primarily disseminated within the socialist bloc, capitalizing on ideological alignment for initial overseas exposure. Gradually, their reach extended to broader international platforms. In 1956, China participated in 17 international film festivals, including Cannes and Venice, either formally or informally. In non-socialist countries, Chinese films resonated with left-wing cultural groups due to their distinct national narratives. For example, the 1958 Hong Kong leftist film *The True Story of Ah Q* (《阿Q正传》) won the Silver Sail Award at the Locarno International Film Festival, with Italian critic Ugo Casiraghi praising its portrayal of Ah Q as “a typical representative of the lower classes in China.” Support from leftist critics facilitated the film's wide dissemination, illustrating the cross-cultural appeal of Chinese national narratives. Through differentiated dissemination strategies, Chinese cinema sought to expand its influence across diverse ideological and cultural contexts.

International film criticism plays a crucial role in shaping the global image of Chinese cinema. Within the socialist bloc, ideological support affirmed the political content of Chinese films, enhancing their cultural legitimacy and positioning them as representatives of socialist culture. In non-socialist countries, Chinese cinema

attracted attention through its distinctive national narratives; for instance, *The Butterfly Lovers* (《梁山伯与祝英台》) was praised by Uruguayan audiences for its “an excellent and poetic film, with beautiful colors, delicate expressions, and an Oriental style,” highlighting its artistic and cultural appeal. However, early efforts to meet market demands sometimes resulted in cultural distortion. A *New York Times* review of *Song of China* noted that “the subtitles are more Chinese in flavor than the performances,” underscoring the challenges of cultural translation. This tension reveals the need for Chinese cinema to balance cultural authenticity and market adaptation in constructing its international image.

Before the reform and opening-up, international evaluations of Chinese cinema evolved from viewing it as a cultural curiosity centered on national style to interpreting it through ideological and political lenses, with strong recognition from the socialist camp. Feedback from international critics prompted Chinese cinema to continually adjust its dissemination strategies concerning national identity, realism, and ideology. Simultaneously, Chinese cinema’s overseas presence encouraged critics to broaden their understanding of Eastern film. This dynamic interaction in a cross-cultural context shaped the early international image of Chinese cinema and laid the groundwork for deeper exchanges between Chinese cinema and global film criticism, jointly constructing the historical trajectory of cinematic cultural exchange.

#### **4.Global Encounters and Cinematic Subjectivity in China After Reform and Opening Up**

After reform and opening up, Chinese cinema underwent significant transformation. The liberation of thought and cultural revival inspired filmmakers to modernize cinematic language. The fifth generation of directors, influenced by the “cultural root-seeking” movement, integrated national history and folk imagery to create a distinct aesthetic that brought Chinese cinema widespread Western attention. In the 1990s, with the rise of a market economy, film production diversified, leading to a divergence between artistic and commercial cinema. International dissemination began through major European film festivals. Sixth-generation directors shifted focus to marginalized groups, while Hong Kong and Taiwanese filmmakers combined Eastern aesthetics with universal themes, broadening cross-cultural engagement.

During this period, Chinese cinema achieved notable international success. Influenced by Italian neorealism and the French New Wave, fourth- and



fifth-generation directors—such as Xie Jin, Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, and Tian Zhuangzhuang—produced films like *King of the Children* (《孩子王》), *The Well* (《老井》), and *Hibiscus Town* (《芙蓉镇》), which explored human nature and history, driving an aesthetic transformation. Zhang Yimou's *Red Sorghum* (1988) won the Golden Bear at Berlin, the first mainland Chinese film to receive an A-class festival award. Subsequent accolades included *The Story of Qiu Ju* (《秋菊打官司》) (1992) winning Venice's Golden Lion, *Farewell My Concubine* (《霸王别姬》) (1993) the Palme d'Or at Cannes, and *The Women From The Lake of Scented Souls* (《香魂女》) (1993) another Golden Bear at Berlin, significantly raising Chinese cinema's global profile. Meanwhile, Hong Kong and Taiwanese directors—Hou Hsiao-hsien, Wong Kar-wai, Tsai Ming-liang, and Ang Lee—garnered international recognition for works like *City of Sadness* (《悲情城市》) and *In the Mood for Love* (《花样年华》), with Ang Lee's cross-cultural films bridging East and West. Actors such as Gong Li, Ge You, and Zhang Manyu also earned international awards, further enhancing the global influence of Chinese-language cinema. Despite market and cultural challenges, Chinese cinema has established a diverse international dissemination system and made significant inroads into global film discourse.

International film critics often frame Chinese cinema within a binary opposition, viewing it either as subversive expression or as an instrument of the system. This narrow lens pressures filmmakers to navigate between these extremes. Festival selection mechanisms favor films with strong folkloric elements and distinctive symbols, prompting a trend of “pseudo-folklore” that detaches these elements from their original contexts and reduces them to cultural performances for international consumption, thereby weakening their critical impact. However, Chinese directors are not merely passive. Zhang Yimou, for example, employs “mimesis” to align with Western aesthetic expectations while embedding critiques and preserving creative autonomy, emphasizing the dignity and vitality of grassroots Chinese people. Critics like Vincent Canby praised *Red Sorghum* as “an allegory but still possessed of the power of social realism,” while Hal Hinson noted that *Raise the Red Lantern* (《大红灯笼高高挂》) “advances politically rather than dramatically.” This strategic creativity challenges the reductive evaluation by international critics, asserting the diversity and independence of Chinese cinema beyond Western-imposed norms.

International film festivals, as influential nodes in global cultural networks, often shape the image of the “acceptable Other,” risking the stereotyping and



categorization of Chinese cinema. Films with exotic themes tend to receive greater attention, while realist works are marginalized. For example, in 1996, critic James Berardinelli interpreted the closed family system in *Raise the Red Lantern* as a metaphor for China's national institutions, viewing the character Songlian as a symbol of individual resistance against authoritarianism. This reading reveals deeper social realism and cultural power dynamics beneath the surface narrative of concubine rivalry and patriarchal oppression. While such criticism exposes political metaphors, it also reinforces dissemination biases shaped by festival selection mechanisms. In response, Chinese cinema has adopted a multi-faceted dissemination strategy: domestically, the introduction of Hollywood films stimulates market competitiveness; internationally, filmmakers collaborate with Hollywood to leverage its resources and assert greater autonomy, challenging the dominant global cultural gatekeeping and reclaiming control over the international circulation of Chinese films.

International film reviews have often framed Chinese cinema in a reductive manner, categorizing it as either anti-establishment or an extension of the state, overlooking the nuanced adaptations filmmakers make within a multicultural context. The emphasis on “pseudo-folklore” films has reinforced simplistic stereotypes of Chinese culture abroad. For instance, political readings of Zhang Yimou's films by critics from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*—while insightful—have entrenched the perception of Chinese cinema as primarily political. Nonetheless, Chinese cinema actively reshapes its international image through creative agency. Zhang Yimou's focus on working-class narratives offers a cultural perspective distinct from Western interpretations. Simultaneously, domestic industry reforms and growing international collaborations have showcased the complexity and vitality of contemporary Chinese cinema, gradually dismantling stereotypes and fostering a more nuanced global understanding.

Over the past two decades since reform and opening-up, Chinese filmmakers have navigated global audiences' interest in Chinese narratives while seeking cultural identity within the framework of international film festivals. During this period, Chinese cinema not only expanded the global influence of Chinese culture but also gained valuable experience for deeper industrialization and international integration. In the 21st century, following China's accession to the World Trade Organization, the film industry has fully embraced market-oriented reforms. Consequently, Chinese cinema faces intensified international competition and shifting capital dynamics,

marking a new phase in its engagement with the global film criticism system.

### 5.The Marketization of Chinese Cinema in the 21st Century Under Global Criticism

At the turn of the 21st century, China's film industry faced a pivotal moment shaped by institutional reform and globalization. After a severe market downturn in the late 1990s, China's accession to the WTO in 2001 accelerated reforms toward industrialization and marketization. The government facilitated this shift by revising Film Administration Regulations and easing co-production restrictions, redirecting the industry from cultural export to industrial growth. Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (《英雄》) (2002), with a 250 million yuan budget, became a commercial blockbuster, earning \$177 million across 47 countries. BBC's Jonathan Ross praised it as "a beautiful and beguiling film that transcends the martial arts genre, moving beyond mere action and violence into the realms of poetry, ballet and philosophy." Simultaneously, smaller art films gained international acclaim: *Peacock* (《孔雀》) won the Silver Bear (Berlin), *Still Life* (《三峡好人》) the Golden Lion (Venice), *A Simple Life* (《桃姐》) the Best Actress Award (Venice) and Golden Horse Award, while the Chinese-foreign co-production *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) secured four Oscars. This period marked Chinese cinema's rise in global recognition and its deepening integration into international markets, gradually asserting an independent cultural voice beyond Western frameworks.

Zhang Yimou positioned *Hero* as a global Chinese blockbuster, aligning its visual style, emotional expression, and values with Hollywood to achieve universality. International critics have acknowledged this vision; for instance, Roger Ebert praised the film's aesthetic beauty and compared its multi-perspective narrative to Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), highlighting its exploration of heroism and subjective truth. Such recognition encouraged Chinese filmmakers to adopt globalized creative strategies aligned with international aesthetic norms. However, the film also faced criticism for promoting a discourse of sovereign unity, distorting history, and overlooking Emperor Qin Shi Huang's tyranny. This critique underscores the challenges Chinese filmmakers face in balancing universal values with local historical and cultural nuances. In response, Chinese cinema has begun to reflect on its creative approach, seeking to integrate Hollywood's industrial production model while avoiding one-dimensional cultural portrayals. The industry is thus striving to balance

globalization and localization to produce more diverse and nuanced content.

*Hero* employed a market-oriented, industrialized dissemination strategy, integrating pre-production planning, promotion, and collaborative workflows. This model of “replicable and sustainable” cultural production has driven the international spread of Chinese cinema and enhanced its global influence. Recognition from international critics of its industrialized approach has bolstered confidence in adopting similar production and distribution standards across Chinese films. However, critiques highlight that *Hero*’s success does not equate to a fully healthy film industry ecosystem. While Hollywood-inspired commercial strategies have elevated production quality, they have also constrained the diversity of Chinese cultural expression. This underscores a key challenge in China’s industrialized dissemination: the pursuit of commercial success risks content homogenization and cultural dilution. In response, Chinese cinema is increasingly diversifying its dissemination strategies, emphasizing local cultural specificity to achieve deeper and broader international engagement beyond industrial models.

International reviews of *Hero* have shaped a nuanced global image of Chinese cinema. The film’s visual spectacle and industrial-scale production showcased China’s technical and production capabilities, elevating its international status. However, critiques of its values and historical portrayal raised questions about the cultural depth and creative stance of Chinese cinema, challenging its global image. In response, Chinese filmmakers have increasingly emphasized indigenous cultural values, authentic storytelling, and avoided cultural distortion aimed at international markets. By enhancing artistic quality and cultural depth, Chinese cinema seeks to convey a more profound cultural narrative, challenging one-dimensional international critiques and fostering a richer, more authentic global image.

## 6.The Construction of Subjectivity in New Era Chinese Cinema

Since surpassing Japan in 2012 to become the world’s second-largest film market, China’s film industry has increasingly aligned with national cultural strategy. Following the Belt and Road Initiative, the industry shifted from rapid expansion to qualitative improvement, with policies emphasizing the global dissemination of China’s cultural soft power. Institutional measures—such as tax incentives, technical subsidies, and international co-production agreements—have matured, marking a transition from market-driven to policy-driven development. Since the 19th National

Congress of the Communist Party, “cultural confidence” has become a central national ideology, further reinforced by the 2016 *Law on the Promotion of the Film Industry* (《中华人民共和国电影产业促进法》). This shift reflects Chinese cinema’s move away from dependence on Western genres and standards toward proactive cultural construction and value articulation.

International recognition of China’s advancements in film production techniques and visual effects has driven ongoing technical improvements in Chinese cinema. Simon Abrams, writing for Roger Ebert’s website, praised *The Wandering Earth* for skillfully blending Cixin Liu’s novel with American sci-fi disaster elements to create a “visually dynamic, emotionally engaging” film with a distinct Chinese identity. Similarly, *Time* magazine highlighted China’s transformative impact on the global film industry through major investments by firms like Dalian Wanda, Alibaba, and Tencent. Such acclaim acknowledges China’s progress in production scale and industrial standards, motivating further development. However, international critics have also pointed to weaknesses in plot depth and character development, prompting Chinese cinema to reflect on the limitations of relying solely on technical prowess. In response, filmmakers have increasingly emphasized narrative innovation, cultural expression, and empathetic storytelling, drawing on multicultural influences to achieve cross-cultural resonance. The recent focus on themes like the “community of shared destiny” exemplifies this creative approach, blending national identity with global perspectives as a positive response to international critique.

Recent films such as *The Wandering Earth*, *Ne Zha*, and *League of Gods* (《封神》) have gained international attention through streaming platforms, showcasing the cross-cultural appeal of Chinese mythology and indigenous narratives. This has expanded dissemination channels for Chinese cinema. However, algorithm-driven evaluation on these platforms often reduces Chinese films to simplified “national images” or “cultural labels,” undermining their diversity and historical depth by framing them as consumable spectacles or genre products. Facing pressures of cultural misinterpretation and ideological constraints, Chinese cinema must balance national narrative goals with global audience expectations. In response, it emphasizes communal aesthetics, addresses global themes, and leverages collectivist values—particularly the “community of shared destiny”—to foster international empathy, promote cross-cultural dialogue, and refine dissemination strategies.

International film reviews present a nuanced evaluation of Chinese cinema,

shaping its complex global image. While films like *The Wandering Earth* have been praised for their visual effects and production scale, underscoring China's technical progress, critiques of narrative depth and scientific accuracy reveal persistent challenges in cultural expression. In response, Chinese cinema is actively refining its creative and dissemination strategies by deepening cultural themes—particularly the “community of shared future”—and promoting cross-cultural dialogue. Its dissemination approach increasingly incorporates communal aesthetics and global issues to strengthen cultural resonance. These efforts mark a shift from localized storytelling toward a more engaged role in global cultural discourse, gradually constructing a richer, multidimensional international image.

Through this reciprocal feedback process, Chinese cinema has matured into a more diverse and market-responsive production model amid globalization. Simultaneously, international cinema has acknowledged the structural shifts in the global film market driven by China's rise. This evolution—from early marginalization to recognition of Chinese cinema's cultural depth and technological innovation—illustrates the dynamic interplay between international film criticism and Chinese filmmaking. As global cinematic aesthetics continue to evolve, Chinese cinema is poised to move beyond a mere export product to become an integral participant in the global film community, playing a more prominent role in the international landscape.

## 7. Conclusion

The development of Chinese cinema increasingly reflects a reciprocal relationship with international film criticism. International critiques have prompted Chinese filmmakers to refine their creative approaches, market strategies, and cultural export methods. Conversely, the rise of Chinese cinema has begun to reshape international critics' perspectives and evaluation standards, as Chinese films move beyond stereotypical portrayals. This mutual influence fosters deeper integration between Chinese and global film cultures. Ultimately, this dynamic marks Chinese cinema's transition from passive subject to active participant in shaping global cultural frameworks.

This paper examines the interactive evolution between international film criticism and Chinese cinema, identifying five key stages of mutual construction. Initially, localization and dissemination through the Southeast Asian market shaped a

discourse of national identity in international criticism. During the pre-reform era, ideological polarization compelled Chinese cinema to merge realism with political expression. Post-reform, fifth-generation directors challenged the “Oriental spectacle” by embedding national historical reflection within Western aesthetic frameworks using “mimesis strategies.” At the turn of the 21st century, the rise of martial arts blockbusters linked Chinese cinema to global markets, driving a shift from artistic expression to industrial operation. In the past decade, industrial and “communal” aesthetics have fostered global value resonance, with international criticism evolving from technical appraisal to recognition of Chinese values like collectivism. Amid ongoing global cultural restructuring, this reciprocal dynamic offers fresh insights into Chinese cinema’s international dissemination and its emerging role in shaping global film standards.

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