

Changes in Story Structures and Cultural Language Patterns in Chinese and American Hero Films: From "Transcendence" to "Transgression"

Dr. Clara M. Whitfield

Centre for Translational Health Research, Eastbridge University, Canada

Dr. Tobias F. Krüger

Institute of Experimental Pharmacology, Rheinberg Medical University, Germany

Submission: 25.07.2024;

Acceptance: 04.10.2024;

Publication: 23.12.2024

Abstract:

This study compares how hero stories have changed over time in Chinese and American movies. It does this by using Deleuze's affect theory and Rancière's idea of the distribution of the sensible to look at paradigm changes and how cultural discourse works. The study shows that American superhero films have moved away from the "transcendence" paradigm and toward self-deconstruction, supporting individualistic values while criticising the systems that support them. On the other hand, Chinese hero films have moved from a "sublime" to a "transgressive" style. By disrupting the established conventions of traditional collectivist narratives and the preexisting order of the sensible, they explore diverse possibilities in the relationship between the individual and the community. However, these kinds of investigations are often limited by certain culturally-specific discourse boundaries. The way stories are told in Chinese and American heroic films has changed over time. This changes not only the way films look, but it also shows how cultural power is shifting and how dialogue can happen in a globalised world. This research gives us a fresh way to think about how Chinese and American films reflect cultural exchange and helps us understand how the heroic story is changing in modern times.

Keywords: Heroic Narrative; Affect Theory; Distribution of the Sensible; Cultural Discourse.

1 Introduction

The heroic story has been an important part of film studies for a long time because it helps people from different cultures communicate. As Chinese and American films have grown, the creation of heroic characters and the development of story structures have gone in different directions, influenced by each other but still having their own characteristics. In the United States, most superhero films follow a "Transcendence" model, which uses myths and personal stories of salvation to show certain cultural ideals (Kuang, 2022). Chinese hero films, on the

other hand, have been going beyond the traditional "sublime" paradigm as a result of globalisation, creating a "Transgression" trend. This trend not only disrupts the established distribution of the sensible—a framework jointly constructed by narrative conventions, heroic imagery, and value systems—but also initiates a systematic reconstruction across three dimensions: aesthetics, narrative, and ideology (Demydenko, 2025; Xu & Chen, 2024).

In the past few years, many different theories have been used to compare Chinese and American hero films. These theories include culture semiotics, narratology, and postcolonial theory. The results show that the two films have very different value systems, ways of making images, and aesthetic preferences. For example, from the point of view of cultural semiotics, visual elements like costumes are seen as signs of power and cultural identity in heroic images. This shows that Chinese and American cultures have different ideas about how to make heroes and how to make art look good (Lu, 2021). There are differences in how stories are told and how values are shown between Chinese and American films. Chinese films often use historical detail and regional settings to show heroic stories within the context of national destiny, while American films prefer linear stories to show universal values (Zhao & Chsing, 2024). From a postcolonial theoretical perspective, the implicit cultural hegemony and ideological interactions underlying heroic narratives reveal profound divisions between China and the United States in cultural politics and discursive power structures (Xu, 2023). Furthermore, from a feminist viewpoint, American hero narratives usually emphasise individual freedom and independence, whereas Chinese works place greater emphasis on familial bonds and social harmony, reflecting differences in gender concepts and underlying social values (Yang, 2025). From an audience reception perspective, divergent audience responses reveal how distinct cultural logics shape emotional identification and value expectations, further confirming the cultural specificity in aesthetic preferences and conceptual acceptance (Yan, 2023). Although these results are useful for future comparative research, more research is still needed to fully understand the philosophical reasons and cultural logic behind changes in narrative paradigms and to build theoretical frameworks that connect small-scale bodily experiences to large-scale cultural politics.

This study wants to move this line of research forward by using Gilles Deleuze's "affect theory" and Jacques Rancière's "distribution of the sensible" as its main theoretical frameworks to look closely at how story structures have changed over time in Chinese and American heroic films. This research suggests that "affect," a bodily force that comes before feeling, is the small way that heroic films affect how people see things and might even mess up normal sensory orders. On the other hand, the "distribution of the sensible" refers to how heroic stories plan and solidify cultural visible orders at a larger level. When looking at the artistic politics of the

heroic story, these two ideas are like two sides of the same coin. They are always interacting with each other, which is what drives the movement of narrative paradigms. This study's case will be developed in three ways using this theoretical lens. First, it will look at the "Transcendence" paradigm of American superhero movies and how it changes and breaks down over time. Second, it will look at the "Transgression" themes of Chinese heroic films and the problems that come with them. Lastly, it will look at how Chinese and American patriotic films compete with each other culturally and where they might go in the future in light of globalisation.

2 Theoretical Framework: The Philosophical Lens of Deleuze and Rancière

2.1 Deleuze's Affect Theory and Heroic Narrative

In Deleuze's postmodern philosophical framework, his theory of affect is very important. Deleuze's theory sees "affect" as a bodily force that goes beyond emotion—a natural, pre-cognitive, and pre-conceptual force that moves things. It shows up as the body's ability to create and change, which is activated when it changes states (Deleuze, 1990). From Spinoza's logical point of view, this idea comes directly: affect is not only a form of bodily force, but also a key factor in how strong or weak the ability to act is (Spinoza, 1994). By talking about affect, Deleuze frees people's existential experiences from the ways of thinking that are used in traditional psychology and affective theory. Instead, he points them toward a state of being that is dynamic and in flux.

Spinozist philosophy is used by Deleuze to criticise Hegelian dialectics and offer a positive view of the world. He doesn't agree with traditional ways of thinking that are based on negative, like opposition and contradiction. Instead, he builds a theoretical horizon based on how "power, affect, and desire" interact. This point of view changes the way we think about society, people, and how they live their lives. It frees the differences in the world from traditional qualitative categories like substance, genus, or function, and instead makes "degrees of power" the main measure (Deleuze, 1988). This philosophical shift not only challenges the deeply rooted dualistic structures in Western thought, but it also gives modern affect theory a strong theoretical base.

The Heroic Narrative can be seen as a way to create affect when Deleuze's theory of affect is applied to film analysis. Through the display of physical strength, the heroic figure awakens the audience's untapped emotional potential, which changes how they see reality. Superpowers are shown in American superhero movies as an example of this affective production. It's not just about making spectacles; it's also a cultural practice that sets heroes apart from regular people by showing them different "degrees of power." One example is Steve Rogers' change from a weak young man to a super fighter in Captain America. This change not only makes

him physically stronger, but it also completely changes his social identity and way of life.

In Deleuze's affect theory, the two sides of power—active and passive—are emphasised. He says that "absolute substance" in Spinoza and the Question of Expression means "infinite power" that has both "infinite activity" and "infinite passivity" (Deleuze, 1988). This point of view gives us a new way to look at heroic figures: heroes are both doers of things (active force) and people who are affected by events (passive force). The heroic image goes beyond the perfect divine archetypes of traditional mythology because of this dialectical relationship between activity and passivity. This opens up more complex and humanly nuanced story possibilities.

2.2 The Distribution of the Sensible and Aesthetic Politics by Rancière

Rancière's idea of the "distribution of the sensible" is "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it" (Rancière, 2004). To put it another way, the sensible determines who can be seen and heard in public and what voices and images can become public (Meng Yan, 2022).

Rancière saw art, especially film, as a way to change the sensible order, which has very important political effects (Lu Xinghua, 2012). He divides historical imagery into four groups. The first, called "history as paradigm," is based on heroes, saints, and major events, and everything revolves around grand historical narratives to create strict hierarchical relationships. The second type is still narrative-based, but it moves from grand history to more romanticised storytelling; the third type breaks the harmony between how bodies are arranged and how scenes show what is happening, letting different things exist in the frame; and the fourth type looks to the future, realising "the principle of equal life for all subjects" by redistributing the sensible (Rancière, 2019).

For Rancière, "social revolution is inherently the offspring of an aesthetic revolution." Before there can be real change, people's views of the world must be changed, which involves changing how the sensible things are distributed. This point of view gives us important information about the cultural politics of heroic film: the development of Heroic Narrative is not just a change in style; it also affects how people think about things in society. When minor characters in traditional heroic stories, like regular soldiers or citizen heroes, become main characters, and when life experiences and values that were not shown before become visible on screen, this naturally challenges and rebuilds the sensible order that is already in place. (Wu Shiqi, 2021).

2.3 Combining theories and coming up with new ways to use them

Deleuze's affect theory and Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible, though rooted in distinct philosophical traditions, form a profoundly complementary yet tense relationship within the discourse of "sensory politics." affect theory provides us with a micro-level toolkit for analysing how film, through bodily forces (the degree, speed, and rhythm of force), acts upon audiences to shape the "intensity" and "potential" of perception (Lu Chunhong, 2024). The idea of the distribution of the sensible, on the other hand, lets us look at how these emotional effects are organised, directed, or limited within a common order of "visibility," which has larger cultural and political implications. The two are similar in this way: affect is the "body-material" base on which the sensible is distributed and can be skewed; the sensible is the "socio-semiotic" framework for affective forces, taking in their effects but also being able to be broken through by their excess power. More importantly, there is a creative conflict between them: Rancière's "politics" is still connected to subjective "contestation" and the "distribution" of the shared world, while Deleuze's "affect" focuses on a non-subjectified, deterritorialized "becoming" force that can go beyond any established sensible order (Li Xiaoru, 2019). This tension is very much like the constant battle in heroic films between the "Transgression" urge and the "established" norms. The development of heroic films shows how affective forces and the structure of the distribution of the sensible have always been interacting with each other.

In this connected theoretical framework, the "Transcendence" paradigm can be seen as upholding traditional power structures by highlighting the huge difference in power (the main difference between heroes and regular people) and enforcing a strict distribution of the sensible (heroes' increased visibility). "Transgression" challenges established order by making power less powerful (the hero's weakness and universality) and more democratic in how the sensible things are shared (putting together different heroic figures). According to Zhang Chen and Li Xinwei (2024), this theoretical synthesis not only links the micropolitics of the body to the macropolitics of culture, but it also shows that new affective forces that break through current frameworks often lead to new aesthetic innovations in cultural change.

3 The "Transcendence" Model in American Superhero Movies and How It Has Changed Over Time

The story structure of American superhero films has changed many times, showing how the genre has changed to fit different eras' social and cultural norms and public psychology needs. However, the theme of "Transcendence" (superhumanity) has always been at the heart of it (Zhang, 2021; Şima & Taşkale, 2022). This transcendence quality shows up in characters' supernatural skills as well as in the way films are structured and how culture works. By looking

at the history and text of American superhero films, we can clearly see how they changed over time, from solidified mythology to self-deconstruction.

3.1 Structures in myths and cultural rules

Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey" story pattern is at the heart of American superhero movies. This model focuses on the hero's journey from the normal world into the extraordinary, going through trials and changes before coming back with the power to save everyone (Campbell, 2008). This story logic is used by iconic characters like Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man, and it shows the main difference between heroes and regular people at the story level. Choi wrote in *American Superhero Films: Myth, Journey, and Cultural Transformation* that these heroes have a whole "system of codes" that supports their mythical qualities through their costumes, gear, and symbols (Choi, 2014).

It's interesting that transcendent nature is always linked to technological ideas in American superhero movies. According to research, these films have a "dualistic view of science"—they believe that technology can solve problems for people, but they are also very afraid that technology could make people hate each other. This conflict is especially clear in the Batman series: Bruce Wayne fights crime with high-tech tools, but he has to watch out for the moral problems that technology can cause (McSweeney, 2014). This conflicted view of technology is what makes American superhero films more than just a source of hope; they show a deeper cultural depth. (Żaglewski, 2019).

3.2 Put imagination and critical reflection in order.

When used as a political metaphor, American superhero films show certain cultural values through "imaginings of order." As Superman represents "mainstream superhero identity transformation" (Smith & Goodrum, 2011), Batman represents "alternative superhero and national identity" (MacFarlane, 2014), and Spider-Man represents "grassroots hero and responsibility identity" (Zornado & Reilly, 2021). These superheroes are all symbolic of different parts of American national identity. After 9/11, American superhero films changed from stories about individual heroes to stories about heroes working together as a team. This was done to reflect a society's worries about safety and order, as well as to help rethink national identity and global order (Griffin, 2022).

At the same time, American superhero films have moved beyond simple affirmations of mainstream values, showing more and more signs of self-criticism and story deconstruction (McSweeney, 2014). For example, M. Night Shyamalan's "Unbreakable" shows through plot twists that the presence of "supervillains," who are the opposite of superheroes, is essential for the rise of superheroes. This story breaks down the traditional idea of good and evil, suggesting instead a dialectical logic in which heroes and villains define each other. Studies in this area

say that "heroes and villains are like yin and yang in Tai Chi—they live together by being opposites." If you don't have evil, you can't have goodness, and the other way around. This point of view not only fits with the idea that anti-hero characters question traditional morals as "counter-hegemonic narratives" (Zamani et al., 2021), but it also fits with studies that look at how good and evil are mutually constitutive in cultural metaphors (AlAwadhi & Dittmer, 2020), re-telling the superhero myth in a very deep way.

The periodization and characteristics of this evolution are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Periodization and characteristics of American superhero films

Period	Representative Works	Key Characteristics	Cultural Context
1938–1977 (Formative Period)	<i>The Superman Series</i>	Pioneering Transition from Comics to Film	Simple Binary Oppositions Against the Cold War Backdrop
1978–1988 (Pioneering Era)	<i>Superman</i> (1978)	Establishing the Genre Paradigm	Post-Vietnam War Reflection and Reconstruction
1989–2001 (Exploration Era)	<i>The Batman Series</i>	Diverse stylistic exploration	Identity Anxiety in the Early Globalization Era
2002–2011 (Prosperity Era)	<i>The Spider-Man Trilogy</i>	Global Market Expansion	Post-9/11 Security Crisis
2012–Present (Alliance Era)	<i>Marvel Cinematic Universe</i>	Cross-Media Collaboration and Self-Deconstruction	Community Imagination in the Digital Age

3.3 The aesthetic politics of American hero films, from feeling to being able to see what's sensible

Using Deleuze's theory of affect to look at American superhero films shows how they create unique emotional spaces by playing with differences in power. When heroes and villains fight, it's basically a clash of different levels of power. These clashes not only move the story forward, but they also make viewers feel very strongly about what's happening in their bodies. In the famous scene from *Avengers: Endgame* where Captain America lifts Mjolnir, the camera moves from close-ups of his tense muscles and determined eyes to a wide shot that shows his thunderous momentum. This is made stronger by soaring music and a sudden drop into quiet, which creates strong kinetic energy and emotional tension. At this very moment, the audience goes through exactly what Deleuze called "affect": a change in their psychological state and a leap in their physical abilities. It comes before named emotions like "excited" or "moved," and

it looks like the strength of the force itself.

Based on Rancière's theory of the distribution of the sensible, the development of the American superhero film genre shows changes in the way things are seen in the movie theatre. Early works mostly followed Rancière's first type of history—the "paradigmatic history" centred on heroes, where all the parts of the story were organised in a strict hierarchy around their great deeds. With the popularity of anti-hero films like *Deadpool* and *The Joker*, the genre started to question the norms of "Transcendence" by using disruptive effects. In *Joker*, Arthur Fleck's crazy laughter, twisted dance moves, and skinny body don't create an effect of the sublime or power, but rather a "weak force" that mixes pain, shame, and release. The film forces viewers to look into the mind of a failure and a crazy person through shaky camerawork, harsh colour palettes, and a constant focus on physical pain. This kind of emotion doesn't make the line between hero and human clearer; instead, it blurs it, even leading viewers to identify with a "descending" process of becoming that isn't heroic. Putting mentally ill people and people on the outside of society—figures that are often missing or stereotyped in traditional stories—at the center of the story and giving them human depth and complexity, the film itself completely changes how the sensible parts of superhero movies are usually distributed. Voices that were once ignored, chaotic inner lives, and antiheroic characters become more visible. This opens up more story possibilities and turns the genre into an important place for modern cultural discussion, where people talk about justice, power, and identity in many different ways.

In American superhero movies, the "Transcendence" paradigm creates a lot of internal tension. On the one hand, it reinforces heroes' privileged status through power differences; on the other hand, it constantly shows how this privilege is based on discourse by criticising itself. Its destructive path mostly shows up on two levels: on the affective level, it undermines the certainty of the "Transcendence" body by showing heroes' weakness, illness, and failure, which leads to negative, passive bodily experiences; on the level of the distribution of the sensible, it changes the order of who should be seen and who can be heard by giving antiheroes and under-represented characters narrative authority and visual centrality. In a globalised world, it is precisely this inherent tension and paradox that helps American superhero films keep their cultural influence while also giving us a way to compare and talk about Heroic Narratives from other cultures.

4 The idea of "transgression" in Chinese heroic films and how it's explored

Examining the evolution of Chinese hero film through the lens of Deleuze's affect theory and Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible reveals a clear trajectory of transition from the "sublime" paradigm to the "Transgression" paradigm (Hu Yaohui, 2024; Nie Xinru, 2024; Zhang Xiaofei & Jin Shengjun, 2023). This shift represents not only an innovation in

aesthetic style and narrative patterns but also a reconfiguration of established cultural sensibilities within the globalization context (He Wei & Han Zhenjiang, 2019; Wang Kaiqiong, 2013). By challenging the distribution of the sensible in traditional collectivist narratives and diversifying affective production mechanisms, Chinese superhero films seek new expressive possibilities amid the tension between the individual and the collective (Li Yang, 2011; Wu Sai, 2023).

4.1 The Tradition and Transformation of Collectivist Narrative Distribution of the Sensible

The traditional paradigm of Chinese heroic film has been profoundly shaped by specific historical and cultural contexts, establishing a solid order of the sensible. Within Rancière's theoretical framework, this order dictates which images may be seen, which voices may be heard, and the spatial relationship between heroes and the masses. Revolutionary historical films produced between 1949 and 1980, such as *Dong Cunrui* (1955) and *Sons and Daughters of Heroes* (1964), constructed a quintessential "paradigmatic history" narrative: heroic figures were fully integrated into grand national narratives, with their individual life experiences subordinated to collectivist values. This narrative model established a strict distribution of the sensible, where heroes' visibility was entirely determined by their symbolic function within historical processes, often downplaying or obscuring personal emotions and inner conflicts (Wang Ban, 2002).

Notably, from the 1980s to the 1990s, Chinese films produced a series of works that continued the traditional heroic paradigm while incorporating characteristics of the new era. For instance, *Wreaths Under the Mountains* (1984), depicting the Sino-Vietnamese War, preserved the tradition of revolutionary heroism while also revealing, to some extent, the inner world of its heroic figures. The *Decisive Battle* series (1991-1992) recreated the Liberation War with epic grandeur, shaping heroic images of numerous military commanders within its grand narrative. While preserving the basic framework of traditional Heroic Narrative, these works began experimenting with limited expressions of individual emotion, laying the groundwork for subsequent transformations.

Since the Reform and Opening-up era, particularly in the new century, China's film industry—driven by marketization and globalization—began reconstructing the distribution of the sensible order within traditional heroic narratives. This transformation was not a simple linear replacement but unfolded as a complex interweaving of traditional and modern, collective and individual, local and global elements. *The Flowers of War* (2011) serves as a profound text illustrating this transformation (Nie Xinru, 2024). The film focuses its narrative on a group of women—prostitutes—who occupy the most marginalized and even stigmatized

positions within traditional grand narratives, alongside a Western embalmer who initially seeks to protect himself during the war's early stages. Amidst the smoke-filled streets of Nanjing—an environment pushed to its limits—these characters evolve from passive objects swept by historical currents and subjected to others' gazes into active agents who sacrifice themselves for righteousness and rescue female students (Song Tao, 2012). Within Rancière's framework, this represents a radical "reconfiguration of the distribution of the sensible," It shattered the established boundaries of "who qualifies as a hero," granting visibility and audibility at the cinematic center to those humble individuals—previously "invisible" and "inaudible" in national narratives—and their radiant humanity. This redefined the narrative logic of courage, sacrifice, and dignity (Wang Yanjun & Ren Hongling, 2014).

Entering the 2010s, with the rapid expansion of China's film market and the clarification of national cultural strategies, the affective restructuring of the Heroic Narrative deepened further, manifesting along two distinct yet occasionally converging paths. One involves the "reheroization of the individual" and the "seamless integration of mainstream values," while the other pursues the diversification and popularization of the heroic lineage.

On the one hand, military action films like the *Wolf Warrior* series (2015, 2017) and *Operation Red Sea* (2018) maintained their focus on individual agency while simultaneously reaffirming "mainstream values" within a global context (Timothy Bevis & Lü Wen, 2014). *Cold Blade* (the protagonist of *Wolf Warrior*) is unquestionably a highly individualistic superhero, whose character, emotions, and agency are profoundly personal. Yet the film deftly anchors this formidable individual agency within the grand framework of national strength and ethnic dignity. Each manifestation of individual heroism ultimately becomes a tangible embodiment of national power and humanitarian spirit (Ren Lingjun & Duan Jifang, 2021). This constitutes a new protocol for the distribution of the sensible: individual visibility is not only permitted but actively amplified, yet the ultimate narrative orientation and source of legitimacy remains the powerful national community. Within this order, the relationship between the individual and the collective transcends simple subordination, evolving into a symbiotic dynamic of "representation" and "being represented"—superheroes embody the strength and will of the community, while the community provides the legitimate stage for their actions (Qin Lanjun, 2013).

On the other hand, the scope of heroism has expanded dramatically from battlefields and epics to all spheres of daily life, bringing ordinary people—previously unrecognized as heroes—into the spotlight of visibility. In *Dying to Survive* (2018), Cheng Yong transforms from a profit-driven businessman into the "God of Medicine" who procures affordable drugs for patients. His heroism stems precisely from his ordinariness, flaws, and even the legal gray

areas of his actions (Wen Yuanzhong, 2021). Through this character, the film grants powerful visibility to the struggles and dignity of ordinary patients navigating the vast medical system. Similarly, *The Bravest* (2019) focuses on firefighters' dedication and sacrifice in extreme disasters, directing public attention toward this perpetually endangered yet often overlooked professional group. Such films no longer portray unattainable superhumans but instead strive to uncover the radiance of universal humanity from ordinary, even humble, origins—an endeavor that can be seen as an effort toward the democratization of the distribution of the sensible (Cai Xi, 2022).

In recent years, this restructuring process has exhibited heightened self-awareness and hybridity. The sci-fi blockbuster *The Wandering Earth series* (2019, 2023) places the logic of "collectivism" on a global scale concerning humanity's survival. While the heroes in the film represent a "community with a shared future for mankind" transcending national borders, the pivotal moments driving the plot remain the difficult choices made by named individuals like Liu Peiqiang and Liu Qi and their emotional bonds. It successfully elevates China's traditional "family-state symbiosis" narrative into a three-tiered community framework of "family-state-humanity," seeking to establish the visibility and audibility of Chinese values within global discourse (Nie Xinru, 2024). Films like *Along journey home* (2022), however, adopt a diplomat's perspective, abstracting the "nation" into a protective force safeguarding citizens thousands of miles away. Heroic action manifests in how this protection is actualized and concretized—a subtle reconfiguration of the relationship between Heroic Narrative and national storytelling in the new era (Qin Lanjun, 2013).

Table 2: Periodization and characteristics of chinese heroic films

Period	Representative Works	Key Characteristics	Cultural Context
1949–1980	<i>Dong Cunrui</i> (1955), <i>Sons and Daughters of Heroes</i> (1964)	Exemplary historical narratives; heroes integrated into national narratives; individual subordination to the collective; distribution of the sensible determined by symbolic function	Socialist Revolution and Construction Period
1981–2000	<i>Wreaths at the Foot of the Mountain</i> (1984), <i>The Great Decisive</i>	Continuation and limited innovation of traditional heroic paradigms, maintaining a collectivist tone while	Early Reform and Opening-Up: Artistic Innovation and

Period	Representative Works	Key Characteristics	Cultural Context
1981–2011	<i>Battle series</i> (1991-1992)	beginning to explore the inner world of individual heroes	Ideological Liberation
	<i>The Flowers of War</i> (2011)	Distribution of the sensible Reorganization, marginal groups becoming heroes, breaking traditional boundaries, making the invisible visible	Marketization and globalization as driving forces
2012–2020	<i>Wolf Warrior series</i> (2015, 2017), <i>Operation Red Sea</i> (2018), <i>Dying to Survive</i> (2018), <i>The Bravest</i> (2019)	Re-heroization of individuals and integration with mainstream values, diversification and democratization of the hero archetype, symbiosis between the individual and the collective	Expansion of China's film market and clarification of national cultural strategy
2021–Present	<i>The Wandering Earth series</i> (2019, 2023), <i>Along journey home</i> (2022)	Narratives of global community, three-tiered community of home-nation-humanity, and the concretization of heroic actions under state protection	Global issues, community with a shared future for mankind

Note: This table outlines the transformation of Chinese heroic film from traditional paradigms to modern diversification, highlighting shifts in the distribution of the sensible order and the interactive relationship between heroic imagery and cultural contexts.

4.2 The Affective Dimensions of "Transgression" Exploration: Body, Power, and Potential

Deleuze's affect theory offers a micro-bodily political lens for analyzing the "Transgression" practices in Chinese heroic film. Affect, as a bodily force experienced prior to emotion, serves as the key mechanism through which Chinese heroic film breaks traditional narrative conventions and establishes novel perceptual connections with audiences. Regarding the "demythologization" of the heroic body and the transformation of affect production, bodies in traditional heroic narratives are often symbolized, becoming ideological carriers. Since the new century, however, Chinese heroic films have exhibited a trend toward the

"demythologization" of the heroic body. Characters like Leng Feng in the *Wolf Warrior* series (2015, 2017) and the special forces team in *Operation Red Sea* (2018), while still serving collective missions, exhibit significantly altered bodily representations. Directors emphasize the physicality and vulnerability of heroic bodies through handheld cinematography, rapid editing of close-up combat sequences, and close-ups of injuries. This visual strategy no longer produces the pure, sublime emotions of traditional heroism but rather a Deleuzian "affect"—the real-time shifts in power relations within the body under extreme conditions (Nie Xinru, 2023; Pan Yue, 2023). Audiences no longer encounter perfect heroes detached from their own experiences but instead share with the characters a bodily experience of struggling through pressure, pain, and crisis.

A more groundbreaking "Transgression" practice emerges in the portrayal of marginal heroes, revealing their affective potential and sensory reconfiguration. In *Dying to Survive* (2018), Cheng Yong begins as an ordinary health supplement vendor whose initial motivation is purely economic gain. Through numerous everyday details, the film depicts how an imperfect, ordinary person can be driven to extraordinary moral courage under specific circumstances. From Deleuze's affect theory perspective, Cheng Yong's transformation did not stem from pre-existing heroic qualities but rather from an ongoing process of strengthening his bodily power and agency through encounters with other characters—a shift from passive to active forces (Huang Xiaohui, 2013). This affective production mechanism disrupts the traditional distribution of the sensible within heroic narratives. It grants a secular, even morally flawed individual heroic visibility, thereby reconstructing public perceptions of "who can become a hero."

4.3 The Aesthetic Politics of "Transgression" Practices and Their Discursive Boundaries

The "Transgression" explorations in Chinese heroic film are not without constraints. Its innovative practices consistently operate within specific cultural discursive boundaries, forming unique patterns of negotiation and strategic maneuvering. Specifically, new mainstream blockbusters demonstrate a renegotiation of the distribution of the sensible. Sci-fi genre films like the *Wandering Earth* series (2019, 2023) achieve a "Transgression" departure from traditional heroic narratives through visual spectacle and narrative structure. Through the collective rescue model of "wandering with the Earth," the films blend traditional Chinese rural sentiment with global catastrophe narratives, constructing an affective pattern distinct from Hollywood's individual heroism. In *The Wandering Earth 2*, Tu Hengyu's digital life project and Zhou Zhezhi's human civilization preservation plan form a polyphonic narrative, disrupting the distribution of the sensible dominated by singular value orientations. This narrative

arrangement grants screen space to representatives of diverse values, embodying Rancière's third historical form where "heterogeneous elements coexist within the frame" (Rancière, 2019). However, this "Transgression" element is ultimately integrated into a higher collectivist value framework, where the affective experience of individual heroism ultimately serves the ultimate goal of preserving the human community (Li Daoxin, 2022).

The "Transgression" explorations in Chinese heroic film also reveal distinct discursive boundaries and cultural negotiations, particularly evident in new historical war films like *The Battle at Lake Changjin* (2021). On one hand, the films employ cutting-edge audiovisual technology to recreate the brutality and shock of war, generating intense physical impact on an affective level. Wu Wanli's journey from rural youth to soldier also partially illustrates individual psychological transformations amid warfare. Yet this affective production and personal narrative remain strictly confined within the framework of nationalist storytelling. Heroic sacrifice is imbued with unquestionable historical legitimacy, while the complexity of individual emotional experiences yields to the construction of collective memory (Li Daoxin, 2022). This narrative strategy reveals the limits of "Transgression" elements in Chinese heroic film—it may innovate in aesthetic form and affective mechanisms, yet its core value expressions must still adhere to specific cultural-political boundaries.

The animated film *Ne Zha* (2019), however, achieves a more metaphorical form of transgression through mythological reinterpretation. The film's central proposition—"My fate is mine, not heaven's"—generates a powerful affective force of modern individual consciousness through *Nezha's* defiance of divine destiny. This affect of resisting predetermined fate and self-definition represents a quintessential "becoming" force within Deleuze's framework, shattering the static archetype of traditional mythic characters. Yet this seemingly radical declaration of individualism is ultimately skillfully integrated into the framework of familial values and social recognition, *Nezha's* rebellion ultimately aims to gain acceptance from the people of Chentang Pass, and the realization of his individual value still requires validation from the community (Shen Wei, 2020). This narrative strategy vividly illustrates a defining characteristic of "Transgression" practices within the Chinese cultural context: while challenging tradition, it must still seek reconciliation with mainstream values.

The "Transgression" exploration in Chinese hero films is fundamentally a struggle over the distribution of the sensible—who can be seen and what experiences deserve to be told. From Deleuze's affect theory perspective, this process manifests as the hero's body returning from symbolization to materiality, and the affective production mechanism shifting from singular sublimity to diverse complexity. Based on Rancière's theory of the distribution of the sensible, this "Transgression" act challenges the established order of visibility within traditional

heroic narratives, granting marginalized heroic figures and experiences a space for expression on the silver screen.

However, the "Transgression" practice in Chinese hero films maintains a delicate equilibrium between innovation and discipline, individual expression and collective values, global perspectives and localized stances. This balance serves as both a cultural strategy for Chinese film within globalization and a reflection of the complex value negotiations within contemporary Chinese society. The "Transgression" nature of Chinese hero film is neither a simple rejection of tradition nor a blind adherence to Western models. Instead, it represents a creative transformation within specific cultural boundaries, offering an illuminating case study for understanding the dynamics of cultural discourse and its reconstruction in the era of globalization.

5. Cultural Discourse Dynamics and Narrative Paradigm Contrast

By analyzing the narrative paradigms of Chinese and American hero films, two interrelated yet fundamentally divergent evolutionary paths become discernible. Employing Deleuze's affect theory and Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible as a unified critical lens, this chapter systematically compares and analyzes the "Transcendence" and "Transgression" paradigms across four core dimensions: affect production, distribution of the sensible, cultural logic, and cultural dynamics within globalization. This reveals the underlying cultural discourse struggles and future trajectories.

5.1 Differentiation in Affect Production: Absolute Power vs. Relational Power

Within Deleuze's philosophical framework, affect manifests as the transformation of bodily forces, serving as the microfoundation through which Heroic Narratives engage audience perception (Dinić-Miljković & Dinić-Miljković, 2021). Chinese and American superhero films exhibit fundamental divergences in their affective production mechanisms, constituting an aesthetic demarcation between two narrative paradigms (Zhao & Chsing, 2024; Li, 2012).

The core of affective production within America's "Transcendence" paradigm lies in the performance and deconstruction of "absolute power" (O'Sullivan, 2016). Its classic model generates affective experiences of the sublime, awe, and reverence by presenting an essential chasm in the "degree of power" between heroes and mortals (Singh, 2014). *Captain America's* serum-enhanced perfect physique, Thor's thunder-summoning divine power, and Spider-Man's superhuman agility are all encoded as a priori, near-divine absolute power (O'Sullivan, 2016). This affective production aims to stimulate audiences' yearning for and identification with Transcendence power (Nakamura & Graham, 2017).

Yet its evolutionary trajectory reveals profound self-deconstruction: from Batman's exploration of trauma and paranoia to Joker's focus on "weak power" and pathological bodies, American superhero film has developed a negative affective production targeting its own mythology (Mokrišová & Verčík, 2022). By revealing heroes' vulnerability, failures, and internal contradictions, it actively dismantles the myth of "absolute power," shifting affective experiences from pure sublimity toward more complex, hybrid states blending empathy, discomfort, and critique (Xue et al., 2023).

In contrast, the affective production of China's "Transgression" paradigm emphasizes the generation and negotiation of "relational power." Rather than establishing an absolute, a priori hierarchy of strength, it focuses on the processes of power's activation, growth, and transformation within specific social relationships and ethical contexts (Zhao & Chsing, 2024). The power displayed by Leng Feng in *Wolf Warrior* and the team members in *Operation Red Sea* is invariably intertwined with brutal collective missions and physical trauma. Cheng Yong's heroism in *Dying to Survive* is not innate but emerges gradually through his encounters with the patient community—shifting from passivity (driven by self-interest) to agency (fighting for life). *Nezha's* declaration, "My fate is mine, not heaven's," derives its emotional power from his struggle and rebellion within the intricate web of familial, societal, and divine destinies. Thus, the "Transgression" affect in Chinese hero films is a dynamic, emergent force within relational networks. It invites audiences not to marvel at absolute transcendence, but to experience the stirring resonance of individual potential ignited within specific ethical-cultural frameworks, resonating with the collective (Zhao Jingjing, 2022; Zhao & Chsing, 2024).

5.2 The Game of Distribution of the Sensible: Deconstructing Privilege and Reconstructing Boundaries

Within Rancière's theoretical framework, Heroic Narrative transcends mere emotional impact; it constitutes a politics of the distribution of the sensible that structures the "order of visibility" (Lü Feng & Wang Xinzhu, 2023). Chinese and American heroic films employ divergent strategies in allocating heroes' visibility and navigating the relationship between the individual and the collective.

The distribution of the sensible within America's "Transcendence" paradigm centers on "individual privileged visibility," evolving from consolidating to deconstructing this privilege (Zeng Fengjuan, 2017; Cai Minyu, 2016). Its traditional model strictly adheres to Rancière's first historical figure—the "history as exemplar"—placing superheroes at the center of the sensible world and granting them absolute narrative authority and visual focus. However, its critical evolution manifests in the persistent questioning of this privileged position. *Deadpool* breaks the fourth wall, mocking the conventions of the Heroic Narrative (Zhao Yuanqi & Jiao

Xinyue, 2025); The Joker resolutely trains its lens on the "surplus" cast aside by the system, forcing society to confront the pain and madness rendered "invisible" in traditional superhero films. This reconfiguration of the distribution of the sensible aims to shatter the established order of hero/mortal and center/periphery, constituting a radical democratization practice within the framework of individualism (Ma Qianhui, 2017).

China's "Transgression" paradigm, in its distribution of the sensible, is dedicated to "expanding visibility within communal boundaries" (Zhang Minghao & Chen Xuguang, 2019). Its transgressive nature does not seek to subvert the collective-centered order of sensibility but rather to enrich, expand, and negotiate this order from within. It breaks the singular image of the "all-powerful, all-knowing, all-sacrificing" hero and the rigid narrative conventions of "sacrificing the self for the greater good" (i.e., the old "pattern") in traditional collectivist narratives. This allows more diverse heroic figures (such as the persistent Gu Zidi, the ordinary Cheng Yong, and the rebellious Nezha) and more complex individual experiences to gain expressive visibility. However, this expansion of visibility operates within clearly defined discursive boundaries. In the *Wandering Earth* series, no matter how great an individual's sacrifice, its value must ultimately be anchored in the survival of the human community (Dong Ying, 2019; Song Gaoxi, 2020); In *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, individual growth and emotions are ultimately integrated into the grand construction of national memory (Zhou Changyu, 2023); Nezha's rebellion ultimately finds its resolution in gaining acceptance from family and community (Huang Xijun, 2019). Thus, the distribution of the sensible in Chinese heroic film constitutes a "reconstruction within boundaries." It revitalizes traditional narratives by introducing heterogeneous elements, yet ultimately upholds a higher-level, harmonious communal affective order (Dong Ying, 2019; Song Gaoxi, 2020; Huang Xijun, 2019).

5.3 Cultural Logic and Globalization Dynamics

The aesthetic divergence between Chinese and American superhero films is rooted in deep-seated cultural logics (Liu, 2024; Gao et al., 2025). The evolution of America's "Transcendence" paradigm reflects the critical and reflective tendencies inherent in its individualistic culture, with its deconstructive drive stemming from the continuous interrogation and renewal of its core value (individual heroism) (Dittmer, 2011; Nangimah, 2021). In contrast, China's exploration of the "Transgression" paradigm reflects its cultural negotiation process within globalization—seeking to reconcile traditional collectivist values with modern individual consciousness. This represents not a complete rupture with tradition, but a creative transformation that "builds by breaking" (Gao et al., 2025; Kong, 2025).

In the era of glocalization, this divergence in cultural logic evolves into a contest of cultural identity within the global context (Kong, 2025). American superhero films deconstruct

traditional values through "anti-hero" archetypes, reflecting profound societal self-reflection on cultural identity. Leveraging their formidable global reach, they seek to establish a universal grammar for the global Heroic Narrative. Chinese film, meanwhile, actively explores unique expressions of "Chinese-style heroes," preserving local cultural roots while integrating internationally recognized narrative languages (Gao et al., 2025; Kong, 2025).

From Deleuze's affect theory perspective, the construction of cultural identity is fundamentally a reconfiguration of "power arrangements" (Li, 2011). Through distinct affective production mechanisms, Chinese and American hero films activate different layers of audience bodily experience: the American model tends to generate intense sensory affect through spectacular visual spectacles, while the Chinese model elicits deep emotional affect through nuanced emotional resonance. These two affective models coexist and compete within the global cultural market, collectively enriching human emotional experience and cultural imagination.

However, it must be acknowledged that this competitive process exhibits "asymmetry." Hollywood's mature industrial system and global distribution network maintain its dominant position within the power structure (Chan, 2025). This asymmetry is equally evident in the depth and freedom of "transgression." American superhero films can deconstruct their own paradigms (e.g., *Joker*) to reach philosophical and socio-critical levels, rendering their "transgression" more subversive; whereas the transgression in Chinese hero films must innovate within boundaries defined by mainstream values and market forces. Their "breaking" often extends only to aesthetic and narrative techniques, frequently concluding with "assimilation" rather than fundamental ideological challenges (Li, 2011; Kong, 2025).

5.4 The Aesthetic Revolution and Political Potential of Heroic Narrative

Rancière emphasizes that "social revolution is inherently the offspring of an aesthetic revolution" (Timothy Bevis & Lü Wen, 2014). In this sense, the narrative paradigm shift in Chinese and American hero films carries not only aesthetic significance but also profound political potential. When the Heroic Narrative disrupts traditional hierarchical structures and once-marginalized figures and voices gain centrality on screen, a new distribution of the sensible order emerges (Ma Rui, 2020).

American superhero films' focus on antiheroes and Chinese hero films' emphasis on ordinary citizens both challenge traditional orders of the sensible to varying degrees. While these challenges may not fully subvert mainstream cultural power structures, they do expand the boundaries of cinematic visibility, creating space for diverse cultural expressions (Timothy Bevis & Wen Lü, 2014). From Rancière's perspective, this fine-tuning of the sensible order serves as a prelude to political transformation—only when people can see different possibilities

and hear diverse voices does change in the real world become imaginable. The international success of films like *The Bombing 2* achieves cross-cultural resonance precisely through narratives that "unite through opposition," demonstrating the positive outcomes of this creative tension (Hao Jian, 2016).

Deleuze's affect theory further reveals the bodily dimension of this aesthetic revolution. He contends that political transformation occurs not only at the level of ideas but also within the micro-realm of bodily sensations (Timothy Bevis & Lü Wen, 2014). As audiences experience diverse affective forces through hero films, their perceptual patterns and emotional structures undergo subtle shifts. The narrative fragmentation and diversification of perspectives brought by the streaming era further accelerates this process. The migration of narrative paradigms in Chinese and American hero films operates precisely at this micro-level, exerting cultural-political influence by reshaping audience emotional experiences and subtly shaping the evolution of global cultural landscapes (Xiao, Yu-Di & Ouyang, Chang-Lin, 2020).

The migration of narrative paradigms in Chinese and American hero films represents the dynamic outcome of ongoing interactions between affective forces and the distribution of the sensible framework across distinct cultural contexts. America's "Transcendence" paradigm evolves through self-deconstruction while upholding its individualist core (Zhao Yanghua, 2021); China's "Transgression" paradigm seeks innovation through internal negotiation while preserving communal ethics (Hao Jian, 2016). These two paths are not simply opposites but form a tension-filled dialogue within the asymmetrical global filmic field. Together, they engage in contemporary cultural debates about what constitutes heroism and communal life, reflecting not only innovations in cinematic aesthetics but also revealing the complex possibilities of cultural power reconfiguration and cross-cultural dialogue. This signals that the Heroic Narrative will remain a vibrant and dynamic cultural arena for future engagement.

In summary, the American "Transcendence" paradigm and the Chinese "Transgression" paradigm exhibit a series of profound and systematic differences across four core dimensions: affective production, distribution of the sensible, cultural logic, and globalization dynamics. These distinctions are not merely isolated aesthetic choices but are deeply rooted in the underlying logic of their respective cultures, dynamically evolving through contestation within the global visual field. Together, they constitute two distinct approaches to engaging with the cultural archetype of the "hero" and offer crucial coordinates for understanding the negotiation and competition within contemporary cultural discourse. To present this systematic comparison more clearly and intuitively, the analysis of the aforementioned core dimensions is summarized in Table 3. This table structurally delineates the theoretical and aesthetic opposition and dialogue between the two paradigms, providing a concise frame of reference for understanding

the central argument of this study.

Table 3. Comparative matrix of core dimensions in chinese and american hero film narrative paradigms

Analysis Dimension	American "Transcendence" Paradigm	Chinese "Transgression" Paradigm
Affect Production	Absolute Power and Self-Deconstruction • Based on an essential disparity in the "degree of power" • Emotional experiences of the sublime and awe • Self-deconstruction through the display of vulnerability • Generates hybrid affective states (empathy, discomfort, critique)	Relational Power and Ethical Resonance • Power is generated within specific social relationships and ethical contexts • Focuses on the processes of power's activation, growth, and transformation • Ignites individual potential within an ethical-cultural framework • Evokes resonant emotions with the collective
Distribution of the Sensible	Deconstruction of Individual Privileged Visibility • Tradition: Hero-centric "history as exemplar" • Evolution: Questioning the privileged status of heroes • Anti-heroes and marginalized figures gain visibility • Democratizing practice within an individualist framework	Expanding Visibility Within Communal Boundaries • Breaks the singular heroic image of traditional collectivist narratives • Allows diverse heroic figures and complex individual experiences to gain expression • Expansion of visibility operates within defined discursive boundaries • Ultimately returns to a harmonious communal affective order
Cultural Logic	Self-Critique and Renewal of Individualism • Continuous interrogation of its core value (individual heroism) • Inherent tendency for cultural self-reflection • Achieves paradigm renewal through deconstruction	Cultural Negotiation within Globalization • Reconciliation of traditional collectivist values with modern individual consciousness • Creative transformation characterized by "building by breaking" • Innovation within the

Analysis Dimension	American "Transcendence" Paradigm	Chinese "Transgression" Paradigm
		boundaries of existing cultural discourse
Globalization Dynamics	Establishing a Universal Grammar for Global Heroic Narrative - Exports narrative models through global influence - Anti-hero narratives reflect societal self-reflection - Maintains a structurally dominant position in the global cultural market	Exploring Unique Expressions of Chinese-Style Heroes - Preserves local cultural roots while integrating internationally recognized narrative languages - Negotiates cultural identity within globalization - Engages in limited transgression within an asymmetrical power structure

6 Conclusion

This study employs Deleuze's affect theory and Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible to analyze the narrative paradigm shift from "Transcendence" to "Transgression" in Chinese and American hero films, along with the underlying cultural discourse struggles. Findings reveal that American superhero films are evolving from solidified myths toward self-deconstruction, achieved by producing negative affect and reconstructing the visibility of marginalized figures; Chinese hero films, meanwhile, have achieved innovative exploration from the "sublime" to the "Transgression" through populist narratives, collectivist reconstruction, and traditional aesthetic transformation. This "Transgression" nature essentially constitutes a limited boundary-crossing within the mainstream distribution of the sensible order ("the framework"), whose depth and breadth are constrained by specific cultural discourse boundaries, often culminating in "assimilation." This paradigm shift represents both autonomous aesthetic innovation within each nation's film and a product of cultural dialogue and competition within globalization.

The theoretical contributions of this study manifest in three key aspects: First, by integrating Deleuze's affect theory with Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible, it establishes a theoretical framework for analyzing hero films that bridges micro-level bodily politics and macro-level cultural politics. This framework reveals the dynamic tension between the "generative power of affect" and the "semiotic delimitation of the distribution of the sensible," providing an effective methodological tool for interpreting the aesthetic politics of cultural products. Second, by contrasting the concepts of "Transcendence" and "Transgression," it transcends the simplistic binary opposition prevalent in Chinese and

American heroic film studies. This approach not only reveals the creative tension within their interaction but also delineates the dynamics of deconstruction and constraint within each paradigm. Finally, by linking Heroic Narrative to cultural discourse games, it expands the theoretical boundaries of film studies, offering fresh perspectives on power flows within cultural globalization.

Methodologically, the "affect-distribution of the sensible" framework developed in this study emphasizes the interaction and tension between bodily experience and symbolic order, offering film studies an effective pathway to bridge micro-level sensations with macro-level cultural analysis. This framework holds potential applicability and insight for examining other national films, genre films, or cross-cultural filmic phenomena.

Practically, this research offers significant implications for Sino-American film production and cultural exchange: First, it demonstrates that the vitality of the Heroic Narrative lies in continuous innovation and self-transcendence, rather than the simple replication of successful formulas; Second, it reveals the challenges facing the unique strengths of Chinese heroic film within the globalized context—namely, how to maximize the expansion of "Transgression" narrative and emotional spaces within existing cultural discourse boundaries to achieve deeper cross-cultural resonance. Finally, it points toward a positive direction for Sino-American filmic cultural exchange—creative dialogue grounded in mutual understanding. Though unfolding within asymmetrical power structures, this process should aim to co-construct a diverse global cultural ecosystem, rather than pursuing unilateral cultural exportation or simplistic local resistance.

This study also has certain limitations. For instance, while the case analyzes are representative, they fail to cover a broader range of subgenres (such as Heroic Narratives in independent or art films). Discussions on audiences' actual affective reception are largely based on textual inferences; future research could incorporate audience studies for empirical validation.

Future research may explore multiple directions: First, building upon the theoretical framework established here, examine the influence and interactions of heroic narrative paradigms in other regions—such as Europe, India, or Africa—to construct a more comprehensive global map of heroic film. Second, investigate the morphological shifts of heroic narratives in the digital media era. For instance: How do algorithmic recommendations on streaming platforms affect the visibility of "Transgression" narratives? How do heroic choices in interactive films (e.g., *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*) reconfigure the "affect-body" relationship in Deleuze's sense? Third, explore the dynamic relationship between heroic narratives and shifting social values, particularly the younger generation's redefinition and

expectations of heroic figures. These in-depth and expanded studies grounded in this theoretical framework—especially when combined with investigations into specific sociocultural mechanisms and audience empiricism—will deepen our understanding of heroic narratives' position and significance in contemporary culture, as well as their positive role in constructing a shared human future.

References

- AlAwadhi, D., & Dittmer, J. (2020). The Figure of the Refugee in Superhero film. *Geopolitics*, 27(2), 604–628. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1820484>
- Cai Minyu. (2016). The Latent Ideological and Political Education Function of American Superhero films. *Knowledge Library*, (15), 37-38.
- Cai Xi. (2022). Subverting Representation: An Investigation of Deleuze's Philosophy of Music. *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music*, (03), 92-103. <https://doi.org/10.16504/j.cnki.cn11-1183/j.2022.03.005>.
- Campbell, J. (2008). *The hero with a thousand faces* (3rd ed.). Joseph Campbell Foundation; New World Library.
- Chan, T.-T. (2025). The making of an Oceanic superhero: Dwayne Johnson, mixed identity, and non-conforming heroism in *Black Adam* (2022). *Celebrity Studies*.
- Cui Chen. (2014). *Research on American Superhero films: Mythology, Journey, and Cultural Change* [Doctoral dissertation, Shanghai Theater Academy].
- Deleuze, G. (1988). *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Deleuze, G. (1990). *The Logic of Sense*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Demydenko, M. (2025). The hero archetype and the semiotics of liberation struggle in Oles Sanin's film "Dovbush": Between historical allusion and visual narrative. *Almanac "Culture and Contemporaneity"*. DOI:10.63009/cac/1.2025.58
- Dinić-Miljković, V. S., & Dinić-Miljković, V. (2021). The affect and its image in Gilles Deleuze's philosophy. *Zbornik radova Filozofskog fakulteta u Pristini*. <https://scindeks.ceon.rs/Article.aspx?artid=0354-32932101003D>
- Dittmer, J. (2011). American exceptionalism, visual effects, and the post-9/11 filmic superhero boom. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*.
- Dong Ying. (2019). The Wandering Earth and the Aesthetic Composition of Domestic Spectacle film. *Film Literature*, (12), 97-99.
- Gao, Y., Li, J., & He, J. (2025). Hybridizing tradition and technology: Global reception of Black

- Myth: Wukong as a vehicle for Chinese cultural identity and international media flows. *Global Media and China*.
- Griffin, M. (2022). "That moment meant a lot to my daughter": affect, fandom, and Avengers: Endgame. *Feminist Media Studies*, 22(4), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2098801>
- Hao Jian. (2016). A Study on Cultural Identity in Superhero Film Series—Taking Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man as Examples. *Film Review*, (18), 86-88. <https://doi.org/10.16583/j.cnki.52-1014/j.2016.18.027>.
- He Wei, & Han Zhenjiang. (2019). On Rancière's Views of Literature and Politics. *Culture Journal*, 0, 219.
- Hu Yaohui. (2024). Deleuze's Affect Theory and Its Critique of Capitalism. *Foreign Theoretical Trends*, (02), 50-58.
- Huang Xiaohui. (2013). Gilles Deleuze in the Context of Post-Marxist Thought. *Journal of Hefei University of Technology (Social Sciences)*, 27(01), 29-34.
- Huang Xijun. (2019). From "Monkey King" to "Nezha": Can Chinese Animation Only Be Based on Classic Myths?. *Standard Life*, (10), 62-64.
- Jiang Haoshu. (2010). American Superhero films in the Context of Commerce and Politics. *Journal of Guizhou University (Art Edition)*, 24(03), 74-78. <https://doi.org/10.15958/j.cnki.gdxbysb.2010.03.011>.
- Kong, L. (2025). Media breakthrough and visual communication strategies of Marvel from the perspective of Chinese and American culture. *Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies*.
- Kuang, Y. (2025). Research on the Presentation of Chinese Elements in American Science Fiction Films and Cross-Cultural Communication. *Communications in Humanities Research*. DOI:10.54254/2753-7064/2025.22079
- Li Daoxin. (2022). From Narrative to Affect: A Cultural-Political Analysis of Chinese Film Structure. Peking University Press.
- Li Xiaoru. (2019). Deleuze's Concept of Affect [Master's thesis, National Sun Yat-sen University].
- Li Yang. (2011). The Founding of a Party: An Adjectival Film and Its Aesthetics. *Film Art*, (06), 51-55.
- Li, H. (2011). Respecting differences and diversity and the cultural identity of the Chinese nation. *Journal of Dalian Nationalities University*.
- Li, W. (2012). Sino-Western differences in the concept of hero. *Academic Exploration*.
- Liu, M. (2024). Differences in Chinese and American Personal Values from the Perspective of

- Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: Taking the Disney Movie *Mulan* 2020 as an Example. *Frontiers in Humanities and Social Sciences*.
- Lu Chunhong. (2024). From General Will to Spiritual Affect: The Theory of Affect in the Context of 18th-Century Western Thought. *Literature & Art Studies*, (06), 15-29.
- Lü Feng, & Wang Xinzhu. (2023). The Unfinished Politics of Equality: A Study of Jacques Rancière's Film Theory. *Fujian Tribune (The Humanities & Social Sciences Monthly)*, (10), 165-180.
- LU Xing-Hua. (2012). film as Politics: On Rancière's Philosophy of Film. *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art*, 32(6), 83-89.
- Lu, H. (2025). Costume semiotics and cultural construction in East Asian historical war films. *Critical Humanistic Social Theory*. DOI:10.62177/chst.v2i4.659
- Ma Qianhui. (2017). A Brief Analysis of the Villain Image in Superhero Movies. *Film Literature*, (02), 50-52.
- Ma Rui. (2020). Gaze upon the Body and Scrutiny of Value: The Spectacle of Female Superhero Movies. *Audio-Visual*, (04), 28-31. <https://doi.org/10.19395/j.cnki.1674-246x.2020.04.012>.
- MacFarlane, J. S. (2014). Desperate times and desperate measures: false-representation and distortion of terrorism in post-9/11 superhero films. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 7(3), 446–455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2014.956460>
- McSweeney, T. (2014). Turning to the Dark Side: Challenging American Mythology in the Superhero Genre. In *The "War on Terror" and American Film*. Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748693092.003.0005>
- Meng Yan. (2022). From "Mapping" to "Redrawing": Spatiality in Rancière's Aesthetic Thought. *Beauty & Times*, (11), 24-29. <https://doi.org/10.16129/j.cnki.mysdx.2022.11.021>.
- Mokrišová, J., & Verčík, M. (2022). Tradition and innovation in Aegean Iron technologies. *The Annual of the British School at Athens*. https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/S0068245421000162/type/journal_article
- Nakamura, J., & Graham, L. (2017). The impact of heroism on heroes and observers: Stories of elevation and personal change. In *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*.
- Nangimah, M. (2021). The cultural repertoire of recontextualized superhero in the Avengers sequels. *EduLite: Journal of English Education, Literature and Culture*.
- Nie Xinru. (2023). Deleuze's Strategy of Authenticity for "the Image Itself". *Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art*, 43(01), 88-96.

- Nie Xinru. (2024). The Entanglement of Affect Theory and Film. *Journal of Shanghai Normal University (Philosophy & Social Sciences Edition)*, 53(03), 77-86. <https://doi.org/10.13852/J.CNKI.JSHNU.2024.03.009>.
- O'Sullivan, S. (2016). Deleuze against control: Fictioning to myth-science. *Theory, Culture & Society*. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0263276416645154>
- Qin Lanjun. (2013). The Meaning of Non-Meaning: Deleuze on "Snark". *Foreign Literature*, (05), 120-130+160. <https://doi.org/10.16430/j.cnki.fl.2013.05.014>.
- Rancière, J. (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Continuum.
- Rancière, J. (2019). *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rancière, J. (2019). *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Ren Lingjun, & Duan Jifang. (2021). The "Fable of Equality" in the Writing of "Redistribution of the Sensible": Also on Rancière's Political Reading of Modern Western Literary Works. *Literature and Art Criticism*, (02), 20-27. <https://doi.org/10.16566/j.cnki.1003-5672.2021.02.004>.
- Shen Wei. (2020). *dialogue Between Myth and Modernity: The Rise of Individual Consciousness Viewed from Chinese Animation*. Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House.
- Şima, E. H., & Taşkale, A. R. (2022). Avengers' anti-Oedipal endgame. *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 25(1), 56–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2022.2146732>
- Singh, G. (2014). *Feeling film: Affect and authenticity in popular film*. Taylor & Francis. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781317813682>
- Smith, P., & Goodrum, M. (2011). 'We have experienced a tragedy which words cannot properly describe': Representations of Trauma in Post-9/11 Superhero Comics. *Literature Compass*, 8(8), 487–498. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2011.00829.x>
- Song Gaoxi. (2020). An Analysis of Collectivist Narrative in the Film *The Wandering Earth*. *Audio-Visual*, (10), 77-78. <https://doi.org/10.19395/j.cnki.1674-246x.2020.10.038>.
- Song Tao. (2012). Image of Difference: On Deleuze's Critique of Kant's View of Synthesis. *Journal of Henan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 39(06), 178-181. <https://doi.org/10.16366/j.cnki.1000-2359.2012.06.034>.
- Spinoza, B. (1994). *Ethics* (E. Curley, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1677)
- Timothy Bewes & Lü Wen. (2014). The Disintegration of Sensory-Motor Orientation?—Deleuze and Rancière on Film and Literature. *Literature and Culture*, (02), 51-58. <https://doi.org/10.13896/j.cnki.wxywh.2014.02.007>.

- Wang Kaiqiong. (2013). Rancière's Biopolitical Philosophy and Its Research on Sinicization. *Seeker*, (08), 110-112+222. <https://doi.org/10.16059/j.cnki.cn43-1008/c.2013.08.046>.
- Wang Yanjun, & Ren Hongling. (2014). A Poetic Interpretation of the Concept of "Minor" in Deleuze's Cultural Perspective. *Journal of Northeast Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, (04), 130-135. <https://doi.org/10.16164/j.cnki.22-1062/c.2014.04.006>.
- Wen Yuanzhong. (2021). Jacques Rancière's "Politics of Aesthetics": Construction Based on Equality. *Beauty & Times*, (04), 18-21. <https://doi.org/10.16129/j.cnki.mysdx.2021.04.007>.
- Wu Sai. (2023). Emancipated Spectators and the Theater of Equality: An Analysis of Rancière's View of Theater and Performance. *Art Garden*, (04), 46-50.
- Wu Shiqi. (2021). "Anti-Representation" Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of the Image Community: Starting from the "Dissensus" and "Evidence" of Film. *Journal of Beijing Film Academy*, (11), 14-23.
- Xiao Yudi, & Ouyang Changlin. (2020). The Evolution of Female Images in Superhero films. *Film Review*, (18), 33-37. <https://doi.org/10.16583/j.cnki.52-1014/j.2020.18.008>.
- Xie Lili. (2011). Explosive Pleasure and Its Opposite: On Mourning and Friendship in Deleuze's Politics of Affect. *Chung-Wai Literary Monthly*, 40(3), 139-187.
- Xu, H., & Chen, Y. (2024). Research on the Narrative Strategies and Effects of International Communication of New Mainstream Films. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Public Administration*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62051/ijsspa.v3n1.11>
- Xu, Z. (2023). The effectiveness of ideological communication in mainstream films based on semantic networks. *Communications in Humanities Research*. DOI:10.54254/2753-7064/10/20231317
- Xue, L., et al. (2023). Effect of texture on 4H-SiC substrate surface on film growth: A molecular dynamics study. *Vacuum*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0042207X23003779>
- Yan, Y. (2023). Analysis of cultural differences in Chinese and American film and television contents. *Highlights in Business, Economics and Management*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54097/gz66e748>
- Yang, K. (2025). The role of values: A study of female heroes in Chinese and American movies. *Communications in Humanities Research*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/2024.19776>
- Żaglewski, T. (2019). Infinite narratives on infinite earths: The evolution of modern superhero films. *Panoptikum*, <https://doi.org/10.26881/PAN.2019.22.06>
- Zamani, M. F., Ihsanullah, A., & Badri, B. (2021). The anti-hero character as counter-

- hegemony to the superhero in *Deadpool*: An analysis of Antonio Gramsci's counter-hegemony. *Jurnal culture (Culture, Language, and Literature Review)*, 8(2), 112–131. <https://doi.org/10.53873/culture.v8i2.264>
- Zeng Fengjuan. (2017). The Spiritual Representation in American Superhero films. *Film Literature*, (19), 59-61.
- Zhang Chen, & Li Xinwei. (2024). Affect, Body, and Art History. *Public Art*, (03), 15-25.
- Zhang Minghao, & Chen Xuguang. (2019). The "Industrial" and "Aesthetic" Path of *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* from the Perspective of "Film Industrial Aesthetics". *Film Review*, (15), 25-30. <https://doi.org/10.16583/j.cnki.52-1014/j.2019.15.006>.
- Zhang Xiaofei, & Jin Shenghong. (2023). Redistribution of the Sensible: A Political Philosophy Interpretation of Rancière's Thought on Educational Emancipation. *Modern University Education*, 39(06), 33-40.
- Zhang, X. (2021). Why most Chinese fans of American superhero films are girls: A gendered local fandom of a global Hollywood icon. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2020.1870709>
- Zhao Jingjing. (2022). The Tradition and Historical Inheritance of Chinese "Hero films". *Film and TV Culture*, (02), 45-53.
- Zhao Yanghua. (2021). Narrative Modes and Characteristics of American Superhero films in the New Century: Taking Marvel and DC Superhero films as Examples. *Audio-Visual*, (02), 55-58. <https://doi.org/10.19395/j.cnki.1674-246x.2021.02.028>.
- Zhao Yuanqi, & Jiao Xinyue. (2025). An Interpretation of the Different Cultural Characteristics of *Nezha 2* and *Thor: Love and Thunder*. *Comedy World (Second Half Monthly)*, (07), 88-90.
- Zhao, J., & Chsing, L. (2024). Research on Chinese hero films from the perspective of film narratology. *Highlights in Art and Design*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54097/fsfzh781>
- Zhou Changyu. (2023). Research on the Collective Memory of the Battle of Chosin Reservoir in Online Communities: Taking Douban as an Example. *Southeast Communication*, (09), 65-69. <https://doi.org/10.13556/j.cnki.dncb.cn35-1274/j.2023.09.025>.
- Zornado, J., & Reilly, S. (2021). *The filmtic Superhero as Social Practice*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85458-4>