

From Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind to China Wind: The Identity and Connotation of Chinese Style Popular Music

by

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Abstract

Chinese popular music, since its birth, has been involved with the construction of Chineseness. How audiences perceive Chineseness and the characteristics that perform this impression have become an increasingly important factor in contemporary Chinese musical discourse. Over the last century, the interaction between national and international perspectives has played a vital role in the production, spread and reception of Chinese style popular music in the Greater Chinese community.

This thesis is a reception-based study. It draws on ethnography, reception theory, online/archival resources and musical and textual analysis in an attempt to reveal the identities and connotations of the concept of Chinese style in popular music, based on three case studies: Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind. The six main chapters, in addition to the Introduction and Conclusion, are divided into two strands: Music and Identity (Part I), and Gender and Performance (Part II). Through the decoding of Chineseness, foreignness, national identity and self-identification by Chinese interviewees living at home and studying abroad, the consumption of Chinese style popular music demonstrates its transformation from a cultural product to the voice of the nation.

This research takes audience as its key subject in examining Chinese popular music through ethnographic investigations. It aims to fill in the gap left by previous (ethno)musicological research on China, by showing various links between popular music, local culture and social life, thus deepening the perception and understanding of Chinese (style) popular music.

Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors Dr Eliot Bates and Dr Luis-Manuel Garcia for their kind support and enduring guidance throughout the length of my doctoral programme. My dream of conducting a doctoral research and becoming an academic in this field can go further because of their patience, warm help and invaluable comments and advice for my study.

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Mention here last, but first in my heart, I found that the love from my family never ends. Thanks must go to my dear parents for their unfailing warm support, which has encouraged me through every difficulty and trough. This thesis is dedicated to them.

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Conventions

All Chinese lyrics that are used in this thesis are presented in both original-language (Chinese) and English translations, with the English translations followed by the original lyrics. All references used for translations of lyrics are indicated while the rest of the translational works are mine. In addition to lyrics, all Chinese terms used in the text have been transliterated to the Roman alphabet using Hanyu pinyin, the most popular transcription system in China, and presented in italics, e.g. *diansheng yuedui*, *weimei*. For titles of songs, musicals and albums, I have included both the Hanyu pinyin and English captions when the song/musical/album is first mentioned, and only English captions when illustrated again for further references in order to preserve the flow of reading. Song titles are mentioned with ‘single quotation marks’ while the titles of films, musicals and albums are presented in italics. In a few cases, when Chinese titles or terms cannot be translated into English smoothly, I then only keep the Hanyu pinyin captions (for titles) or Hanyu pinyin transliterations with further explanations (for specific terms).

All interviews for this research were primarily conducted in Mandarin and all interview quotations are translated into English by myself. Interviewees’ names are used based on their own intentions, i.e. some preferred to present their original Chinese names and some preferred to use their self-styled English names. In general, I have introduced some of the interviewee’s background, such as age range or occupation, when he/she is first mentioned. The same participants will not be introduced again in other sections or chapters unless the research theme has changed. For example, ‘a 25-year-old postgraduate student from the Mainland’ will be introduced again as ‘a 25-year-old male postgraduate student’, based on the changed theme (i.e. Gender and Performance) of this thesis.

Moreover, some Chinese popular music musicians – especially Mandopop stars who come from Hong Kong, Taiwan or other Greater Chinese communities (i.e. in addition to the Mainland) – are well-known in the global mediasphere by their self-styled English names, for instance, Jay Chou, Faye Wang, David Tao. In this case, their family names come last (e.g. Jay Chou), while for musicians who use their Chinese names, their family names come first (e.g. Cheng Lin) through transliteration based on the Chinese tradition. In both cases, their full names have been presented when they are first mentioned, and I only repeat surnames in further references. In a few cases where singers/musicians use or adopt Chinese stage names, I have

included both their real names (either in footnotes or text) and stage names when they are first mentioned, and I mainly refer their stage names for further references since the stage names are widely known by Chinese audiences.

Introduction: Chinese popular music, Chinese characteristics and the Chinese style

I really don't like those young musicians and singers who thought that if they [and their music] look like Americans [follow Western standards], they were on the right track. So they followed those "stars' styles", and did what "stars" have done... We should always create popular music, electronic music or any other types of music with Chinese characteristics. The Chinese popular music must have Chinese characteristics, the Chinese style.

—Da Zhangwei, *Si ren ding zhi*¹ (November. 2016)

Popular music in China, unlike the West, is an 'unusual' research subject in musical institutions. Although it is highly engaged with people's daily life, it has not been systematically researched or studied (Qian 2007²; Jin 2016). The theories and frameworks that originally developed in popular music studies in the West have not been well examined in the Chinese context. Without sufficient academic studies in this area, the usage and understanding of popular music in China is ambiguous and problematic for Chinese academics and ordinary people. The term 'popular music' is defined by and perceived through different standards with different meanings.

Chinese popular music, since its birth – the emergence of Shanghainese Pops – has been involved with the construction of national identity. What is 'Chinese style' popular music and what is popular music with Chinese characteristics, are both key questions that musicians from different eras are trying to answer through their musical creations. Consequently, the expression and exploration of Chineseness and Chinese characteristics has been an important

¹ Da Zhangwei, the former lead vocalist of the youngest Chinese rock band The Flowers in the 1990s (the band was formed in Beijing in 1998). Due to his young age, Da Zhangwei was perceived as a talent by audiences and Chinese popular music circles, however, the plagiarism scandal that took place in 2006 destroyed Da Zhangwei and their band's reputation. The band split up in 2009 and Da Zhangwei shifted his attention from rock/punk to create pop/EDM within Chinese characteristics, and later coined the term CDM (Chinese dance music) in the TV program *Heroes on the Earth* in 2016.

The television program is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7TDLnyVMNo>, accessed on 10th January, 2017.

² Qian suggests that 'Chinese popular music is a very new subject' because it re-appeared and re-engaged with the public until the 1980s; the 'Open Door' policy, when ordinary people were 'allowed' to receive different musical types (2007: 1). However, in my research, the situation is different due to the changing sociocultural environment. Popular music performs an important role in ordinary people's lives, as they have engaged with popular music tightly through different ways. It is not a 'new subject' for the public, however, it is still 'unusual' in the academic field. The lack of academic popular music study is more linked with the course settings of musical institutions and the training background of researchers.

factor in Chinese musical discourse and practice between the 20th and 21st centuries. Within the developing sociocultural and political environment, Chinese audiences have continually shown a strong willingness to express their own voices of national identity and self-identification in relation to their interpretations of Chineseness. I draw on ethnography, reception theory and musical and textual analysis in an attempt to reflect the identity and connotation of Chinese style popular music through interviewees' decoding of a series of concepts (e.g. Chineseness, foreignness, authenticity and self-identification) through three case studies: Shanghainese Pops (*shidaiqu*), Northwest Wind (*xibei feng*) and China Wind (*zhongguo feng*).

Goals

By exploring and researching the identity and meaning of Chinese style popular music through these three musical forms, especially under the context of globalisation and localisation, I will demonstrate that the production and spread of the concept of Chinese style, in the eyes of audiences, is not merely a result of the consumption of products but the dissemination and enhancement of the voice of national powers – the soft and hard masculinities of the nation. The three musical forms are situated in different eras and within different social contexts. Although varying contexts indicate certain features of the development of Chinese popular music and audiences' tastes in specific eras, the producers of these three musical forms have all claimed that they are producing Chinese style popular music. Additionally, these three musical forms are all perceived as expressions of Chinese style popular music by the interviewees, thus, all of them will attempt to answer three main questions that lie at the centre of this research.

- **Firstly, how does sound, text and image perform the identity of Chinese style popular music?**
- **Secondly, how has the image of Chinese style been gendered through multiple sources in these three cases. In other words, how have the sense of hardness and softness, masculinity and femininity been produced and perceived through the concept of Chinese style?**
- **And finally, what meanings does 'Chinese style' have in popular music?**

This research will:

1. Compare and contrast the main characteristics of Chinese style popular music in three different geographical and historical contexts; analyse the different methods used to create Chinese style popular music, including the incorporation of Western musical elements.
2. Demonstrate the reasons why these characteristics of Chinese style popular music emerged in the specific eras and places that they did, in order to explore the relationship between music, place and identity.
3. Analyse audio, visual and lyrical materials of these three musical forms to illustrate how different elements symbolise Chinese and Western identities, and how these identities reflect hybridisation and disjuncture of the concept of Chinese style.
4. Explore the construction of softness and hardness, femininity and masculinity of Chinese style popular music, and understand how interviewees have used soft/hard or feminine/masculine to imply gendered images of musical sources and the concept of Chinese style with different sociocultural contexts. In particular, it will attempt to answer questions such as how have audiences' perceptions of gender identities reflected Chinese traditional social and cultural characteristics or values? Or how have specific gender identities articulated links between gender dynamics, the power of the nation and a sense of Chinese style?
5. Use musical analysis and textual analysis to understand how Chinese musicians in the 1930s/1940s, late 1980s and early 2000s responded to a central challenge in the creation of Chinese-style popular music: how to (for example) superimpose Western harmonies on Chinese pentatonic melodies without simply imitating Western music styles. How has this challenge affected musical practice and the production and marketing efforts of the Chinese music industry – how to produce and promote the concept of Chinese style between globalisation and localisation?
6. Discuss how Chinese listeners make decisions about the quality of Chineseness and their understandings of national power – audiences' willingness of 'writing' the history of Chinese popular music and the nation itself.
7. Compare interviewees' interpretations of Chinese style, national and self-identity based on their different cultural backgrounds, in order to reflect various historiographical debates happening outside of academia.

The perception and understanding of genre and Chinese popular music

Several studies have explored the construction of Chinese popular music (e.g. Jones 1992, 2001; Baranovitch 2003; de Kloet 2010; Groenewegen 2011a), since popular music in China has been developed and structured in a very different way, in comparison to the West. As previous research indicates, Chinese popular music production is based on local sociocultural principles. First, it is catalogued into two main categories; *tongsu*/officially-sanctioned popular music and *yaogun*/rock (e.g. Jones 1992); and secondly, it is loosely divided into three domains (Figure I.1) due to the strong ties between language and geography in the Chinese community (represented by Jeroen Groenewegen). In both cases, the construction of Chinese popular music shows that genre in Chinese popular music has different meanings and functions, it is not only structured based on musical sources but also contains ideological implications (e.g. the rock and pop music pointed out by Jones 1992).

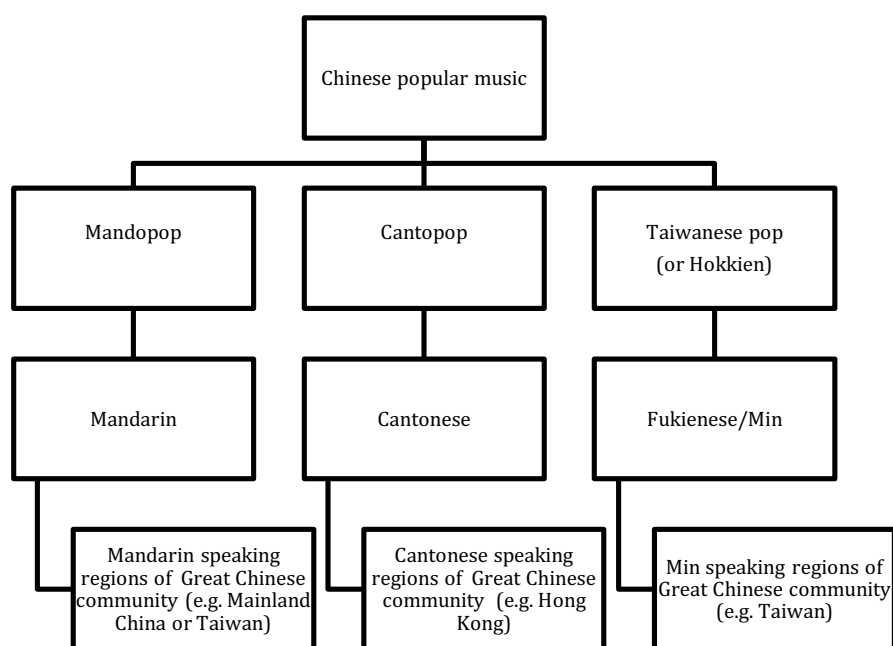


Figure I.1: the structure of Chinese popular music based on the linguistic-geographic principle

The confusion of genres that exist in Chinese popular music, especially in the contradictory terms of pop and popular, demonstrates the vague and ambiguous perception of the meaning

of popular music in China. Groenewegen states that ‘genres are less pronounced and articulated [in China] than in the West’ (2011a:53), indicating that the Chinese popular music is not widely perceived (and structured) through the concept of genre as it is in the West. The definition of ‘pop’ and ‘popular music’ has been well discussed in the West (Gammond 1991; Kassabian 1999; Regev 2002). However, in Chinese society, due to a lack of research and the limited discourses or related courses in institutions/universities and the culture itself (i.e. the translation issue),³ the meaning of these two terms is unclear. For example, in some Chinese articles, papers and dissertations, scholars and researchers define popular music as pop music (e.g. Zhou 2013). Although pop is used as an abbreviation for popular music, such as C-pop or Mandopop, the meanings of pop and popular music are not interchangeable. This is especially so when they are linked with the concept of style or genre, i.e. pop implies a specific genre.

During my interview process, many of the interviewees expressed confusion between pop and popular. The interviewees Lan (a 27-year-old music teacher from the Mainland) and Xiaoyu (a 26-year-old PhD student who studies in the UK), provided the following statements:

Na: What is your understanding of popular music and pop music? Are they different? Or they mean one thing?

Lan: Popular music means pop music based on my understanding. Those pop songs, like Jay Chou and Lee-hom Wang’s songs [in hip-hop style] or earlier Chinese ballads/classic pop songs from Teresa Teng are all popular songs, right? Honestly, I don’t know what’s the difference between pop and popular music. I think both terms mean *liuxing yinyue* (popular music)...oh, but rock is different, it’s not pop/popular, it’s rock.

(I asked the same question)

Xiaoyu: For me, pop [music] means popular [music]. I think pop includes jazz, hip-hop, rock, ballads etc.

Na: But no pop? Pop is not a genre, such as jazz or blues?

Xiaoyu: No, pop for me is the name to describe different kinds of popular music. I didn’t see any difference between these two terms until I downloaded an app QQ music and found out that pop may have different meanings to popular. Because this app uses pop to imply a specific genre, so pop is in the same layer as jazz, EDM, rock, then I realised pop probably is different to popular... another thing that confused me a lot is if the musical style is not popular, it should not be considered as pop or popular music, right?

Na: So if R&B was not popular in this generation, R&B songs should not be in the scope of popular music?

Xiaoyu: Yes.

Na: Then how do you define those styles/genres? Are they unpopular music?

³ Both pop music and popular music refer to ‘*liuxing yinyue*’ (popular music)’ when they are translated in Chinese.

Xiaoyu: For me, there are two main types of music: pop/popular music and non-pop/popular music. Those unpopular musical genres/styles are non-pop/popular music.

The two terms of pop and popular in this interview question were used primarily in English but further explained in Mandarin in order to seek the distinction between these two terms through the reception aspect. Since most of my interviewees are well educated and many of them have overseas study experience, they can understand these two terms in English (but not the meaning of these two terms). In some occasions, my interviewees also preferred to express these two terms in English in our Mandarin-based interview conversations. In both cases, 'pop' is used as an umbrella term to cover different musical styles or genres of Chinese popular music, but pop as a genre missed its meaning as in the Western contexts (Figure I.2). For Lan, if the song is in jazz, ballad, EDM or hip-hop styles, as long as the song is not rock, they are all 'pop songs'.⁴ This confusion of the two terms not only blurs the distinction among different music genres but also further indicates that genre has a different meaning in Chinese popular music; it is not merely musical forms, 'it is a function of ideology' (Jones 1992:20, Figure I.3). For Xiaoyu, his confusion of pop and popular illustrates the vague, ambiguous and contradictory understanding of genre or style, and also questions the meaning of popular and popularity (Figure I.4).⁵ The term 'popular' then becomes problematic when it is used to describe Chinese musical genres or styles.

⁴ Only when it comes to rock music, some musical amateurs and fans point out that 'rock is different to pop' because 'they sound different'; it is 'noisy and loud'. They cannot explain how other musical styles sound the same, but some interviewees mention that rock has different meanings; 'that is an attitude' (especially those from Northern China, as the interviewee Michael states). Thus, even though audiences have perceived pop and rock as different forms, it is not based on the difference of musical genres but the ideologies between pop and rock, which will be explained further in the case of Northwest Wind (the second and fifth chapters).

⁵ Andrew Jones (1992) and Qian Wang's (2007) studies do not fully show reception's understandings between popularity and popular music but they discuss different terms that used to imply popular music in China, e.g. *tongsu yinyue* (popularised music) and *liuxing yinyue* (popular music).

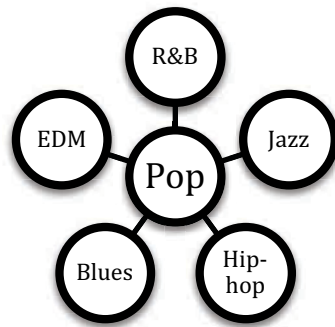


Figure I.2: when pop (music) is used to imply popular (music)

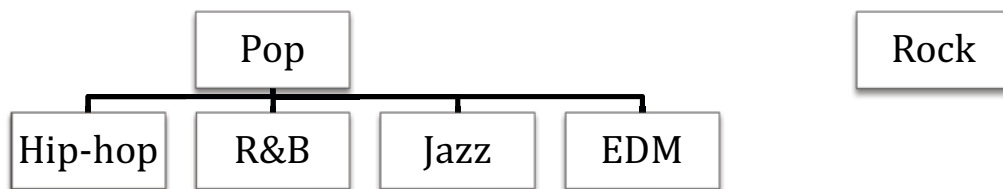


Figure I.3: when genre functions as an ideology

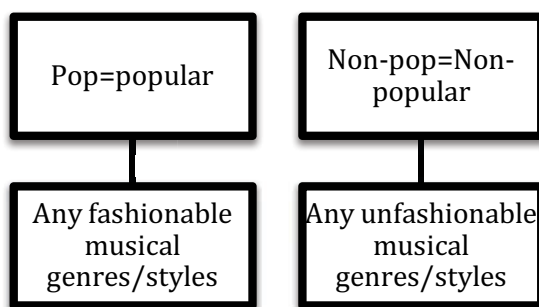


Figure I.4: when pop means popular and implies popularity

Thus, as Motti Regev suggests, the concept and meaning of ‘popular music’ in this research is not the same as ‘pop’ (2002: 251). In addition, I draw on Ruth Davis’s (1996) identification of popular music – as folk, as mass, or as populist – to understand the characteristics of Chinese

(style) popular music.⁶ However, since Chinese popular music has developed within particular social contexts and has been influenced by (traditional) Chinese cultures, the understanding of Chinese popular music cannot only be based on Western identifications. It still needs to consider the impact of local conditions and principles, in particular, the influence of linguistics in the Greater Chinese community, especially when Chinese popular music is perceived in this way by audiences.

The Chinese style

It is difficult to identify the distinctive characteristics of the structure of Chinese popular music since an appropriate ‘standard’ point of reference is difficult to establish, especially as the concept of genre is problematic in the Chinese context. However, highlighting Chinese musical and cultural influences in the production of popular music, i.e. showing ‘national symbolism’ (e.g. Hebdige 1979; Torode 1981), then, inevitably reflects the conceptualisation of **Chinese style**. The ‘Chinese style’ refers to Chinese cultural influences across a number of different areas (for example in the arts, fashion or architecture). When it comes to music, the Chinese style has been applied by Chinese musicians to refer to music with a strong sense of Chineseness or Chinese characteristics in order to reflect upon the huge impact that Chinese (musical) culture has had on musical production. Therefore, Chinese style popular music in this research refers a particular type of popular music that uses various means to showcase Chinese musical or cultural influences (as these three cases illustrate).⁷ The understanding of Chineseness and Chinese characteristics will be explained further in the following sections.

The term *style*, according to James Elkins (1996) and Robert Pascall (2001), originally means ‘a tool of communication’, that derives from Latin *stilus*, ‘the shaper and conditioner of the outward form of a message’ (*Grove Music Online*). Style as a concept has produced various definitions and descriptions within different disciplines based on different purposes, for example, ‘the 28 variants for the term’ from the *Oxford English Dictionary* as Berel Lang 2008 (*Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*) illustrates. Therefore, style could be defined as ‘the constant

⁶ Davis in her work argues the distinction between ‘popular’ and ‘non-popular’ (‘art’ music) genres, and questions the meaning of ‘popular’ by exploring the relationship between ‘popular’ and ‘traditional’ music. Anahid Kassabian’s research (1999:116-117) further discusses the connotation of popular music and divides it into four categories: popular as populist, as folk, as mass and as counterculture.

⁷ In other words, Chinese style popular music and Chinese popular music are not parallel forms; instead Chinese style popular music is a type of Chinese popular music. For example, the three different musical forms in this research are all ‘Chinese style’ and fall under the heading of Chinese popular music.

elements, qualities, and expression' (Schapiro 1953: 287), or 'a distinctive manner or mode' (Prown 1980: 197). In this sense, this term is strongly linked with the act of interpretation as Elkins (1996) suggests.

Pascall defines style as 'a term denoting manner of discourse, mode of expression, type of presentation' and 'a style may be seen as a synthesis of other styles'. Pascall further notes that 'style manifests itself in characteristic usages of form, texture, harmony, melody, rhythm and ethos; and it is presented by creative personalities, conditioned by historical, social and geographical factors, performing resources and conventions' (2001). In the field of music, style is more engaged with 'relationships rather than meanings', which demonstrates the difficulty of understanding this term since this concept sometimes exhibits incoherent standard or components.⁸

Based on Pascall's definition and explanation of style, the exploration of the concept of Chinese style in this research focuses on two main perspectives. First, musical characteristics: how have Chinese and Western musical, lyrical and visual materials represented the sense of Chinese style; how have Chinese musical traditional or folk elements and Western popular styles constructed and shaped the concept of Chinese style (popular music)? Second, gender identities: how have the symbolised Chinese culture and nation been gendered in various ways through the conceptualisation of Chinese style; how have the production of gender identities presented the cultural influences or values – the function of Chinese style? In addition, this research seeks to understand Chinese style through examining interviewees' interpretations of national identity and self-identification in different contexts – the 'outside looking' nature of Chinese style.

Chineseness and Chinese characteristics are not clearly defined; these terms do not have a certain definition and the 'hegemonic' interpretation depends on context. As Liang Hongming states, "Chineseness" and "Chinese values" are as contentious and "non-static" as the meaning of being Chinese. A discussion of the changing meaning of being Chinese and of the many meanings of being Chinese should proceed with a keener sense that these terms have no clear definition' (1996:158). According to Liang, it is difficult to define what Chineseness is, since the meaning of this term changes alongside sociocultural development. Although Liang

⁸ Thus, style could refer to musical features of a specific musician's work, of a particular period or of a specific region.

mentioned this point in the 1990s, the definition of this term remains unclear in the present. The qualities or standards of Chineseness and the meaning of Chineseness are also changing with the development of the society and people's own experiences. In other words, the use of Chineseness is based on individuals' experiences and intentions, and the meaning of this term is in relation to various factors and elements in different contexts, for example, self-identification in this generation. The three cases that are the focus of this research will illustrate different meanings of Chineseness within differing sociocultural contexts and focus on audiences' (un)changing understanding of 'Chineseness'. In the same way as Chineseness, 'Chinese characteristics' is also not well defined. This term officially appeared in the public through the discourse of the Communist Party of China (announced by Deng Xiaoping) in 1982: socialism with Chinese characteristics (*juyou zhongguotese de shehuizhuyi daolu*), meaning socialism adapting to 'Chinese conditions' (*Guangming ribao* 2013). Although Chinese characteristics as a concept was later applied in varying ways in the field of politics, no clear definition or detailed explanation has been made for this concept or for 'Chinese conditions'. Thus, when the term 'Chinese characteristics' has been applied in other areas, for instance, art and music, the meaning of this concept is vague and interpretative, especially as Chinese artistic philosophy pursues *xieyi* (conceptualism) rather than *xieshi* (realism) (Wang 2001:111).⁹ It could constitute Chinese musical characteristics, such as Chinese pentatonic tunings, folk musical modes and Chinese instrumentations (like the arrangement of Chinese traditional instruments) or Chinese characteristics in Chinese aesthetics, for example, the aesthetics concept of *yijing* (I will discuss in detail in Chapter 3), as have been explained by *meixuebaikequanshu* (*Aesthetics Encyclopaedia*).¹⁰ Since the 'code' is undefined and in different contexts it has different 'dominant' interpretations, the encoding and decoding process then is very much based on personal experiences and understandings, which also provides the space to discuss the encoding/decoding positions suggested by Stuart Hall (explained further in the next section).¹¹

Chinese popular music, as a whole, tends to show local musical or cultural features since it is

⁹ *Xieyi* is a type of Chinese traditional painting, it aims to show 'the essence rather than the appearance of things' (originally explained by Huang Zuolin 1962, quoted from Quah 2004:30), while *xieshi* is another category of Chinese traditional painting, which emphasises realistic descriptions (Hearn 2001:21). Since the realistic description from *xieshi* has frequently been linked with realisms of Western arts, *xieyi* and *xieshi* are used as two ideological systems in China to show the differences between Chinese and Western arts and philosophies.

¹⁰ *Meixuebaikequanshu* explains *yijing* as the distinct national characteristic scope of Chinese aesthetics (Ru and Li 1990:631).

¹¹ The code of 'western or foreignness' also shares the same context as Chineseness or Chinese characteristics. The use or the meaning of these terms is even more vague in the Chinese society. It very much depends on personal understandings of 'western and foreignness', therefore, people do not always share the same 'ground' of interpretations of these terms.

a localised branch of transnational popular music. In particular, when songs are sung in Chinese/Mandarin, these Chinese popular songs not only sound different, but also create different meanings as the language plays an important role in the production of (Chinese) popular music. However, Chinese style, as a particular type of Chinese popular music, is produced with a different meaning; it contains specific cultural and political implications when compared with general Chinese popular songs. The conceptualisation of Chinese style has a certain goal in the production process – the musical, lyrical and visual sources are used to show the strong influence of Chinese traditional or folk cultures, traditions, values and the power of the nation itself. In other words, the common ground of the production of Chinese style musical forms is the various presentations of national symbolism. Therefore, the concept of Chinese style is perceived and interpreted differently by the audience, compared with other Chinese popular songs or musical forms. Moreover, the Chinese style has been given significant functions, which explains why this specific concept and the related compositional model i.e. Chinese traditional and folk music elements combined with Western popular styles, has appeared and been applied throughout the history of Chinese popular music with different ‘titles’. Also, why the production of Chinese style popular music will not likely end in the future.

As Charles Keil states: ‘the presence of style indicates strong community, an intense sociability has been given shape through time, an assertion of control over feelings so powerful that any expressive innovator will put his or her content into that shaping continuum and no other’ (1985:122). The conceptualisation of Chinese style in popular music shows the exploration of Chineseness or Chinese characteristics, and also strongly indicates Chinese audiences’ demands of presenting national and individual identity in cultural products. Therefore, the three musical forms in this research were all established based on one specific compositional model as Figure I.5 illustrates, which aims to show popular music with Chinese characteristics or Chineseness.

Musical forms	Main Chinese characteristics	Western popular styles
Shanghainese Pops	Chinese folk compositional methods and pentatonic tunings	Jazz influence
Northwest Wind	Northern folk musical materials and specific vocal delivery	Rock influence
China Wind	Chinese traditional musical and cultural influences (e.g. Chinese pentatonic tunes, Chinese operas) and multiple Chinese imageries (i.e. poetic lyrics)	Various Western styles (e.g. pop, rock, Hip-hop, R&B)

Figure I.5: the particular compositional model shared by three musical forms

These three musical forms are not the most current ‘popular music’; however, there are two main reasons to choose them as examples to investigate the conceptualisation of Chinese style in the production of Chinese popular music. Firstly, the production of the concept of Chinese style is a process,¹² and my three choices demonstrate this by showing the history of Chinese popular music and the practices of the specific compositional model. This concept is frequently reflected in recent popular songs (e.g. Tan Weiwei¹³ and many of Da Zhangwei’s new songs), musical television shows (e.g. *The Ultimate Entertainer*, *Heroes on the Earth* and *Ding ge long dong qiang*) and in new terms (e.g. CDM; Chinese dance music, which derives from Electronic Dance Music). It illustrates the importance and continuance of this specific concept in Chinese musical society and also indicates the conflict of the understanding and expression of Chineseness and Chinese characteristics between Western and Chinese musicians on the one hand, and Chinese audiences from different regions and communities on the other hand. Hence, it is essential to show how ‘Chinese style popular music’ was established and applied throughout the history of Chinese popular music.¹⁴

Secondly, Chinese style connects with audiences’ cultural experiences, memories and social practices. Even if these three musical forms, especially Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind, are not hot issues in today’s popular music market, they are still perceived as the representation of the idea of Chinese style by audiences of different ages and backgrounds. In

¹² Therefore, ‘Chinese style’ is a concept and a process – not exactly same as the common understanding of a style in the Western context.

¹³ Tan Weiwei (also known as Sitar Tan) is a Chinese singer whose musical works cross pop, folk and rock. She joined the high-profiled musical television show *I am a Singer* in 2013, and brought the audiences a number of folk-rock performances, especially folk musical elements from ethnic-minority regions (e.g. Mongolian music). She collaborated with *huayin laoqiang* (a traditional form of Chinese opera from Shaanxi) artists in one programme of the Chinese New Year Gala in 2016, which received huge praise from both musicians and audiences due to the strong presentation of Chinese characteristics and Chinese cultural influences in this performance.

¹⁴ The definitions of these three terms: Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind, as well as the history of Chinese Popular music will be further discussed in the section of Research Background.

this sense, Chineseness and Chinese characteristics show their multiple meanings and functions through audiences' decoding, based on their own cultural backgrounds. In addition, although I have prepared many 'popular and new' songs in this generation for my interviews, the majority of my interviewees liked to use 'old' songs as examples to express their experiences, feelings and memories, especially when it comes to the interpretations of national identity and self-identifications.¹⁵ This phenomenon is also not unusual when using popular and new musical television shows as examples. Many of the singers in the shows, e.g. *I am a Singer*, did not choose to sing the latest or most popular songs, but those connected with their own experiences and emotions. In addition, the songs which earned the most audience votes were not (always) the 'new' songs but those songs with 'stories' – songs that evoked emotions and memories. Therefore, the 'old' and 'new' are not perceived based on time but through audiences' interpretations within their experiences and memories or the presentation of the music. Furthermore, the idea of Chinese style in this thesis is not limited to these three musical forms but expanded with recent social, cultural and political contexts. Thus, these three musical forms are chosen as main examples to show the diversity of the production and reception of the concept of Chinese style, how the concept has been shaped, and how audiences with different cultural backgrounds have expressed or negotiated their understandings of Chineseness, foreignness and identity in different contexts in order to show their willingness and expectations of 'writing' the history of Chinese popular music (i.e. historiography).

Encoding and decoding Chinese style

As a study centred on the exploration of the meaning of Chinese style through audience's perception, I draw on Stuart Hall's reception theory of encoding and decoding. As Hall points out, 'before a message can have an "effect" (however defined), satisfy a "need" or be put to a "use", it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded' (Hall 1973:3, 1999:509). Based on Hall's theory, meaning is not only determined by the producer or sender, but also by the recipient; the audience does not passively receive the meaning because the message is hidden or vague, and never transparent (Hall 1973, 1980;

¹⁵ I do not mean that interviewees do not like those 'popular music' pieces in this generation; however, when it comes to the sense of Chineseness and Chinese characteristics which is a popular topic in China and can be seen through Chinese social media *Weibo*, the majority of my interviewees liked to use 'old' popular songs to express their opinions of recent events. For example, many of the younger interviewees would link the increasing tension between Taiwan and mainland China with China Wind musicians and they do not think China Wind songs are out of date, while for the interviewees from the elder generation, i.e. aged over 45, the China Wind songs are definitely 'new songs'. The majority of my interviewees have interpreted Shanghaiese Pops and Northwest Wind music as 'classic' popular songs rather than 'old' songs. For them, and especially the elder interviewees, these classic popular songs were either involved with their musical experiences or linked with their cultural memories. In each case, the exploration of 'national identity and self-identification' is a long historical process.

Procter 2004). In this research, the concept of Chinese style popular music is established not only by the production of cultural and national signs in the music (i.e. the sender) but also largely based on people's engagement with these signs through music. Chineseness, Chinese characteristics and Chinese style show their strong connection with people in the community and are partially defined by them. Consequently, audiences, based on their different backgrounds and experiences, decoded messages from popular music in different ways and provided the specific social and cultural functions of Chinese style. Within these decoded messages, Chinese style can be understood through different interpretations from varying perspectives – such as identities, cultural heritage or nationalism – which as a consequence shows its multiple connotations.

The three main positions that Hall (1973) suggests people take when decoding messages – ‘dominant-hegemonic position, negotiated position and oppositional position’¹⁶ – are all revealed through these three case studies from a narrow perspective, i.e. a sender – a code – receivers, which show a certain social psychology and related cultures behind the decoding processes. **However, the three decoding positions are based on the assumption that there is a hegemonic interpretation or a ‘correct’ meaning of the code that links the sender and the listener.** This is not the case of this research from a broad perspective, especially when the code remains undefined and related to hidden factors. Therefore, the relationship of these three positions, especially the dominant/hegemonic position and oppositional position are interlinked due to the undefined or non-hegemonic interpretations of existing codes or concepts. It is not a singular ‘correct’ meaning that is encoded by the sender and decoded by the participant, but more like a changeable situation based on the participant's cultural experiences and his/her interpretations of certain concepts. In other words, the decoding positions that are reflected by the interviewees in some cases are based on their ‘dominant’ position of a certain concept or code; they accepted or rejected the message based on their own understandings of the undefined concepts or codes in a certain context. **Thus, the encoding/decoding model and especially the decoding positions suggested by Hall in this research are expanded,** as the same code could be decoded in various positions even though they were intended to be encoded

¹⁶ According to Hall, the dominant-hegemonic position is one where the receiver decodes a message in the exactly same way as it was encoded, the negotiated position then is a mixture of ‘adaptive and oppositional elements’; ‘it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules’ (Hall 1980:136). While the oppositional position is the one where the receiver can recognize the intention of a message i.e. denotative and connotative meanings, but decodes the message in a fully contrary way. In addition, Hall also mentions a professional code or ‘meta-code’ under the scope of dominant/hegemonic position and points out that it ‘operates within the “hegemony” of the dominant code; it reproduces the dominant definitions’ (1973:16).

in the same way by senders, for example, using the same musical elements or the same compositional pattern. In addition, sometimes the interviewees firstly decoded the message in the same way as it was encoded (i.e. dominant-hegemonic position), then rejected the ‘same element’ from another sender when they felt it was encoded ‘wrongly’ according to their understanding of the ‘dominant’ code (i.e. oppositional position) due to the hidden factor in this code, for instance, the criticism of ‘authenticity’ of Chinese style in Leehom Wang’s music (which I will explained further in Chapter 3 and the Conclusion). Moreover, when the code/concept does not have a ground of ‘hegemonic’ definition, the interviewee or receiver in a broader context cannot acknowledge the legitimacy of the dominant definition of the code/concept. The three hypothetical positions then need further conditions or explanations; the context of decoding process is vitally important, because the decoding positions are based on receivers’ own ground interpretations or rules (Hall’s explanation of negotiated position partly indicates this feature).

Research background

The history of Chinese popular music

Shanghai (1920s-1940s)

Although ‘popular music’ has been interpreted in various ways by audiences, Chinese popular music has gone through a number of important developmental stages. Beginning in the 1920s, Shanghai was the birthplace of Chinese popular music and became a significant place for the development of the Chinese popular music industry (as well as the Mandopop industry).¹⁷ Chinese popular songs between the 1920s and 1940s were initially named as *shidaiqu* – literally meaning ‘music of the time’ (Wong 2001). Since Shanghai was the centre and quintessential hub for the establishment and spread of *shidaiqu* at that time, this particular musical form is also widely known as Shanghainese Pops. Li Jinhui is regarded as the most important figure of Shanghainese Pops/*shidaiqu*, who not only established the style in the 1920s but also experienced different phases of the development of Shanghainese Pops and the early Chinese music and dance industry (Sun 2003).

¹⁷ Mandopop literally means popular music sung in Mandarin; Mandarin popular music. It is categorised as a subgenre of Chinese popular music. Figure I.1 partially shows the relationship between Chinese popular music and Mandopop.

The central position of Shanghai in the development of early Chinese popular music declined around late 1940s, due to the Chinese Civil War (especially between 1946 and 1950) in China.¹⁸ The war marked a major turning point in modern Chinese history, with the Communist Party taking control of mainland China and forming the People's Republic of China (PRC, in 1949) and which saw the Republic of China retreat to Taiwan. This huge change in the political climate created diversion for the development of Chinese popular music. Meanwhile, the epicentre of Mandarin popular music, and especially Shanghai styled pop songs, turned into Hong Kong.

Hong Kong (1950s-1960s)

Since the late 1940s and early 1950s, due to the political environment in mainland China, many Shanghainese Pops' musicians left Shanghai and moved to Hong Kong. In the 1950s and 1960s, Shanghai style pop songs and related film and music industries were still as popular in Hong Kong as they were in Shanghai. However, the Shanghai styled pop song and the development of Mandopop were gradually declined during the 1960s. In *The rise and decline of Cantopop: A study of Hong Kong popular music (1949-1997)*, Wong Junsum takes us back to several different periods in Hong Kong's history, when popular musical changed alongside changing sociocultural conditions. Wong's research (2003) shows that the declining popularity of Shanghai and Mandarin pop music since the 1960s is down to the rising salience of Anglo-American pop (e.g. the huge influence of the Beatles' concert in 1964 in Hong Kong)¹⁹ and the development of a local pop scene i.e. Cantopop (also voices by Groenewegen 2011:11). The impact of Western-based pop music at that time and its rooting in Chinese culture resulted in a specific musical scene in Hong Kong – local musicians started to release two versions of pop songs, one in English and one in Cantonese.²⁰ As Groenewegen (2011:11) claims, there was an 'emerging Hong Kong identity vis-à-vis both British and Chinese culture'. From 1980s to the 1990s, Cantopop gained its seminal position in Hong Kong and also received popularity in other regions of Great Chinese community (e.g. mainland China) as an important form of

¹⁸ The Chinese Civil War refers to a war conflict between two political governments: the Communist Party of China and the Kuomintang-led government of the Republic of China. The war fought took place in two main stages; the first was a ten-year period between 1927 and 1937, and the second was between 1946 and 1950.

¹⁹ According to Wong (2003), the Beatles' concert in 1964 brought the trend of 'opening acts' to Hong Kong. Also, because of the impact of the Beatles, a large number of bands formed (by youth musicians) and appeared in Hong Kong, e.g. Lotus, Teddy Robin & The Playboys and The Mystics (Chou and De Kloet 2012: 44). For more about the Beatles' visit Hong Kong to 1964 visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRia0hzzaEU>, accessed on 7th July, 2014.

²⁰ The Cantonese version is usually created after the original English version and served for related films (Wong 2003).

entertainment, especially within the context of the internationally influential television industry in Hong Kong i.e. TVB.²¹ This link between music and television/film industries in Hong Kong also provided opportunities for local singers, actors, actress and stars, such as Leslie Cheung, to broaden their fan base throughout various regions across Great Chinese community. A number of pop songs in this period were covers or Cantonese versions of foreign hits; however, the lyrics included a mixture of original language and Cantonese (Wong 2003; Groenewegen 2011:12).

Taiwan (1970s-1980s)

Taiwan has been considered the ‘the cradle of Mandopop’ (Wang Yu-wei 2011), given that Mandarin popular music has retained its dominant position in Taiwan’s popular music market since the 1970s.²² Back to the period of 1930s (especially from 1932 to 1937), Taiwan started to establish its own music industry, with songs produced in Taiwanese, the local language (Groenewegen 2011:12-13). Much like in Hong Kong, the interaction between colonial presence and the embeddedness of Chinese culture means that music in Taiwan is a fusion of various different musical influences.²³ Alongside Taiwanese popular music, English hits and Mandarin covers of Japanese tunes were also at the centre of Taiwan’s popular music market during the 1960s. Since the 1970s, Taiwan gained its dominant position in the production of Mandarin popular music and became a hotbed for Mandopop superstars, for example, the legendary female singer Teresa Teng (Deng Lijun). Teresa Teng is one of the most important figures in the history of Chinese popular music; she is not merely a popular singer in the context of Mandopop, but ‘is influential in the popular history of Japanese pop music, Cantonese pop music, and Taiwanese pop music’ (Wang Yu-wei 2011). Due to her successful singing career

²¹ TVB, or Television Broadcasts Limited, was a wireless commercial television station established in Hong Kong in 1967. TVB shows its transnational influence in different Chinese groups because its productions can reach out internationally; not only in different regions of the Great Chinese community, e.g. Chinese mainland China, Taiwan or Macau, but also overseas amongst Chinese communities of Western countries, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia.

²² For most of my contemporary interviewees, their understandings of ‘popular music’ and their musical experiences are tightly linked with Taiwanese mandarin popular songs, such as those from Jay Chou and Leehom Wang’s music (see Chapter 3). For them, Taiwan and Taiwanese singers represent the golden era of the development of Mandarin or Chinese popular music. Even though most of my interviewees do not know the history of music or music industry in Taiwan, their specific perceptions of the link between Taiwan and Chinese/Mandarin popular music still point towards the huge impact of Taiwan on the production and reception of Chinese/Mandarin popular music.

²³ Taiwan, officially known as Republic of China (*Zhonghua minguo*), was an inhabited island in East Asia that opened to Han (the Chinese ethnic majority) people during the 17th century, after which it was colonised by the Dutch and Spanish. The island was later annexed by the Qing dynasty (1632-1912) and ceded to Japan in 1895 after the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). When Taiwan was colonised by Japan, the Republic of China was formed on the mainland in 1912. The Republic of China took over Taiwan in 1945 following the surrender of Japan to the Allies. However, as I mentioned previously, the happened Chinese Civil War resulted Republic of China’s loss of the control of the mainland and was had to move the government to Taiwan in 1949.

across the East-Asia, Taiwan (or more specific, Taipei) has been credited as the dominant place of Mandopop industry at that time.

In addition to music and singers, the complicated relationship between Taiwan and mainland China is another vital issue influencing the development of Chinese popular music (e.g. the emergence of the China Wind style in the later period). Groenewegen points out that ‘contemporary with Teng’s regional and transnational successes, Taipei citizens started to reconsider their position vis-à-vis the Mainland and local culture and languages’ (2011: 13). The specific history and the political conflict between Taiwan and the Mainland strongly influenced audiences’ reception of Taiwanese Mandarin popular music, not only in 1970s and 1980s, but also today.²⁴

Beijing (and mainland China) in the mid/late 1980s and 1990s

In mainland China, Chinese or Mandarin popular music regained its popularity after the emergence of Chinese Economic Reform policy (led by Deng Xiaoping) in the late 1970s. This opened China’s door to accept imported products, including popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan. 1984 was the first time that overseas Chinese singers and performers were invited to perform on stage at the Chinese Spring Festival Gala of that year, for example, Xi Xiulan and Zhang Mingmin (Jin 2002:68). Meanwhile, it was also the period during which an influential Chinese popular musician – Hou Dejian, having returned to mainland China from Taiwan. Hou’s major hit ‘Long de chuanren’ (Descendants of the Dragon) serves as the soundtrack of Chinese ethnicity for generation after generation.²⁵ Since the 1990s, musicians from *Gangtai* (Hong Kong and Taiwan) started to enter the Mainland’s music industry, which further developed Chinese popular music and the industry. Following this trend, Beijing, China’s capital, gradually became an important hub for the development of Chinese and Mandarin pop music (Wong Yu-wei 2011).

Although pop music seemed to get much of the attention during the mid 1980s and 1990s, the

²⁴ For example, my interviewees show their decoding of some Taiwanese pop singers/music or their distinct interpretations of the cultural symbols used in Chinese popular music, which will be discussed further in the case of China Wind music (see Chapter 3 and the Conclusion chapter).

²⁵ Hou Dejian is a singer and songwriter from Taiwan. The different understandings of the identity of the ‘dragon’ from Hou’s hit ‘Descendants of the Dragon’ results in different interpretations of the song, and once again, various decodings of ‘Chineseness’ and the relationship between Taiwan and mainland China by audiences (which I will explain further in Chapter 3 and the Conclusion chapter).

emergence and development of Chinese rock in mainland China at that time had a vital impact on the history of Chinese popular music and the industry as a whole. 1989 was an unforgettable year for the nation because of the Tian'anmen Square Protests.²⁶ Regarded as the voice of the protests, Cui Jian's 'Yi wu suo you' (Nothing to My Name), represented the landing of Chinese rock in the Mainland.²⁷ The distinct vocal and instrumental style from Cui's rock music not only brought a new genre to the Chinese popular music market, but also shifted audiences' tastes of popular music as a whole. The Northwest Wind Style (*xibeifeng*), which emerged alongside Chinese rock shares some musical features with Chinese rock but stresses the use of northern Chinese musical and cultural materials.²⁸

The development of Chinese/Mandarin popular music since 2000s

Since the 2000s, the development of Chinese/Mandarin popular music started with the emergence of various pop idols, especially those from Taiwan. Even though Beijing took place of the center of the production of Chinese/Mandarin popular music, due to the maturity of the Mandopop music industry and the continual emergence of new singers and musicians, Taiwan still played a vital role in the development of Mandopop. Jay Chou's China Wind (*zhongguo feng*) music has received huge popularity since its first debuted in 2000s. Chou's China Wind style refers to a musical form that combines Western popular styles (e.g. hip-hop, pop, rock) and Chinese musical elements, such as instrumentation or traditional tunings. In this regard, it is similar to early Shanghainese Pops or 1980s Northwest Wind music. Other Taiwan-based musicians, for example Leehom Wang or Kenji Wu, following Jay Chou's mode, also created their own brands of China Wind.²⁹ Mainland China, at that time, maintained its interest in producing Mandarin popular music and pop singers, as well as boys/girls' idol groups, since pop music had become mainstream by the mid-2000s (Wang Yu-wei 2011). Meanwhile, the Mainland's rising film and television industries (e.g. televised dramas) also provided opportunities for the development of various styles of Chinese/Mandarin popular music.

²⁶ The Tian'anmen Square Protests or known as June Fourth Incident, refers to a series of university students-led protests and demonstrations in Beijing (located in Tian'anmen) in 1989. The protests were insisted on forcibly suppressed by Chinese Premier Li Peng. The death roll from the protests let the Tian'anmen Square Protests became well known as Tiananmen Square massacre.

²⁷ Cui Jian received huge popularity and supports during the time of Tian'anmen Square Protests since he frequently appeared with students/ protestors and performed his song 'Nothing to My Name' at Tian'anmen Square shortly before the crackdown occurred. Cui was later banned to perform in major venues of Beijing.

²⁸ This particular style further illustrates the exploration of 'Chinese identity' and the changing ideology based on the particular sociocultural environment of the era (I will explore this in detail in Chapters 2 and 5).

²⁹ The examination of different types of China Wind music and their related singers/musicians will be presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 6 of this dissertation through various perspectives.

The increasing popularity of Mandarin popular music in different sectors of the Greater Chinese community or the Chinese community overseas, as well as in other Asian countries, offers opportunities for the production and promotion of internationally popular Mandopop stars (Wang Yu-wei 2011), especially those from *Gangtai*, such as Jay Chou and Jolin Tsai. Meanwhile, some Cantopop singers have also shifted their interests towards the Chinese and Mandarin popular music industry in order to open themselves up to the Mainland market and gain the broadest audience.

Research of Chinese popular music³⁰

In the study of cross-communication of popular music and culture, there is limited research emphasising the Western-Chinese popular music relationship.³¹ The lack of academic literature in this area has led to a scarcity of intellectual exchange between Chinese and Western scholarly communities devoted to popular music studies. There are, however, a few significant studies of Chinese popular music focused on other themes, for instance, the music-place identity of Chinese popular music or gender in Chinese (popular) music.

Some scholars have focused on Chinese popular music of the early 20th century. For example, Andrew F. Jones's *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (2001) and Sun Ji'nan's *Li Jinhui yu Lipai yinyue* [Li Jinhui and Li School Music] (2007). Sun uses a variety of historical materials to contextualise the social environment and Li's life and musical works of that era in order to take a balanced approach towards judging Li and his music. Jones, in contrast, retrospectively analyses the spread of Western cultural influence within the Chinese music environment after the Opium War, in order to demonstrate the development of imperialism and Chinese musical nationalism. In this comparison, it appears that the Chinese scholar focuses on the 'inside works' – musical history and musical works, while the western scholar pays more attention to the 'outside factors' of music itself, such as

³⁰ This section focuses on influential books or monographs that discuss general Chinese popular music. There are many PhD theses, papers, articles or and chapters (either in Chinese or English) that focus on the historical background to Chinese popular music (e.g. Jin 2002; You 2007; Wong 2005; Wang 2009; de Kloet 2001; Guan and Zhang 2007), or which illustrate a particular region's popular music scene (e.g. Wong 2003), or which explore a specific period or musical form in the historical development of Chinese popular music (Wong 1979; Brace 1991; Qian 2016). Chapter 1, 2, 3 and Part II of this dissertation will further review relevant literatures, which will focus on the three cases and the two research themes that make up this dissertation.

³¹ However, some influential works have focused on the exploration of the relationship and conflicts between Chinese and Western musical cultures, e.g. Richard Curt Kraus's work (1989) on the piano and politics in China.

the relationship between music, culture and politics. Their works both provide valuable references to the study of Shanghainese Pops from emic and etic perspectives.

A number of other works have focused on the rock scenes of mainland China during the late 20th century. For example, Andrew F. Jones's *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* (1992), Nimrod Baranovitch's *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, and Politics, 1978-1997* (2003), Jeroen de Kloet's *China with a Cut: Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music* (2010) and Qian Wang's thesis 'The Crisis of Chinese Rock in the mid-1990s: Weakness in Form or Weakness in Content?' (2007). Jones' work carries out significant cultural, sociological, musical, and textual analysis. He takes a theoretical approach towards examining both textual and contextual data in order to investigate the differences between pop and rock.³² Baranovitch discusses the relationship between popular music and political and social changes in China in relation to ethnicity, gender and politics during the 1980s and 1990s in the context of new technologies and the emergence of a market economy. De Kloet's research pays more attention to Chinese rock between the end of 1990s and 2000s in China. The author shows several rock musical scenes (e.g. 'punks in dingy clubs') in China during that era, with the focus on illustrating a specific *dakou* culture.³³

Although these three Western scholars examine the Chinese rock music and Chinese rockers' works, such as Cui Jian's rock music, they sometimes have different or opposite theorizations (e.g. when exploring the relationship between subculture and Chinese rock). The reason for this is due to their focus on three different periods – the early 1990s (Jones), the mid 1990s (Baranovitch) and the later 1990s (de Kloet) – periods when the rock scene differed.³⁴

In addition, these scholars all use analysis of lyrics to examine Chinese rock music. The analysis of texts or lyrics, despite being an important method to explore the ideology of Chinese rock music and rockers' thoughts, may also be flawed. The authors analyse lyrics separately from sound, which divides a song into two constituent parts; however, that is not how rock

³² According to Jones, music in China has a different 'look', and 'genre is a function of ideology, not musical style' (1992:20).

³³ *Dakou*, literally 'cut-out,' a reference to a particular cultural scene of that era: unsold CDs were resold to China through an unofficial route from the West, and those unsold CDs normally had a hole punched in the side.

³⁴ However, it also links with their various research aims and core issues. Jones aims to make a genre distinction between rock and pop and explore the relationship between Chinese rock and politics; Baranovitch focuses on the changing environment and the reasons behind the crisis of Chinese rock; while de Kloet pays more attention to the reception and the perceived authenticity of Chinese rock.

music or pop music is usually consumed by the audience. It is assumed that audiences do not separate music into either lyrics or sound, they 'listen' to lyrics. Thus, in my research, the three musical forms are all examined through the aural, textual and visual aspects in order to understand, for example, how audiences link specific sources with the concept of Chinese style, and how audiences perceive identities through these musical, lyrical and visual materials.

Through discussing the aforementioned books, Qian Wang's thesis (2007) explores Chinese rock music in the context of globalisation and localisation, demonstrating not only the different phases of emergence, development, crisis and rebirth of Chinese rock, but also the contradiction between tradition and modernity. In particular, Wang claims that informal interviews enabled him to collect more convincing data, because musicians may only supply 'official answers' through formal or foreign interviews.³⁵ In Qian's opinion, the positives of informal interviews provide something 'real' from the interviewees. However, the 'informal' or 'official' information, from a certain aspect, is based on individuals rather than the 'interview formats', especially considering that the musicians that Wang contacted are experienced interviewees. This suggests that they could still provide 'official answers', but under 'informal conditions'.³⁶ Therefore, my research targets different interviewees in both formal and informal interview formats based on the different backgrounds of interviewees in order to produce an alternative approach (as detailed in the section of Fieldwork and Methodology).

Unlike scholars who pay more attention to the rock scene in China, Jeroen Groenewegen's *The Performance of Identity in Chinese Popular Music* attempts to reflect 'how lyrics, sounds, and images perform identity in contemporary Chinese popular music' (2011a: 1) during the 1990s and 2000s. Groenewegen analyses and compares three different market-oriented singers – super pop star Faye Wong, rock band Second Hand Rose and the creative artist Xiao He to show the identity of Chinese popular music in different performance styles. Groenewegen's work shows the importance of the interaction of sound, visual and lyrical content in the production of music forms, which offers valuable reference to my research, since the interplay between music, text and image is also my approach and is illustrated in each case to reveal the multiple identities of Chinese style popular music. Similarly, Timothy Lane Brace's research

³⁵ For example, he states that 'if I was a foreigner, I would easily receive the "political repression" answer from many of them' (2007: 38).

³⁶ Additionally, even if it is an 'official' answer, the data still demonstrates two factors: how artists/musicians attempt to build their public images which fans/audiences hope to see or expect that they (musicians) should have, and how musicians/artists want their fans/audiences to believe they are.

Modernization and Music in Contemporary China: Crisis, Identity, and The Politics of Style (1992) does not focus on one particular music style or scene; instead, it pays attention to three different types of music: Traditional Peking Opera, Popular Music and Serious Music. Through examining these three different musical types, Brace discusses factors that influenced the development of Chinese popular music during China's modernisation process. Brace employs an ethnographic methodology to explore the historical crisis in three musical domains, not only illustrating the meaning of cultural symbols in each music type, but also pointing out the contradiction of Chinese culture and music during the modernisation process. However, in Brace's research, 'style' is not specifically defined and is mostly linked with the analysis of popular music. He discusses three representative musical styles of Chinese popular music and their connection of political implications. Although the author shows how musical productions are used to serve specific policies, for example how musicians face demands to show the 'social lives' with the presentation and understanding of socialist features, the meaning of style is not always clear.

In addition to works that focus on the development of a particular musical genre (e.g. rock), or a specific period of the development of Chinese popular music, Marc L. Moskowitz's influential book *Cries of Joy, Songs of Sorrow: Chinese Pop Music and Its Cultural Connotations* (2010), expands studies of Chinese popular music by not only exploring the development of Mandopop but also emphasising the importance of gender dynamics for Mandopop in Taiwan. Moskowitz focuses primarily on Taiwanese Mandopop and its reflection on women's experience in these songs (p: ix). Based on the majority of the female audiences' (interviewed by him) perceptions of these Taiwanese pop singers and their music, Moskowitz explores alternative versions of masculinity of male singers and also argues that due to the sorrowful and vulnerable expression in the music, Taiwanese male singers tend to show a more feminine or androgynous image to the audience (compared with the understanding of 'masculinity' in the West). Although my research also engages with Mandopop (e.g. China Wind style), unlike Moskowitz, whose research emphasises on Taiwanese audiences and especially women's perceptions of Mandopop performers' gender identities, I focus on mainland audiences' (both male and female) interpretations of different modes of masculinity and femininity (detailed in Part II).³⁷

³⁷ There are many additional papers and articles or book chapters also pay attention to explore the gender dynamics of Chinese popular music, they will be further reviewed and discussed in the introduction of Part II.

However, these significant works highlight one of the major problems of Chinese popular music study: it is heavily orientated towards rock-based research. Focusing on Chinese rock music can explore part of the Chinese popular music scene. However, it cannot illustrate the development and changing sociocultural conditions of Chinese popular music and the changing social lives in Chinese society. Without discussing other musical forms, it fails to answer questions such as how Chinese characteristics are constructed in Chinese popular music through various ways and consumed by audiences based on their changing or unchanging tastes in different phases. Nor does it answer how and why audiences have perceived different gendered images through musical sources of Chinese popular music – how the nation has been gendered in different contexts. Therefore, my research explores Chinese popular music through three non-rock based musical forms. By comparing and contrasting these three musical forms, this research will not only show how sound, text and image perform identities of Chinese popular music, but will also explore the interaction between music, audience and the changing sociocultural environment that shapes the concept of Chinese style in popular music.

In addition, among these works, there are few detailed musical analyses of Chinese popular music by either Western or Chinese scholars – despite Sun's book and Chen's thesis of Shanghai popular songs, which will be shown in Chapter 1. The majority analyse Chinese popular music by employing sociological and anthropological approaches that largely ignore the music itself.³⁸ For specific topics such as the distinction of music in different regions, an analysis of musical works is essential to show the characteristics that differentiate musical forms of Chinese popular music. Therefore, my research is highly linked with musical works, which demonstrates the development of Chinese popular music through cultural, social and political aspects, and more importantly, by examining, analysing and comparing musical works in different contexts to reflect the meaning of Chinese style and the interaction between national and international arenas of production and reception of this specific concept.

³⁸ It is linked with the authors' interests and research goals. For example, Jones claims that he is less interested in using musicology as a way to explore Chinese popular music than in exploring cultural and media perspectives.

Gender and sexuality as a research theme contributes to the analysis of cultural and social phenomena and events. Studies focusing on the gender dynamics of music are vast and articulate different perspectives. My research focuses more on the fields of gender studies in both ethnomusicology and popular music because these are two areas which can examine gender and music through analysis of music as text and context, for example, in the interaction between music and lived experience, as Rachel Harris and Rowan Pease (2013:5) suggests. Gender study in China is also strongly linked with the issues that are explored and discussed in these disciplines.

Simon Frith claims that ‘identity is mobile, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being’ (1996: 109). In Frith’s research, music can be articulated with identity because of music’s inherent power to express the link between the individual and society. Its vital role in the construction of identities allows music to be an important field to analyse gender issues. Focusing on the theme of gender and sexuality, scholars in the area of popular music have shown their interests in addressing particular questions. For example: how have the gender identities of men and women performers been portrayed in their music or public representations? How have sound and image been gendered? How have musical sources been used to imply specific sexualities in different contexts? How have musicians’ gender identities been influenced by their professional careers?

A number of studies have focused on the production and presentation of different modes of masculinity in popular music. Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie’s (2007) theoretical paper distinguishes two types of popular music – cock rock and teenybop – which are both created and performed by male musicians but mainly consumed by men and young girls respectively. The article illustrates the complexity of gender and sexuality in popular music, and also indicates the importance of understanding the production and construction of gender identities and sexuality with the consideration of consumption (also suggested by Fred E. Maus (2011)). In my research, although the production of Chinese style popular music is largely based on male musicians, the construction of the sense of Chineseness and Chinese characteristics does

³⁹ This section pays more attention to general gender studies in ethnomusicology and popular music. Literature that specifically focuses on gender in Chinese music will be reviewed in the introduction to Part II. In addition, although the exploration of queer identities in popular music (e.g. Taylor 2012; Whiteley and Rycenga 2013) shows considerable impact on the gender study, my research is not tightly linked with LGBTQs. Therefore, this section does not expand on this topic.

not rely on a specific gender but instead on certain gendered images, such as the tenderness, soft and hard masculinities of China Wind music or different versions of femininity of Northwest Wind. Consequently, the consumption of 'Chinese style' does not show a gender preference, i.e. both of my male and female interviewees are consumers of Chinese style popular music (see more in Part II). Ellen Willis (2011) also pays attention to the phenomenon of the male domination of rock. Willis states that 'it is no accident that female musicians have been denied access to this powerful musical language' (2011: 143). Her statement asks scholars and readers to rethink the absence of links between rock music and women musicians, and also questions studies that support the 'link' between women and femininity which denies the value of some certain resources to women (e.g. McClary 2002). The discussion between masculinity and rock arises through the consideration of gendering sound in popular music. The study of Chinese popular music, especially Chinese rock, also shows this interest (or is influenced by it), for example in Baranovitch and de Kloet's works (will explain further in Part II). In addition, the idea also has an important role in my research since most interviewees linked specific sounds with certain images or sensations, which provides them with a basis for gendering musical forms. Moreover, through gendering audial and visual materials, audiences' perceptions also show how Chineseness and Chinese characteristics (e.g. instruments, vocal expressions) have performed as the sonic signifier to articulate the concept of Chinese style, the voice of the nation, through the gender perspective.

Many other important works have considered audiences as the main subject and used ethnographic methods in their gender and sexuality based studies (Pini 2001; Lawrence 2004; Longhurst 2007:199-246; Bennett 2012). The reception approach of gender dynamics is likewise applied in works of gender studies in Chinese popular music (e.g. Moskowitz 2010). The later three chapters (Part II) of this thesis, which focus on the exploration of gender dynamics in my research, also pay more attention to reception, specifically Chinese audiences' interpretations of various gender identities in Chinese-style popular musical forms. Through their ambiguous and ambivalent perceptions of men and women, masculine and feminine, the audience reception not only shows how audiences negotiated their understandings of gender when their perception of musical forms mismatch performers' genders, for example Northwest Wind and China Wind, but also indicates how traditional Chinese cultural and social values influence audiences' understandings of gender roles.

Several studies examine the music and personae of global women pop stars, especially

Madonna, through either visual materials (e.g. Goodwin 1993; Vernallis 2004) or political commentary (e.g. Bordo 2004) as Maus (2011) indicates. The first two case studies in my research are both dominated by female singers and performers. Through their different portrayal of femininity within male musicians' design and understanding of feminine sexuality and power, these women singers and performers have developed different (un)feminine images or public personas, which has delivered various sensations to audience in relation to the decoding of Chinese style.

In addition to research on gender and sexuality in popular music, gender studies in ethnomusicology show a shift in attention from the absence of the female's voice to the area of male expressivity. Ellen Koskoff's early influential edited anthology (1987) is a typical example of using a women's studies approach to music. Based on ethnographic research, the cases in Koskoff's work explore women's multiple roles in different types of performance and music. The categories of relationships to genders suggested by Koskoff and the attention to women in music inspired further research in the West (e.g. Kisliuk 1998 or the journal *Women & Music*). Gender studies of Chinese (popular) music also explore the construction of female identities in music, for example, the discussion of women's roles in early Chinese popular music and art music (Zheng 1997; Ho 1993; Hung 2008b), female masculinity and androgyny presented by Chris Lee from *Super Girl*⁴⁰ (e.g. Fung 2013; Bassi 2016), the exploration of different versions of femininity of Mandopop female singers, such as Faye Wong and Sammi Cheng (e.g. Groenewegen 2009; Fung 2009), as well as several case studies on female performers collected in the volume of *Gender in Chinese Music* that was edited by Rachel A. Harris, Rowan Pease and Shyr Ee Tan (2013), which I will discuss further in the following section.

A large number of studies have noted the importance of understanding the role of performance in the construction of gender identities. Judith Butler's influential work on gender studies not only further develops the approaches of how musical performance constructs gender identities, but more importantly, forms her theory of 'gender identity as performative' (1988,1990). Butler's theory has had a vital impact on gender scholarship, especially for feminist and queer studies. In her works, Butler points out the different meanings between the terms sex and gender and argues that gender is created through the performance of gender itself, and that

⁴⁰ *Super Girl* (*chaoji nüsheng*) was a Chinese singing competition for only female candidates organized by Hunan Satellite Television since 2004. Chris Lee won the champion in the second season in 2005.

‘performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalisation in the context of a body (1999: xv)’. The concept of gender performativity is strongly echoed in music gender studies scholarship, for example, Philip Auslander’s research (2004) on the androgynous sensibility of Suzi Quatro. The gender study of my research is also based on the understanding of ‘gender identity as performative’ in order to explore the production and perception of various gender identities in different social contexts (see the introduction of Part II).⁴¹

Compared with the growing interests in women and femininities in the ethnomusicological field, research on musical masculinities has received less attention. This is in spite of the important work of Louise Meintjes (2003) in the production of masculinity in Zulu Ngoma song and dance in South Africa as well as that of Deborah Pacini Hernandez (1995) in bachata (a Dominican popular music) as Harris and Pease voice (2013:6). In addition, Freya Jarman Ivens’s edited volume *Oh Boy* (2007) not only offers a useful approach to the study centred by men but also suggests a different understanding of masculinity. Scholars in *Oh Boy* use different male-identified performers to analyse how different modes of masculinity have been constructed, presented and negotiated in the texts of popular music and musical practices. For Jarman Ivens, gender formations are ‘per-form-ations’; they are the ‘results of careful and sustained practice’ (2007: 5). This specific thought expands the understanding of masculinity and femininity: both men and women can produce and present masculinity, in that masculinity is not only presented in men, and, similarly, femininity is not only presented in women. This understanding is partly reflected through the cases of Northwest Wind and China Wind in my research, where female and male performers present alternative masculine and feminine images in order to show the power or beauty of the nation; Chineseness and Chinese characteristics are presented with the theme of softness and hardness/masculinity and femininity (discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6). Through these alternative modes of masculinity and femininity, the interviewees’ perceptions further note the polysemic nature of Chinese style through the gender perspective.

⁴¹ For example, how have these gender identities perceived in this generation? Has the message from long lasting Chinese gender traditions and the performed gender identities been received or not? Or how have these gendered images in relation to the construction of the concept of Chinese style been gendered, including Chinese (traditional) cultures and Chinese characteristics?

Style and popular music

The relationship between style and popular music is not well discussed in Chinese academic circles, namely due to the misunderstanding of and confusion between genre and style, which has been considered as interchangeable terms (e.g. You Jinbo's work).⁴² The separation of these two terms – style and genre – is one of the key issues in Fabian Holt's works (2003, 2007). In his research, Holt claims that 'the network of a genre can be understood from the perspective that the genre is a constellation of styles connected by a sense of tradition. These aspects distinguish genres from marketing categories and labels because it has a more stable existence in cultures of musical specializations among musicians, listeners, critics, pedagogues, and others' (2007:18). Holt's research shows some major differences of the scope between style and genre from cultural and historical perspectives; however, style and genre are still not two 'isolated' islands. In addition to the ambiguity of genre and style, Chinese scholars' works (e.g. Jin 2002; Zhao 2013) also indicate that the analysis of Chinese popular music is very much based on the chronology of Chinese popular music rather than the concept of genre/style. However, a few Chinese works analyse China Wind music through the concept of style, mainly because of how it takes the meaning from its Chinese title (discussed further in Chapter 3).

In contrast, the topic of style and popular music is well explored in the West through different aspects and understandings of style, for example, as is done in the influential volume *Popular Music – Style and Identity* (edited by Will Straw in 1995).⁴³ The scope of this volume ranges from popular music in the West to the East and from analysis of musical sources to gender dynamics, all within the theme of popular music and style. The meaning of style is explored and examined mainly through four perspectives: musical characteristics, perception and production of music and visual sources, sexuality and the construction of gender identities, and the interaction between music and the political, social and cultural impacts. Although authors in this volume evince different interests in illustrating music-style relations, their works reveal multiple links between style and identity: how style represents identities and how the production of identities shapes the image of style.

⁴² You Jingbo's *Liuxingyinyue lishi yu fengge* [History and Style/Genre of Popular Music] (2007), which follows two themes, i.e. history and style/genre. However, it is difficult to say whether *fengge* in You's book means genre or style since the author uses these two concepts interchangeably to portray the outlook of Western popular music and the development of Chinese popular music without defining the meaning or distinction between these two terms.

⁴³ This volume includes over fifty articles related to popular music that were presented at the 7th International Association for the Study of Popular Music conference in Stockton.

Weeks Jeffrey points out that, 'identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others... it is also about your relationships, your complex involvement with others' (1990:88). Weeks mentions a series of factors of identity, but he points out that 'the values we share or wish to share with others' remain as the centre of the factors of identity (ibid: 88).

Through Weeks' definition of identity, Pascall's definition of style and the link between style and identity from Straw's edited volume, my research will demonstrate how different musical, geographical and gender identities have shaped and influenced the construction and reception of the idea of Chinese style. In particular, how has the production of various identities affected audiences' choice for identifying Chineseness, national and individual identity and the sense of 'Chinese style' in different contexts?

Andy Bennett and Paul Hodkinson's volume *Ageing and Youth Cultures—Music, Style and Identity* (2012) focuses on the connection of age and style. Through analysing different musical scenes (e.g. queer scene), scholars not only show the characteristics of different styles, but reveal the meaning of style by rethinking and examining the lives of middle aged people who still participate in youth cultures. The meaning of style in this volume is explored through the participants' involvement with their ageing bodies, appearances, adulthood, as well as sexualities. Although the concept of aging and the subject of 'post youth'/older people are not central to my research, the methods and approaches, such as case studies, in-depth and follow-up interviews and the interplay between musical style and sexuality, that scholars used to reflect the meaning of style are still relevant to my work. Their exploration of the link between identities and lifestyles, and how people engaged in particular styles or musical scenes, provides a useful reference for the cases of Northwest Wind and China Wind. In Northwest Wind music, the link between the tough local lifestyle and the wild image of north-western men allows audiences to link this style with the sense of hardness. The rough vocals by female performers are not only partially perceived as an alternative version of masculinity but also as the symbol of the life of that particular region. In the case of China Wind music, due to the disconnect between the music and the generation in real social life, this style has produced an imagined Chinese nation. Although people have perceived elements from China Wind music as cultural symbols, without linking people's lifestyles with sources from this musical form, China Wind music neither truly shows the life of contemporary China nor that of traditional China.

Additionally, Harris M. Berger's work pays attention to the interactions between emotion and style, exploring structures of stance in social and lived experiences through a phenomenological approach. The idea of stance performs as the vital conceptual tool in this book, and it explores 'the social and agentic relationship with material that emerges when she [people] grapples with that form and brings it into her experience' (2009:16). Through examining musical meanings based on the concept of stance, Berger states that 'style is a particularly complex category of stance qualities, mixing the affective timbre of social relationships with qualities of attention and facility', and he considers style as a 'sedimented quasi-stance' (ibid: 30-31). Berger's understanding of stance and style shows the different meanings of these two terms⁴⁴ and further points out the importance of context – the conditions of making musical meanings through production and reception. The stance, style or attitude that is presented by performers and received by listeners, according to Berger (e.g. the example of different ways of playing metal guitar solo), is very much based on a specific condition, such as time period, an individual's background and knowledge of the music or his/her experience and engagement of the music. This idea partially echoes Hall's encoding/decoding model, showing the link between an individual's experiences and their encoding/decoding positions as I discussed previously. In my research, the concept of Chinese style has not only been shaped and comprehended through performers, producers and listeners' different cultural experiences and engagements with musical forms, but performers, producers and listeners negotiated their stances in relation to the understanding of Chineseness, authenticity and national identity.

In addition to the literature specialising in style and popular music, there is a large literature on popular music studies covering the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and discussing other topics, for instance music and place, global and local. In order to generate a better understanding of Chinese style popular music, especially the production and perception of the national symbolism and the impact of globalisation on local popular music, the cross-references from research that focus on popular music from other nations, as especially accounts relating to Asian popular music (e.g. Wong 1990; Ho 2003; Wong 2003; Hsin 2012; Fuhr 2015) or 'world music' (e.g. Feld and Whitmore's works) are also useful. These studies supply an analysis of music and society through cultural, political, social and transnational angles, which not only provide a comparative reference for this thesis but also deepen the consideration of the conceptualisation of Chinese style in the context of globalisation and localisation.

⁴⁴ According to Berger, stance shows the reality in lived practice and can operate in reception and composition while style lacks or is less considered in these perspectives.

Chinese cultures are related to a particular social environment in specific regions, for example, the ethnic minorities that Baranovitch examines in his work. The conceptualisation of Chinese style and the presentation of Chineseness also link with different local or regional musical and cultural features, and the perception of Chinese style is linked with local or regional musical traditions and cultures. Therefore, my research considers the interaction between music and locality, especially for Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind studies, to discuss how particular regional cultures have shaped and influenced the production and reception of the concept of Chinese style. The exploration of music-place identity (e.g. Cohen 1991; Stokes et al 1994; Negus 1996), and particularly the linkage between specific geographical features or Chinese natural and cultural landscapes and the musical style, will be utilised in my research in order to answer questions such as how and why the musical sources from Northwest Wind style are used to imply a 'hard' sound and image of the specific region (Northwest China). In addition, through interviewees' ambivalent understandings of regional and national characteristics, this research also questions the measurement and meaning of music-place identity through the reception perspective. It will illustrate how regional marks has been 'transformed' to refer to national characteristics by audiences (for the study of Northwest Wind) and how ethnicity has influenced audiences' decoding of regional and national (for the study of China Wind music).

Furthermore, Chinese popular music is a branch of global popular music. Therefore, it is important to understand how Western-rooted modern popular musical elements develop and cooperate with Chinese music and cultures, in addition to how this hybridisation (or fusion) has been perceived by Chinese audiences. Holton explains that 'globalisation is an ongoing set of processes shaped by human agency and is far too complex to be encompassed within a single master process' (2005: 15). The 'competition' between global and local leads to 'glocalisation', which means 'the combination of global and local elements within human activities' (ibid: 22). Holton's global-local research further illustrates how globalisation and localisation can be articulated, as have been indicated by Petrella (1995).⁴⁵ In this research, the 'new package' of Chinese traditional musical cultures, for example Chinese Operas, also illustrates how local and global are articulated, and how the global provides the chance to re-show the value of the local, though with different interpretations. Therefore, my research also discusses how Chineseness, Chinese characteristics and the concept of Chinese style have been produced and

⁴⁵ Petrella (1995) provides seven ways that global articulates local, for example, 'the global invents its own local', in a conference, the source is cited from Qian (2007:103).

promoted between globalisation and localisation in different contexts.

Fieldwork and Methodology

Fieldwork

Most of the data for this research was gathered during two fieldwork trips to China, in Shanghai and Hong Kong for the first trip (December 2014 – February 2015), and in Hangzhou and Shanghai for the second one (January – March 2016), supplemented by interviews conducted in Birmingham, UK. Shanghai and Hong Kong shared the colonial influences of the early modern Chinese history (the era of Republic of China), and also were where Mandopop and Cantopop emerged. In addition, as there is an increasing number of Chinese people studying internationally, which may influence how younger Chinese interpret the meaning of Chinese style. I then chose Birmingham as the site to explore the interpretations of Chinese style among overseas Chinese students/people.⁴⁶ As an additional benefit, it also provided a way to collect data from Chinese students/people hailing from different regions of China.

The first fieldtrip was planned to collect various materials, for instance, archives and library resources, albums, magazines and biographies, in these two chosen cities, while the second was an interview-based fieldwork trip which included formal and informal interviews, and both one-to-one and focus-groups interviews. After the second fieldtrip, I re-interviewed most of the participants between September 2016 and January 2017 to understand whether they had changed or broadened their understanding of Chinese style and gender dynamics.

I conducted 46 individual interviews lasting approximately 40-50 minutes each. I also conducted 4 group interviews (all formed by pairs) during the same interview phase, with 54 interviewees in total. These are based on a standardized interview apparatus, focusing on, for example, age ranges, gender, musical preference (further detailed in the Appendix). 30 of my interviewees are women and 24 are men. The majority of my data came from the sources listed below:⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Since I was doing my PhD at the University of Birmingham, I got more chances to connect with Chinese students from different schools and colleges through a variety of events in the same university. Based on my own background as a music student, I was able to meet Chinese research students in the area of music from other UK based universities naturally (e.g. Birmingham Conservatoire, University of Southampton, etc.).

⁴⁷ 11 for the first type interviewees, 20 for type two, 18 for type three and 5 for four. Type five and seven are not included in the number of interviews since they were either very casual talking/meetings (for type five, but there were three main

1. Professional performers and research students at the Chinese-based Conservatories of Music

Through personal contacts I was able to have a number of meetings with professional performers, for instance, pianists who have a great passion for performing Chinese folk or classical music, and music students with different majors (performance, musicology and ethnomusicology) from Zhejiang, Shanghai and Xi'an Conservatories. Through the interviews and discussions, their different interests in Chinese and Western music, and especially their personal experiences with Chinese music, not only deepened my understanding of Chinese music in general but also gave rise to the idea of Chinese characteristics and Chinese style in popular music.

2. Non-professionals of different backgrounds in mainland China

During my stay in Hangzhou and Shanghai (the second fieldtrip), I was able to conduct repeated interviews/meetings with Mainland citizens through personal contacts. Some of them were youth studying different majors (e.g. education, engineering, arts, history) in Chinese universities, while some were office staff/workers who carried out different jobs in Mainland companies. I also interviewed a few aged between 40 to 60 who like 'Chinese classic popular music' (*jingdian liuxing gequ*). The information from these interviews and meetings helped broaden my understanding of the meaning of Chinese popular music among different identity groups of Chinese audiences (e.g. age range, educational background and gender).⁴⁸ Furthermore, this deepened my understanding of the relationships of Chinese audiences to Chinese style as to how they defined and recognised Chineseness, Chinese characteristics and identity within the changing socio-cultural and political structures, which directly influenced the arguments and discussions throughout this thesis.

performers I was able to talk with) or happened frequently (for type seven). Because of the size of the on the Chinese population (which totals around 1.4 billion), there are a huge number of people not covered in this research, especially those from rural areas. This is a limitation in the context of this study, but provides opportunities and avenues for future research.

⁴⁸ Though some interviewees indicated their particular gender identities (i.e. LGBTQ) during the interviews, they were not comfortable with revealing very personal information in the thesis. Thus, the gender identity of interviewees will only be mentioned in a general way (i.e. male or female audience) in this research.

3. Chinese overseas students and teaching fellows in the UK (Birmingham based)

In addition to the local people whose musical experiences and practices are mainly connected with mainland China, I also included overseas Chinese students in my research. Since beginning my study in the UK, I have established friendships with many Chinese students from different regions of mainland China who study abroad. Through the personal contacts made, they introduced me to their friends and helped me in contacting their friends in different places in the UK. The results of interviews with overseas Chinese students formed a different understanding of national identity and self-identification on the one hand, and national and international on the other hand, which added depth to many of the issues discussed in this thesis.

4. Professional musicians and specialists of Chinese projects

Also through personal contacts, I was able to meet professional musicians who are passionate about producing or composing the ‘Chinese sound’ in their works, and specialists whose roles are either in reporting Chinese news in various areas, such as economics, politics, cultures or social lives, organizing musical educational courses for Chinese foundational institutions or promoting the cultural development between China and other countries (e.g. between UK-China). Through these meetings I became aware of the different roles of Chinese characteristics and Chinese style on local and global stages, as well as its implications of music in the sociocultural and political climates.

5. Professional performers of the Chinese opera (*Kunqu*)

Through a personal contact, I was able to get the chance to talk with some *Kunqu* artists to discuss Chinese operas and Chinese traditional cultures. They also introduced detailed information about the development of *kunqu* in their city and showed me some visual examples of their performances and practices. These relationships deepened my understanding of Chinese musical traditions, in particular, the gender dynamics of Chinese operatic music, and contributed to some of the issues discussed in the China Wind chapter and the perception of gender in Part II.

6. Attending musical events

I attended various Chinese traditional and opera performances and live performances of popular music in both China and the UK.⁴⁹ In addition, I was able to observe the different activities of the performers and musicians in different places, for example, Jay Chou's touring in mainland China and London, UK. I also observed the behaviours and activities of the audiences at these musical events,⁵⁰ in particular, their interactions with different communities, notably their interactions with each other, e.g. fans from Mainland and fans from Hong Kong, Taiwan or other Greater Chinese communities, and with the singers or performers. Understanding these relationships is crucial in understanding the cultural and social meaning of the concept of Chinese style and also the production and dissemination of Chinese style popular music between the local and global levels.

7. Serendipitous meetings

During my studies in the UK, due to the jobs and roles I took in the universities, I got opportunities to work with local and international staff and students. Their interests in China and Chinese cultures led to many 'occasional' conversations which, while not designed specifically for my research, further enhanced the findings of my research. Many of these conversations and meetings resulted in interesting and fruitful discussions about various social and cultural topics related to China's development, Chinese cultures and Chinese celebrities. The information through these meetings provided different views of China and a broader understanding of it on a national and international level.

8. Various Chinese social medias and electronic mass media

Data for this dissertation also came from Chinese social media, such as Weibo and Wechat, online news (e.g. Sina news), the Chinese musical *gongzhonghao* (similar to YouTube subscriptions), online forums and post bars, such as Baidu post bars, television programs and

⁴⁹ I had many opportunities to attend musical performances for both folk and pop music when I studied in Chinese universities as a music student. When I started my study in the UK I was also able to attend Chinese classic, opera, folk and pop musical performances. Examples include the Chinese New Year Concert and the performance workshop presented by Chinese music scholar (Professor Haisheng Li), in the University of Birmingham (both in 2015), the 400-year anniversary special performance in memory of Tang Xianzu and William Shakespeare; *The Peony Pavilion* in London (Troxy, 2016). Also, Fish Leung (2016) and Jay Chou's (2017) global touring in London, UK (both in The SSE Arena, Wembley).

⁵⁰ Which, both in China and UK, were dominated by Chinese and ethnic Chinese audiences.

Facebook posts, YouTube videos and Taiwanese online news. The content of these sources and the comments made by audiences with respect to these online sources offered data concerning various historiographical debates happening outside of academia.⁵¹

Methodology

There were two main research methods used in this reception-based study. The primary method was based on the ethnographic approach; observation of participants and long-form interviews (as the primary form of data). This specific method is used to explore the connotation of Chinese style, the Chinese characteristics and their relationships with the changing socio-cultural environments based on the ‘native point of view’ (Spradley 1980; Brace 1992). As scholars note, ethnography as a method of research is ‘meaning-centered’ (Brace 1992:19), and the analysis of the resulting field study should pay more attention to the multiple meanings of events, practices or actions in the lives of a particular cultural group, exploring what these events mean to the people that we are studying (Geertz 1983; Spradley 1980; Philipsen 1992). Therefore, in addition to revealing Chinese audiences’ different interpretations and understandings of Chinese style popular music, my analysis of the texts from interviews also are covered in the question of **what meanings does the concept of Chinese style have for those touched by it?**

Ethnomethodology

During the interview data collection and analysis process, I was not merely searching for what messages were perceived by interviewees, more importantly, I was exploring how participants made decisions about the quality of (for example) Chineseness, national/self identity and national powers – their expectations of the way to ‘inscribe’ the history of Chinese popular music and the Chinese nation. In particular, the explanations of musical sources, events or phenomena that interviewees have used to demonstrate or negotiate their stance on specific concepts in certain contexts, which is similar in a way to Laurence Wieder’s approach of exploring convict code in his (1988) work. The exploration between interviewees’ ‘indexical expressions’, i.e. how interviewees in a context produce or construct a concept or a vision of

⁵¹ In addition to data gathered from my interviewees, data concerning audience reception of the presentation of Chineseness, singers’ personas or the relationship between mainland China and Taiwan are also derived from comments and feedback offered by audiences on online news outlets or original online posts (especially for the case of China Wind).

social life in that context (Garfinkel 1967; Lynch 1993; Kirby et al 1997), and accounts from those ‘indexical expressions’ shows my application of ethnomethodology.

As a subfield of sociology, ethnomethodology was originally developed in the work of Harold Garfinkel, emerging from his study of jurors (Mann 2008: 210-212). Garfinkel’s fundamental work, based on the ‘action theory’ of Talcott Parson (Talcott and Shils 1951) and the Schützian approach (i.e. ‘phenomenological sociology’) of Alfred Schütz (1973) as well as ‘symbolic interactionism’ of Herbert Blumer (1969), illustrates three main concepts that lie at the centre of ethnomethodology: ‘accountability, reflexivity and indexicality’ (Garfinkel 1967; Lynch 1993; Kurtişoğlu 2014:284-285).⁵² It provides an alternative way to analyse ‘everyday activities as members’ methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e. “accountable”,⁵³ as organizations of commonplace everyday activities’ (Garfinkel 1967: vii, also voiced by Gubrium and Holstein 1997).⁵⁴ My interviewees’ interpretations of Chineseness, authenticity and identity in this research show multiple links between social life and style within different contexts. The concept of Chinese style not only represents the social life and social psychology but also creates it.

Due to the nature of reception study, my work pays more attention to audiences’ perceptions of Chinese popular music. Thus, the interview approach and related empirical data were the most practical and direct ways to capture audiences’ various decoding of Chinese popular music as well as their understandings of Chinese style, which fall squarely within ethnomethodology.⁵⁵ Through the interviews, the interviewees showed a series of consistent patterns of thought and ideology – for instance, Chineseness, Chinese characteristics and cultural influences, or gender dynamics and the national power – which illustrate the reliability of the interview data.

The secondary research method in this thesis involved musical analysis and textual analysis. As mentioned before, one major issue in the study of Chinese popular music is the lack of

⁵² Garfinkel considers indexical expressions as central phenomena – the meaning of words or terms depends on contexts. Reflexivity refers to a process that how people shaped actions and thoughts to create social reality in relation to context. Based on Garfinkel’s works and especially the idea of indexical expressions, scholars have shown different interpretations of the concept of reflexivity. For example, Turner argues that ‘human interaction is reflexive in that humans interpret cues, gestures, words, and other information from one another in order to sustain reality’ (2012:444). In addition, John Heritage notes that ‘reflexivity means that members shape their actions in relation to context, while context is being redefined through actions’ (1984: 242).

⁵³ The term ‘accountable’ was then explained as ‘observable and reportable’ by ethnomusicologists (Lynch 1993:14).

⁵⁴ Gubrium and Holstein also point out that ethnomethodology shows a deep concern for the methods that ‘society’s members use to make their social experiences sensible, understandable, accountable and orderly’ (1997:7).

⁵⁵ The interviewees in this research are highly articulate about the topics they discuss.

attention to the music itself. Thus, I conducted musical analyses of audio recordings for all three musical forms, which is also the most direct way to show the musical characteristics of Chinese-style popular music. For many Chinese popular songs, no official scores exist. As a result, analysis of this kind of music is primarily based on my own transcriptions made from digital sources (otherwise, scores used for musical analysis are indicated). These digital sources include valuable information about the background of the music, such as the performers, the year of recording, the record company and the specific musical style that singers delivered in that period. In addition to the musical sources, I also analysed lyrical and visual materials to explore the multiple identities of Chinese style popular music. Most of the visual materials for cases of Northwest Wind and China Wind come directly from singers' music videos and live performances (i.e. still images from videos and performances), while for Shanghainese Pops the visual elements are mainly taken from films uploaded to YouTube and other online resources (all references are indicated). My approach here, based on textual analysis method, is more like an interplay of music, text and image. Both the musical analysis and textual analysis are used to deepen, confirm or limit the analyses based on the interview data.

Grounded theory

In addition to these two main methods, another factor concerning my research methodology is its relationship with grounded theory. Grounded theory, as developed by sociologists Barney Glaser, Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, is a methodology providing a set of methods for constructing theory through the analysis of data (Martin and Turner 1986). Through the philosophical and sociological traditions from Pragmatism (e.g. Mead 1934) and Symbolic Interactionism (e.g. Hughes 1971; Blumer 1969), grounded theory is built upon two main principles from these orientations: one pertains to 'change' and another pertains to the stand of 'determinism' (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 5). The first principle stresses the changeability of phenomena while the second one maintains that actors have their own ways to control their decisions or opinions through their responses to changing conditions. Therefore, the purpose of grounded theory is not only to seek to 'uncover relevant conditions, but also to determine how the actors respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions' (Corbin and Strauss 1990: 5-6).

My research is not exclusively based on grounded theory, but nonetheless draws from its methods. The interview format (open ended questions), the manner of data collection and

analysis – especially the ‘interactive approach’ i.e. catching the interplay between changing conditions of phenomena and actors’ choices or perceptions of the changing conditions of phenomena – and the ‘abductive reasoning’ method⁵⁶ (represented by Charles Sanders Peirce) used in this study, are all taken from grounded theory.

An illustrative example of my use of grounded theory in this research project can be found in the analysis of China Wind music. Instead of using a popular but problematic framework for China Wind music (see Chapter 3), I let audiences theorize China Wind. The first step was to collect some key points (e.g. Jay Chou or ‘new’ presentation) from the interviews; to generate the theoretical concepts from the data to show the China Wind phenomenon (i.e. initial coding). I then decided what to observe further according to the collected concepts, started the data analysis process, wrote memos and obtained some hypotheses (i.e. sampling, memoing and theorizing), and combined this with musical analysis. Later, I created broad groups of similar concepts and linked them together under a higher-level category, such as ‘representing Chineseness’ or ‘national identity’. In addition, I also compared the China Wind phenomenon and contexts to strengthen the ethnographically informed account. Through the grounded theory method, the process of coding, sampling, data analysis and account/theory development are not conducted separately and in linear order, but as different and repeated steps or cycles, until the China Wind phenomenon can be described or explained further. The same approach was also applied and can be found in the study of gender dynamics that constitutes the second half of this dissertation.

Meaning

The main goal of this research is to explore the meaning of Chinese style – the production, representation and dissemination of Chineseness and Chinese characteristics in the music. Therefore, it is essential to explain the function and role of ‘meaning’ based on my understandings since the issues or questions and the analysis in this study is informed by this specific term.

The term ‘meaning’ is quite difficult to define since it is used by people with different backgrounds in various ways, both in general social life and in academia. In other words,

⁵⁶ A combination of induction and deduction.

meaning shows different ‘images’ based on individuals, groups or communities’ experiences, thus, meaning in this context is elusive (e.g. Schwabenland 2006). In order to answer the main questions asked in this thesis, my understanding of meaning mainly drew upon scholars’ works with two key perspectives: social psychology (represented by George Herbert Mead) and symbolic and interpretive anthropology (represented by Clifford Geertz). The definition and explanation of meaning from these scholars’ works offer not only a private but also a public sense of this term.

According to Mead, meaning is not subjective. It is a ‘development of something objectively there as a relation between certain phases of the social act; it is not a physical addition to that act and it is not an “idea” as traditionally conceived’ (1934: 76). Therefore, meaning cannot be simply viewed as an isolated phenomenon, as it is produced in the society. ‘It is an external, overt, physical, or physiological process going on in the actual field of social experience... it should be conceived objectively, as having its existence entirely within this field itself’ (ibid:78-79).

Meaning is frequently linked with interpretations, as the majority of my interviewees in this research kept stating ‘meanings’ based on their interpretations of the event/music/singer. Meaning has different implications when it relates to different interpretations. As Brace suggests, ‘interpretation is posited as a primary activity of an actor... Reality as given is not passively absorbed but actively encountered’ (1992:13). Therefore, interpretations not only reveal reactions of actors but also lead to new actions, which are involved in the process of constructing and restructuring the reality. Hence, the actors’ participation in various cases, for instance, attending tours or uploading posts online, should be viewed as ‘active, interpretive, and strategic’, especially when the participants are struggling with traditions, such as musical traditions or gender traditions (Brace 1992:14; Gadamer 2013).

In this context, music has a ‘performed meaning’ since it is socially situated (Geertz 1983:29). The music is not merely a symbolized code to be decoded through its musical sources, but more importantly, it is ‘part of the conversation of gestures of a particular culture’ (Mead 1934:43; Brace 1992:15). What music illustrates, then, is the pattern of thoughts and ideologies that are constructed in the field of social action and ‘a sensibility’ that is produced and reproduced by participants in this field (Geertz 1983: 99-120; Brace 1992:15).

The organisation of the thesis

This thesis is a reception-based study. The six main chapters, in addition to the Introduction and Conclusion, are divided into two strands: **Music and Identity (Part I)**, and **Gender and Performance (Part II)**. The first three chapters (i.e. Part I) are dedicated to two main issues. First is how sounds, lyrics and images perform the identity of Chinese style popular music through three musical forms; Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind music. Each (of the first three) chapter examines one form and includes an introduction to the background of the musical form as well as a review of the relevant literature. Second is how audiences perceive the aural, lyrical and visual materials with the concept of Chinese style. Their perceptions of the musical sources show their understandings of Chinese characteristics and Chineseness and also indicate multiple meanings of Chinese style from the reception perspective.

Part II focuses on the exploration of gender dynamics of Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind music. From the different senses that are perceived by audiences based on each musical form, these latter three chapters explore the construction of softness and hardness, femininity and masculinity in the three musical forms through live/stage performances and music videos, and also examine different gender identities presented through male and female singers and performers. Furthermore, it illustrates how the idea of Chinese style was linked with certain gendered images by the interviewees. In other words, how the image of the nation has been gendered in various ways. More detailed introductory information of the exploration of gender dynamics of these three cases is provided as three individual sections in the Introduction of Part II.

Contributions and limitations of this study within the context of ethnomusicology and popular music

Innovation and Contribution:

Due to the two strands that are explored in my research, this study of Chinese popular music contributes to four scholarly fields: ethnomusicology, popular music studies, gender studies, and Chinese studies. Since this thesis pays more attention to the perception of Chinese popular

music, one of the main contributions of this research is that **it examines audiences as the subject to explore Chinese popular music through a reception-based, meaning-centred approach.** Ethnomusicology in China is not in the exactly same tradition and context as in the West. Although ethnographical approaches have been broadly accepted by Chinese scholars, ethnomusicological research is still dominated by musicologically trained students and researchers.⁵⁷ Their different interests and methods result in many Chinese language ethnomusicological works that neglect the cultural, social and political meanings of music. In addition, the study of popular music in China has only received limited attention because neither Chinese musicologists nor ethnomusicologists ‘approve’, as Qian (2007) suggests, of popular music as an appropriate subject for study (though more and more Chinese scholars show their interests in popular music studies in recent years).⁵⁸ However, scholars and researchers from cultural and media studies have demonstrated a passion for popular music study.

As mentioned above, the study of Chinese popular music has two main issues: first, a lack of attention on the music itself, and second, a main focus on Chinese rock. Therefore, **my research carries out musical analysis through three aspects – sound, lyrics and image – for three non-rock based musical forms and pays more attention on the production and reception of the concept of Chinese style.**⁵⁹ Although the three musical forms in this thesis, Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind music, have been examined individually, few works have linked them together based on the concept of style. Consequently, few works have explored the connotation of Chineseness or Chinese characteristics through the decoding of Chinese style in popular music between national and international contexts.

The amount of Chinese popular music research in the West is growing in the fields of ethnomusicology and cultural studies. However, as already noted, Western scholars who study Chinese popular music have paid more attention to production or political and cultural effects, rather than native audiences’ perceptions of the music. Furthermore, based on their training,

⁵⁷ During my fieldtrips in China, I was able to talk with many music students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) from Chinese-based Conservatories of Music or musical institutions, who are taking ‘ethnomusicology’ as their major. However, most of them have been trained through the musicological way and lack training in the field of ethnomusicology or other related disciplines. Additionally, some undergraduates stated that for their final ethnomusicological projects they analyzed scores and materials that were largely provided by their tutors; fieldtrips were not required.

⁵⁸ In addition to the performance pathway in nine leading Chinese conservatories which have been involved with popular music (mainly in vocal training), the majority of music departments in other institutions/universities do not set up courses related to popular music study.

⁵⁹ Though Northwest Wind involves rock elements, it does not share the same ideology as Chinese rock.

their research of Chinese popular music has been carried out using anthropological and sociological approaches that are not informed by engagement with musical materials; their works have shown a keen interest in cultural analysis, to the absence of the music itself. **Therefore, my study makes a contribution to both Chinese and general ethnomusicology and popular music through musical and ethnographic analysis of the relationships between style and culture, and between production and reception of music.**

Moreover, my research also pays attention to the examination of the meaning of musical and gender traditions to audiences or the decoding of gendered images of different musical forms. It discusses audiences' understandings of gender: the perception of male and female singers, femininity versus masculinity and soft versus hard articulations of gender in different musical forms. It also explores the changing or unchanging cultural values of gender among differently-aged audiences in different contexts. **Thus, another contribution of this research is that it examines audiences' interpretations of gender identities within different sociocultural contexts.**

Also, the theoretical framework of this research is extended through the incorporation of ethnomethodology and grounded theory. It is developed through the interview process during data collection and analysis. The terms, concepts and categories that are revealed through the data provided a way to rethink the structure and meaning of both the concept of Chinese style and the gender identities of Chinese popular music.

Justification and limitation

The first point that needs to be justified concerns my approach to analysing Shanghainese Pops – the selection of interviewees and the combined manner of analysis. Shanghainese Pops emerged in the 1920s, meaning it is difficult to obtain testimonies from audiences or musicians from that particular era. Therefore, the interviewees for the case of Shanghainese Pops include two age ranges: people between 45 to 60 years old, and listeners who were born in the 1980s or 1990s. Both of these two interviewee groups are familiar with Shanghainese Pops because of the huge impact of this musical form itself; they have listened to or watched Shanghainese Pops through multiple sources, such as film or television series, and they additionally know

the music through their families' influences.⁶⁰ Without the social and cultural experiences in that era, the interviewees' impression of Shanghainese Pops largely lean on historical documents, contemporary films and television series. Hence, their understandings of and interests in this musical form were then inevitably connected with the portrayal and presentation of the visual-based materials of Shanghainese Pops.⁶¹ Consequently, audiences' interpretations and perceptions of Shanghainese Pops lack direct historical and social links to that specific period. Furthermore, their developing understanding of sexuality and gender may not fully match the production and perception of the gendered images and gender identities of this musical form during that era. Thus, the method used to analyse Shanghainese Pops is based on a combination of contemporary interview-driven reception of this form in parallel with online and archival resources, such as historical documents, posters, films.

However, this issue is not present when analysing Northwest Wind and China Wind music, as both musical sources and relevant interview data from audiences of that era were available. For Northwest Wind, in addition to the audiences who were from that period, I compare older and younger Chinese audiences since Northwest Wind songs were introduced as a specific 'Chinese characterised' music to some audiences during their study in school or university. Therefore, they have a particular impression of this musical form based on its distinct regional flavour, which provides the 'confidence' for interviewees to link this musical form and the concept of Chinese style. The analysis of China Wind music is very much based on the interview data from the younger generation since they are the main audiences of this musical form; they have produced and witnessed the popularity of China Wind music and constructed fandom for the representational singers of this style.

Secondly, most of my interviewees belong to China's ethnic majority (i.e. Han). The ethnicity bias in this research means that the meaning and understanding of Chinese style are mostly dependent on Han Chinese perceptions. However, the production of Chinese characteristics or Chineseness of popular music is very much based on Han culture and taste, as these three musical forms illustrate, since the huge amount of Han audiences 'formed' the Chinese popular music and Mandopop market. Hence, the meaning of Chinese style is then strongly linked with

⁶⁰ Many of them mentioned that their father/mother or grandfather/grandmother are fans of Shanghainese Pops, so they have listened Shanghainese Pops since they were very young.

⁶¹ Although the narratives, especially modern narratives, from those films and television series linked with part of the histories, without connecting the exact social and cultural environments, the portrayal of Shanghainese Pops and Shanghai cultures is limited.

Han people from the very beginning of the conceptualisation of this idea. While ethnic-minority people's interpretations of Chineseness, national identity and Chinese style might be a fruitful avenue for future studies on Chinese popular music.

In addition, although interview data play a vital role in my thesis, it is not the only source used; musical, lyrical and visual materials were all used for the analysis. In some cases, due to the specific backgrounds of the interviewees, I have noticed the limitation of the interview data, therefore, archival and online resources were also used for providing materials to balance the analysis from different perspectives. Furthermore, the interviewees' understandings and interpretations of some concepts/ideas/events did not always match the historical realities and their perceptions sometimes are vague, ambiguous and contradictory. Hence, I have presented my analysis to show what factors or what kind of cultural frames influence their ambiguous or contradictory interpretations and feelings.

Overall, this dissertation, based on ethnographic investigations, will show the vital relationship between popular music and local cultures. It aims to fill in the gap left by previous (ethno)musicological works on China and to deepen the understanding of both Chinese style and Chinese popular music, and the multiple links between music and the society.

Part I: Music and Identity

Chapter 1: Shanghainese Pops (*shidaiqu*, 1920s-1940s)

I. Introduction

1. Introduction

Between the 1920s and 1930s (during the Republican period), colonialist culture continually expanded into modern China because of the increase of foreign settlements. Due to the specific social environment and its advantageous location as China's largest harbor (by 1930) as well as its historical status – one of the initial treaty ports of China – Shanghai became a vital place for the transmission of popular music and culture between the West and China (Luo 2009; Zhou 2013: 18-19; Lee 2010:3).⁶²

Starting in the 1930s, Shanghai was an international metropolis, becoming the economic and cultural center of China as well as that of finance and trade throughout Asia. With its huge economy and ability to radiate cultural variety, Shanghai became a place of influence far outside of its regional limitation. The interaction between colonial presences and the Chinese sections not only showed a mixing of cultures of this place but also indicated Shanghai's openness to the Western influence (Zhou 2013:19; Lee 2010).⁶³ When it comes to music and entertainment, symphonic music, opera, jazz, Hollywood film and songs and ballroom dance were blended together (Sun 2007). Meanwhile, a variety of media emerged: records, radio, sound films, newspapers and magazines. This media appeared to witness and record the urbanization of the vibrant city.

Based on the social environment that emphasized modern commercial competition and the changing needs of the urban mass culture, Shanghai witnessed the birth of the earliest Chinese popular music – Shanghainese Pops. Shanghainese Pops refers to the popular songs that were

⁶² After the first Opium War (1839-1842), Shanghai was named as a treaty port by the British. The city then started to become a place that was subject to foreign involvements.

⁶³ As Lee points out '(from 1843-1943) Shanghai was a treaty port of divided territories'(2010:5). The foreign settlements, such as the French Concession or British and American Settlements, all brought their particular cultures to this specific city. Even though Shanghai had its own placed Chinese sections (a walled city), native residents were still engaged with the foreign settlements (e.g. business, entertainment or living).

initially composed by Li Jinhui and later by additional composers with the idea of popular music with Chinese characteristics. As a style, it absorbed Western popular musical elements and highlighted Chinese folk materials, as we can hear in ‘Mao mao yu’ (Drizzles).

By analyzing the melody, lyrics and jazz accompaniment, this chapter firstly explores the production and perception of Chineseness and foreignness of Shanghainese Pops between the 1920s and 1940s. Historical and digital musical sources, and contemporary interviewees’ interpretations show the contradictions and hybridity that appeared in the production of this musical form. Secondly, through discussing and analyzing various sources of Shanghainese Pops, this chapter shows the complexity of the musical form as a hybrid style which has been produced within particular social conditions rather than a simple attempt at nationalism of Chinese popular music as previous studies argue. In particular, attention is paid to the argument of the nature of Shanghainese Pops – its relationship with the concept of Chinese style, which has been interpreted in different ways by musicians, scholars and audiences.

2. Previous approaches towards the study of Shanghainese Pops

Research into Shanghainese Pops mainly concerns the founder of this musical form Li Jinhui and his ‘yellow’ (indecent) music. For example, Jones (2001) and Sun’s (2007) research, which are two fundamental monographs of Shanghainese Pops study. In addition to these two influential works, the studies of Shanghainese Pops in China are generally focused on three perspectives. First is the impact of Li Jinhui on the creation of Shanghainese Pops, showing the importance of Li Jinhui’s musical activities for the development of Chinese popular music (Ming 2001; Li 2002; Feng 2007; Xie 2017). Second is the analysis of representative songs/singers/musicians’ works of Shanghainese Pop (Hung 2009; Wang and Bao 2009; Sun 2011; Chen and Zhao 2011; Jia 2015). Their works illustrate some of musical or artistic characteristics of this form and also indicate the changing social environment of Shanghai in that era. Third is the exploration of Shanghainese Pops, the Shanghai-based music industry and the social, cultural and political environment in Shanghai in the Republican era (Luo 2009, 2016; Huang 2011; Li 2015). By illustrating the cultural features of fashion and vulgarity in Shanghai popular songs, Luo and Huang’s works point out the characteristics of ‘urbanization, modernization and internationalization’ of the city of Shanghai based on the ‘colonization’ at that time of Shanghai style cultures (*haipai wenhua*). While Li’s paper focuses on a specific Shanghai popular song ‘When will you come back again, gentleman?’ Through discussing

various arguments and criticisms towards this song by Chinese scholars and critics (however without analysing their arguments further) and the legality of the republic government during the Anti-Japanese War era, Li argues that in today's social context, 'crossing party lines' is much more important than figuring out the identity of the 'gentleman.'

Compared to Chinese researchers' works, English-based scholars Jonathan Stock (1995) and Andreas Steen (2000) show more interest in the cultural, social and political impact of Shanghai popular songs through a particular singer, Zhou Xuan and her musical activities. Stock examines a number of Zhou Xuan's popular songs from different dates to indicate the rehabilitation of early Shanghai popular music. This study indicates that 'the reception of specific musical structures is strongly tied to perceptions of identity, time and place' (1995:130),⁶⁴ which is further echoed by my interviewees' interpretations of Shanghainese Pops, especially the sense of femininity of this musical form. Focusing on the specific song 'When will the gentleman come back again?', Steen explores the identity of the 'gentleman' and the transition of China from tradition to modernity through the legendary female singer, Zhou Xuan's singing career. By analyzing the text of this song through the sociopolitical perspective, Steen indicates 'how deep and far-reaching the political and emotional impact of a popular song in Chinese society can be' (2000:149). In addition, Szu-Wei Chen's research (2005, 2007) pays more attention to the generic and stylistic characteristics of Shanghai popular songs by exploring their emergence between the 1930s and 1940s through historical aspects; Chen's work provides a bigger picture of the rise of Shanghainese Pops. Chen (2005) clarifies five rules as generic features of Shanghai popular songs based on their musical sources and lyrical contents, while his thesis (2007) demonstrates the musical characteristics within the specific sociocultural environment of Shanghai popular music.

These important works have explored the Shanghainese Pops scene; however, missing is the perception of Shanghainese Pops, especially the current reception in relation to the remarkable impact of Shanghainese Pops on the development of Chinese popular music. Similarly, scholarship has not sufficiently covered the perception of gender identities of Shanghai popular music. A few studies explore the construction of female identities of old Shanghai through culture, literature, music or fashion perspectives, for example, Leo Lee's research *Shanghai*

⁶⁴ However, Stock also points out that the scope (strength of influence) of these perceptions (i.e. identity, time and place) should be reconsidered.

Modern (1999 in English, 2010 in Mandarin),⁶⁵ and Su Zheng and Hung Fangyi's studies of female performers of old Shanghai popular songs. However, few works show attention to the reception of the gender dynamics of Shanghainese Pops.

Therefore, this chapter uses representative musicians' works, for example, those of Li Jinhui and Chen Gexin and Li Jinguang's hit songs, as sources to illustrate the production and perception of Chinese-Western musical characteristics and the hybrid cultural influence of Shanghainese Pops. Musical sources are used in tandem with interviewee interpretations in relation to their understandings of Chineseness and foreignness. In addition, the construction of feminine sexuality in Shanghainese Pops will be explored initially through the text of this musical form (i.e. the lyrical section) in order to reflect the sense of femininity or softness that is perceived by audiences, whereas the female performance style and its relations to its specific cultural and social environment will be explored further in Chapter 4.

3. What is Shanghainese Pops?

Shanghainese Pops was widely known as Era Songs, a term referring to urban popular music in Shanghai. As Wong Kee Chee claims:

Shanghainese Pops, popular known as Era songs in later days, literally means "songs of the times". On the label of the record of one of the most famous of the earliest Shanghainese popular songs, 'Drizzles', apart from the English word "social" (denoting "fashionable"), there appeared beside it the Chinese word "timely" (*shidai*, Figure 1.1).⁶⁶ This may be the clue to how Shanghainese Pops came to be known as "songs of the times". (2001: 12)

⁶⁵ Lee analyses women-children relationship of Shanghai cultures through a particular pictorial *Liangyou Huabao* (The Young Companion) between 1930 and 1945.

⁶⁶ It is a photo copy of the cover of the CD from Wong's book (2001).



Figure 1.1: label of the record *Drizzles*

Although the original title Era songs refers to ‘songs of times’ – which is supposed to include different types of music in that era, like pop, art, folk and anti-war songs – the meaning of Era songs was actually much narrower than the title indicated; it was used to designate popular music in Shanghai, as Wong (2011:10-12) and Liu Ching-chih (2013:15) point out.⁶⁷

Scholars’ explanation and interpretation of Shanghainese Pops illustrate the tight relationship was between this musical form and the specific city – Shanghai. However, unlike the title ‘Shanghainese’ implies, the musical materials of this form, neither the Chinese melody nor the jazz accompaniment can be identified as ‘Shanghainese’. What is more, it is perceived by the majority of interviewees as the musical branch of Shanghai style cultures mainly because the musical form reflects the sociocultural environment rather than the presentation of local musical characteristics. As the interviewee Zhou (a university lecturer working in China and the UK) states:

I don’t think the music [Shanghainese Pops] contains many local musical features of this city [Shanghai]; however, most Shanghai popular songs show the lifestyle of Shanghai, for example, the entertaining life, and the text tells the poor life of songstresses at that time. So, I feel it [Shanghainese Pops] cannot be isolated with the environment and history of Shanghai in that era.

For the interviewee, Shanghainese Pops can be linked with ‘Shanghai’ because it shows the specific lifestyle of this city in that era, such as the blossoming entertainment industry along

⁶⁷ Wang mentions that ‘in its narrow confines, Era Song is nothing but popular songs in western mode... by Shi Dai Qu, we mean the authentic Shanghainese fares that originated in Shanghai during the late 1920s and early 1930s (2001: 10-12). Liu shares this opinion in his book (2013).

with its wartime reality. The music-place identity of Shanghainese Pops that is perceived by the interviewee is not based on its local musical features, which indicates the musical and cultural hybridity of this form and also hints how ‘Shanghainese’ Pops is linked with the concept of ‘Chinese style’ by audiences – how the feature of a place/city is decoded as the representation of ‘national’ characteristics (which is one distinct and consistent perception shown by my interviewees throughout the research). Compared with the other two musical forms, Shanghainese Pops especially challenges interviewees’ identification and decoding of the concept of Chinese style due to the ‘hybrid ethnicity’ in this musical form. Even though the three cases in this research are all involved with Western musical and cultural influences, only Shanghainese Pops left a strong impression of ‘foreignness’ with the interviewees; the western jazz musicians and the jazz accompaniment were at the center of their perceptions. Hence, the presentation of Shanghainese Pops seems to mismatch interviewees’ largely shared belief of the function of Chinese style: showing the Chinese cultural influence or the voice of the nation. However, since the majority of interviewees easily and simply connected the concept of Chinese style with Shanghainese Pops, this chapter will reflect how audiences have shown their ambivalent decoding position of Chineseness and foreignness, in particular, how the interviewees have negotiated their stance of hybridity and perceived this characterised Shanghai culture as a form of ‘Chinese style’ in the case of Shanghainese Pops.

II. Li Jinhui and the contradictions of his ‘common people’s music’ concept

Although few interviewees have paid attention to the producers of Shanghainese Pops, the producers’ vital impact on establishing and developing this specific musical form cannot be ignored, especially that of the founder of Shanghainese Pops, Li Jinhui (1891-1967). Li, who is considered by scholars to be one of the most important figures in the history of Chinese popular music, was in touch with the May Fourth movement of the ‘common people’s concept’ due to the influence of Cai Yuanpei, Qian Xuantong and his brother Li Jinxi (Sun 2007:13-15).

In 1927, Li, inspired by Western popular singing-dancing performances, started to create early Chinese popular songs.⁶⁸ According to Jones (2001) and Sun (2007:155-87), Li Jinhui’s

⁶⁸ Li had the opportunity to watch variety performances from Italian, American and French troupes in Shanghai in that time (Sun 2007).

Shanghainese Pops creation went through different phases (e.g. 1927-1929, 1929-1931). During these stages, Li not only created the melodies and lyrics to one hundred popular songs, but also recorded those popular songs for companies like Pathé-EMI (Jones 2001:73). The vast majority of his production influenced how the form of Shanghai popular songs has developed.

Li thought that Chinese popular music should be different from traditional music while still showing the value of traditional and folk traditions (Sun 2007). He therefore tried to combine the rhythmic form of Western jazz, foxtrot, tango and Chinese traditional tunes or pentatonic scales to establish the main musical creation mode of Shanghainese Pops as well as the early form of Chinese popular music – a hybrid genre of danceable music for that period in Shanghai. The concept of Chinese style was not really stated by Li even though his approach showed his intention to stress the sense of Chineseness in popular music. The creation of early Shanghainese Pops was more like an experiment based on various purposes and demands, for example, the ‘common people’s music concept’ influenced by the May Fourth movement, therefore, either the encoding or decoding process of Shanghainese Pops is complex. However, this specific compositional pattern and the feature of hybridity have been applied as a useful means by musicians in later eras to further develop the idea of Chinese style.

The ‘common people’s music’ concept and the audience of Shanghainese Pops

The ‘common people’s music’ concept plays a vital role in Li Jinhui’s musical creation and practice. Li’s ‘common people’s music’ concept was inspired by the civilian slogans, for instance civilian education or civilian literature, from the May Fourth cultural movement (Sun 2007:35). The civilian slogans aimed to show the importance of ‘civilians’, and attempted to indicate that cultural and educational activities should serve the ‘civilians’. Li explained his understanding of civilians as below:

“common people” in traditional China means “*shu min*” (plebs), while the meaning of *shu* can be interpreted as *masses*, so “*shu min*” means the majority of common people. Since “*ping min bai xing*”⁶⁹ was commonly used in China, it can therefore be seen that civilians refers to the common people. (Li 1922; Sun 2007:35)

⁶⁹ *Pingmin*: civilians; *baixing*: common people. It could be translated as civilian population as a whole phrase.

Sun and some other Chinese scholars (e.g. Ming 2001; Li 2002) have already paid much attention to the importance of this concept in Li's musical creations. I do not focus on the influence of this idea in this thesis; instead, I am more interested in the contradiction between Li Jinhui's notion of 'common people's music' and the consumption of Shanghai popular music. This leads to a key question: who was the audience of Shanghainese Pops?

Through Li's interviews, the concept of *baixing* ('common people') is specifically linked with the working class, the proletariat, even though the term does not strongly indicate a specific class per se. As he himself states 'songs and dances is the most popular art form, which is not supposed to serve the special class for their enjoyment. It [singing and dancing] can only be spread when the art is "common"' (originally from Yang Zilin at *Beiyang huabao* 1930, also cited by Sun 2007:36). Li further says that 'I also want to get to the "other side of the river", produce some "elegant works", however, in that way, we are leaving the *nonggong qunzhong* (proletariat) further, who can only obtain one flute or *huqin* with their limited budget' (Deng 1930:157-159; Sun 2007:36). Therefore, Li's music and activities were focused on serving the 'common people' from the lower class, who were neither rich enough to consume pricy products nor able to appreciate elegant music.

However, Li's practice and activities in his works somehow reflect one major issue of the 'common people's music' concept: common people versus commercial goals. The object of his music has not always focused on the working classes during the process, but changed to a market which can consume his music due to the specific social conditions. The Shanghainese Pops (especially later Shanghai popular songs), although using a variety of elements like traditional or folk materials that were appreciated by the common people, were performed in specific entertainment places such as ballrooms. Shanghainese Pops therefore could hardly be considered as consumed by common people, the working classes, who had no access to these venues.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ A certain issue needs to be mentioned here is if major venues were not available for most common (lower class) people in that era, how could they gain access to Li's popular music? If the 'common people's' music concept worked as well as many scholars (e.g. Sun) suggested, how did Li reach common people with his pop music in the form of a commercialized product? How could Shanghainese Pops be spread among the common people? The answer seems to be related to the multiple forms of media and technology that appeared in Shanghai at the same time such as radio broadcasts, cinema/film and records/phonograph (which has been explored in detail by Jones and Sun's books, and is also well discussed in other paper-based researches). The reason that I did not expand the discussion of media and dissemination of Shanghainese Pops (e.g. the role of radio) is because it is not linked with the audience reception of this musical form. Almost none of my interviewees show their interests in the role of media and technology of the spread of Shanghainese Pops. Therefore, as a reception-based study, I paid more attention to discuss and analyse materials that strongly linked with the perception of Shanghainese Pops.

Moreover, what has been perceived mostly by contemporary interviewees is that the consumers of Shanghainese Pops are 'rich people', or more specifically, 'rich men'. As Zining (a 30-year-old PhD student currently studying in the U.K) states:

Honestly, I may have a bias of Shanghainese Pops, however, I feel most of these songs were used to pleasure rich people. It was created for satisfying rich men.

Zining's opinion shows the class of the consumer of this musical form from the reception perspective, also indicates the construction of gender dynamics of Shanghainese Pops. Like Zining, the majority of my interviewees believed that only 'rich people/men' could consume Shanghainese Pops because this style was mainly performed and disseminated through a certain venue – entertaining-based locations i.e. ballroom and dancehall.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the interviewees' perception of Shanghainese Pops is primarily based on its portrayal in contemporary films and television series, thus, it is possible their perception is shaped by filmic or televisual representations. In other words, it is possible that the reception of Shanghainese Pops has transformed over time. It may be considered as 'mass' or 'proletarian' pop in the mid 20th century, but now considered as a musical product associated with a wealthier class. However, the common shared portrayal of 'rich men' as the main consumer of Shanghainese Pops through the narratives of screen works still strongly indicates the 'higher class' of the audience of Shanghainese Pops. Therefore, the 'common people' ideology that has been applied to this music is inaccurate during its development.

In addition, many of the Shanghainese Pops records, especially those of Li's works which were re-recorded in the swing style during the mid 1930s, for instance, 'Drizzles' and 'Special Express', are highly indicative of the commercial purpose of pop music. According to Isabel K. F Wong, the record company or even musicians themselves (e.g. many of Li's popular songs were released by Pathé), in fact, targeted a different market; they were more interested in 'the trendy, westernized Chinese consumers' due to commercial considerations (2002: 247).⁷¹ Ironically, the 'special class', the westernized Chinese who were capable of consuming Shanghai popular music, were the class that Li claimed 'this type of music/dance was not supposed to serve'.⁷²

⁷¹ Wong points out that 'as was the case with many popular songs of the period, [white musicians] were in the employ of the Pathé Company, giving the song a Western veneer to increase its appeal to trendy, westernized Chinese consumers'. (2002:247).

⁷² Sun argues that 'although Li's ballroom music creation activities belong to commercial acts, the purpose was not only about

Chen Szu-Wei, in his research, expand the identity of audiences of Shanghainese Pops to include both '*xiaoshimin*' (petty urbanites) and 'non-petty urbanites', since Shanghai popular songs were 'taking the whole country by storm' (2007:164-166). Despite the difference in taste and consumption habits between '*xiaoshimin*/petty urbanites' and 'petit bourgeoisie', Chen's identification also undermines the 'common people' ideology.⁷³ In addition, Chen's suggestions of the ways Shanghai popular songs spread, such as attending concerts or going to the cinema, are all based on the assumption that the audience of Shanghai popular music is not from the lower class but was instead the middle and upper classes.

Therefore, Li's popular music creation, in fact, is not a musical work enjoyed specifically by the 'common people' as he himself claimed. It is a musical product with a commercial aim. Through the use of folk and jazz elements, Li harnessed their 'lowbrow' and 'coarse' cultural associations to attract a broader paying consumer base which led to a financial success for himself and his musical group. His Asian tours show that the folk elements were used to attract the broadest market, the local masses with a Chinese background. The multiple purposes of the Shanghainese Pops creation placed his music in a contradictory position and also led to harsh criticism of his works.

III. Chineseness and foreignness of Shanghainese Pops

Shanghainese Pops, as the beginning of the history of modern Chinese popular music (and Mandopop) is largely perceived as the 'classic Chinese style of popular music' by most of the interviewees based on its specific music compositional form, which sees Chinese traditional folk music elements combined with American jazz-like accompaniments. These two types of musical sources produce the distinctive sound of Shanghainese Pops, and are also used as the main text for audiences' interpretations of Chinese and Western characteristics, as the interviewees Xingyu (a 26-year-old PhD student who originally from the North of China now

making profits. Li did not charge any payments for organizing bands, providing scores or introducing musicians. The main purpose of his activities was to absorb jazz music features to create Chinese style ballroom music' (2007: 59-60). It is no doubt that Li made huge contributions to the music creation of Sinified jazz, and he was respected by his peers because he did not act like a businessman, he never set profit as the first goal. However, the contradiction between the 'common people's music' concept and ballroom music activities must be considered.

⁷³ Chen states that the term *xiaoshimin* is not well defined, and it is used to depict 'those who were irritated by the socio-economic reality and were powerless to strive for a change' (2007:165). Although this explanation cannot exactly identify the class of the audience of Shanghainese Pops, their powerless social status is strongly indicated. In this context, audiences' consumption means of Shanghainese Pops that Chen suggests are not fully match the *xiaoshimin* identity.

studying in the UK) and Ruona (a 45-year-old administration worker in a Beijing educational institution) state:

Xingyu: My impression of Shanghainese Pops highly relates with the sound materials and the love-based lyrics. The melody and the vocal style are in the Chinese flavor but the music [accompaniment]; the jazz elements, offer the sense of foreign flavor. For me, Shanghainese Pops is a kind of Chinese style popular music within foreign flavors.

Ruona: I think the musical elements of Shanghainese Pops have made it sound different. The melody and the vocal are very much based on Chinese musical traditions, but it also sounds fashionable because of the jazz band.

The interviewees' interpretations highlight the hybridity of Shanghainese Pops through sound perspective. The following paragraphs will explore the characteristics of this musical form in detail from three angles: musical materials, lyrics and accompaniment style, in order to show how Chinese and Western identities have created the distinct flavour of Shanghainese Pops and how this specific flavor has been perceived by audiences.

1. Musical materials⁷⁴

Chinese pentatonicism and melodic structure

During the course of the interviews, the presentation of Chinese pentatonicism was consistently perceived as a representation of Chinese style, a feature shared across Chinese (style) popular song eras. As Chen (2007: 15) points out, 'traditional Chinese operas and folk songs are based mainly on pentatonic scales together with some so-called "altered notes" out of the pentatonic scale and thus has a distinctive identity.' For the audience, the three Chinese styled popular musical forms sound somewhat traditional because the melody within each is largely formed around pentatonic scales (a musical analysis of these three cases will further illustrate this point). In general, the Chinese pentatonic scale (or *wusheng yinjie*) refers to a five-tone mode/five notes per octave musical scale. The five notes of this scale are named as *Gong*, *Shang*, *Jue*, *Zhi* and *Yu*, which correspond to C, D, E, G and A in the Western musical mode.

⁷⁴ This section mainly discusses the characteristics of the melody of Shanghainese Pops, the feature of jazz accompaniment of Shanghai popular songs, especially the jazz accompaniment of the first two examples (i.e. 'Drizzles' and 'Special Express' will be further explored in the third section (The jazz accompaniment).

All of these five notes can function as the *Gong* note (the tonic) and therefore can have five different five-tone mode pentatonic scales or tunings, each with a different interval sequence (Chen 2005; 2007:219-220). In addition to the basic five-tone mode, each scale can have variations (e.g. six-tone mode or seven-tone mode) with the use of *pian* notes (altered or deviated tone). The four *pian* notes used to expand basic five-tone mode pentatonic scales are known as *qingjue* (F), *bianzhi* (F#), *run* (Bb) and *biangong* (B). With the application of one or two *pian* notes, the five-tone mode scale can be expanded to two six-tone mode scales and three seven-tone mode scales.⁷⁵

In Shanghainese Pops, one of the main features is its folk musical influence, obvious in the works of Li Jinhui, Li Jinguang and Chen Gexin. In particular, the use of Chinese pentatonic mode is the core of their melodic creations, especially the pentatonic scales based on *Gong* tuning, for example, ‘Ai zhi hua’ (Love of Flower, F *Gong*, six-tone mode) and ‘Mai hua ci’ (C *Gong*, five-tone mode). The widespread use of *Gong* tuning, and especially the use of six-tone mode *Gong* scale, seems because it is much easier to connect with the Western major scale (Hung 2006). The following examples indicate this characteristic and several variants of traditional Chinese melodic composition (e.g. *yuyaowei*).

‘Drizzles’ (1927)⁷⁶

‘Drizzles’ is regarded as the birth of Chinese popular music. The structure of this piece is a single form of four phrases with a full reprise (Example 1.1). This can be considered as two identical parallel sections of four phrases. Each phrase shows a downward trend (Sun 2007: 158) especially in combination with the specific girly vocal style the singer (i.e. Li Minghui) presented in the recording. The melody of ‘Drizzles’ is very much in the Chinese flavour. The traditional pentatonic scale is based on the *Gong* tuning, G *Gong* (five-tone mode G A B D E).⁷⁷ The whole song is developed with the note *Zhi* (D); phrases a and a¹ start from *Gong* (G, tonic), end in *Zhi* (D, dominant); and phrase c starts from *Zhi* (D, dominant), ends in *Gong* (G, tonic). The structure of the Chinese melody resembles the dominant and tonic motion as well as dominant, tonic and subdominant movement of western harmony, as in the chord

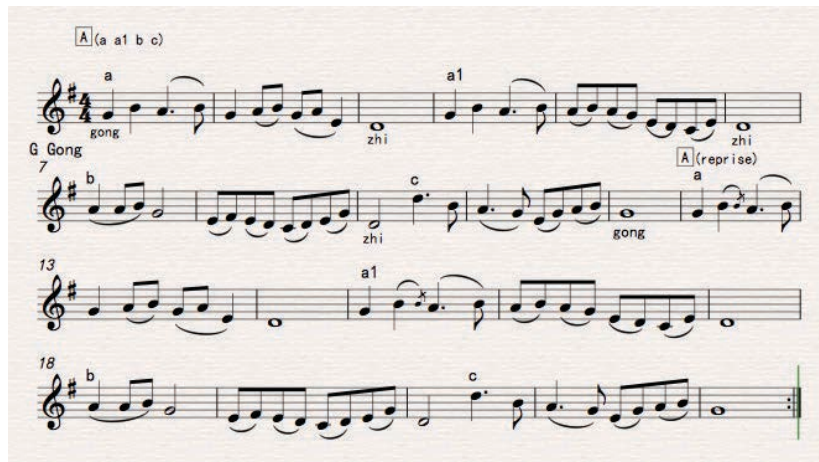
⁷⁵ There are no specific names for six-tone mode scales. While for seven-tone mode scales, they are called *yayue* (with *bianzhi* and *biangong*), *qingyue* (with *qingjue* and *biangong*), and *yanyue* (with *run* and *qingjue*).

⁷⁶ The scores used for this particular song are from Li Jinhui’s musical collection *25 family love songs* (1929).

⁷⁷ The original *Gong* tuning is made by five notes: *Gong*, *Shang*, *Jue*, *Zhi*, *Yu*, which refers to C D E G A, if the *Gong* note is C.

progressions illustrated by Example 1.2.

Example 1.1: ‘Drizzles’



Example 1.2: dominant, tonic and subdominant movement of ‘Drizzles’



In addition to the dominant and tonic relationship of Western harmony, the bass line of this particular song also shows the characteristic of arpeggiated Alberti bass accompaniment that is widely used in western classic music (Chen 2007), just as Example 1.3 illustrates.

Example 1.3: the bass line of section A (indicates the feature of arpeggio)



‘Tebie kuaiche’ (Special Express, 1929)⁷⁸

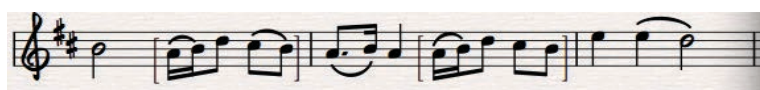
Like ‘Drizzles’, the melody creation of ‘Special Express’ is also based on the *Gong* tuning. This music is in D *Qingyue Gong*⁷⁹ (seven-tone mode scale). The *Qingyue* scale shows *pian* notes *qingjue* (G, minor second above of *Jue*) and *biangong* (C#, the minor second below *Gong*) in the expanded five tone mode *Gong* tuning.

The music largely uses folk musical modes (*xuanfa*) or traditional folk music creation methods. The progression of the melody frequently uses the *yuyaowei* (the fish bites the tail) mode; the first note of the latter phrase is the same as the last note of previous one (Example 1.4), which is a common method of composition in Chinese traditional folk music (Sun 2007:181; Miao 2001; Wu 2017:110), for example, ‘Meng Jiangnü’. Additionally, this song also applies *lian huan kou* (interlink) musical mode, which means the use of part of the melodic lines from the previous phrase as the material of next phrase, and expanding it to a new phrase (Miao 2001), as Example 1.5 illustrates. Folk artists believe that, by using this melodic development technique, it can act as an ‘echo’ between phrases (Miao 2001).

Example 1.4: ‘the fish bites the tail method’



Example 1.5: ‘interlink’



⁷⁸ The scores of this song are from Li Jinhui's musical collection *25 family love songs* (1929).

⁷⁹ D *Qingyue* scale of *Gong* tuning: *Gong* (D), *Shang* (E), *Jue* (F#), *Qingjue* (G), *Zhi* (A), *Yu* (B), *Biangong* (C#), *Gong* (D).

Western popular music structure and diatonic scales/major-minor tonality

Different from Li Jinhui's melody creation mode, which was still very much based on the Chinese folk musical traditions, the later Shanghainese Pops musicians shifted their attention to the imitation of Tin Pan Alley ballads, in particular, the application of Western popular music form i.e. AABA. For instance, Chen Gexin's hits 'Ye Shanghai' (Night life in Shanghai), 'Meigui meigui, wo ai ni' (Rose, Rose, I Love You) and Li Jinguang's masterpiece of Shanghai popular song 'Ye lai xiang' (Tuberose).

'Night life in Shanghai' (1946)

'Night Life in Shanghai' was originally a film score composed by Chen Gexin in 1946.⁸⁰ The structure of 'Night Life in Shanghai', based on Zhou Xuan's recording,⁸¹ is an AABA form with reprise, the main composition pattern of later Shanghai popular songs, especially Chen Gexin's works:

Intro	Jazz band, blues influence
A	Verse
A	Verse
B	Bridge
A	Verse
A	Instrumental verse (band), first two bars are functioned as a small bridge between the first AABA form and its reprise
A	Instrumental verse (band)
B	Bridge (vocal)
A	Verse

The AABA form is a typical scheme frequently used for Tin Pan Alley ballads, although it sounds similar to the Chinese traditional literary form: *qi cheng zhuan he* (Wong 2003: 96),⁸² which might be one of the reasons why many Chinese composers preferred to borrow this form

⁸⁰ Chen Gexin (1914-1961) was a famous Chinese popular music songwriter, and a prominent figure of later Shanghainese Pops.

⁸¹ Zhou Xuan (1918-1957) was a legendary Chinese singer and film actress. She was best known as the iconic singing star in the Great Chinese community, and was named as 'Golden Voice' by her audience due to her distinct vocal qualities/delivery.

⁸² *qi cheng zhuan he* is a typical Chinese rhetorical convention. This pattern or structure has been adapted to various artistic creations. The *qi cheng zhuan he* structure involves four moves – elaboration/beginning (*qi*), the development (*cheng*), the turning point (*zhuan*) and conclusion/the end (*he*), which matches the idea of AABA.

to create pop songs, as observed in many Cantonese pop songs (ibid:96-97).

The Chinese characteristic of ‘Night Life in Shanghai’ is mainly represented by the melody, while the foreign feature, the jazz ensemble, is used as the accompaniment, in exactly the same manner as Li’s pop music creation pattern. The melody of this song is in the B^b *Gong* tuning (B^b, C, D, F, G) with *biangong* note A. With this *biangong* note, the melody shows the characteristic of expanded *Gong* tuning (six-tone mode, B^b, C, D, F, G, A), and also indicates Western diatonic scales despite the melody still reflecting a strong five-tone mode pentatonic flavor.

In this song, the verse and chorus sections both show the feature of diatonic scale or expanded pentatonic tuning; however, in many Shanghai popular songs, the diatonic scale is frequently applied in B-bridge as a comparative section based on the concept of AABA form (Chen 2007:252-253). The pentatonic scale and diatonic scale further illustrates the musical hybridity of Shanghainese Pops.

Another example, ‘Rose, Rose, I Love You’ (1940) is one of the masterpieces of Shanghainese Pops composed by Chen Gexin as an interlude for the movie *Tianya genü* (The Wandering Songstress). This particular song was first recorded by Yao Li on Pathé Records (EMI) and later covered by variety female singers such as Fong Feifei and Anita Mui. In 1951, Columbia Records paid attention to this song, and translated it into an English version ‘Rose, Rose, I Love You’, which is sung by American singer Frankie Laine.⁸³ The structure of this song is also formed as AABA with reprise: AABAA, the melody of the A section is in D *Gong* tuning (D E F# A B) with *bianzhi* note G# (i.e. six-note mode) while the B section is in the D major diatonic scale.

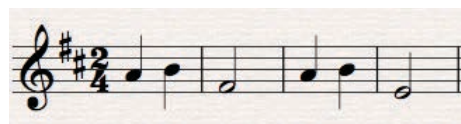
Chen in his works also uses some folk musical modes to stress the Chinese characteristics, for example, the *hetou huanwei* or *hewei huantou* (‘same head, different tail or different tails, same tail’) method as Example 1.6 and Example 1.7 show.

⁸³ Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpEGTSed1II>, accessed on 09 Jun 2009. The English lyrics were written by Wilfred Thomas. This English version is arranged by Chris Langdon, conducted by Paul Weston with his orchestra and accompanied with Norman Lubolf Choir.

Example 1.6: ‘different heads, same tail’ of ‘Night Life in Shanghai’



Example 1.7: the ‘same head, different tails’ mode appeared in B of ‘Rose, Rose, I love You’



‘Tuberose’ (1944)

Another important composer of Shanghainese Pops, Li Jinguang (Li Jinhui’s younger brother), also applied the AABA form and combined Chinese-Western tonality to further develop Li Jinhui’s style of Shanghainese Pops, for example, in the song of ‘Tuberose’. This song was composed by Li Jinguang in 1944, based on Li Xianglan’s recording,⁸⁴ the structure of ‘Tuberose’ is an AABABA form as the table shows:

Intro (0:00-0:28)	Western styled accompaniment (rumba influence)
A	Verse
A	Verse
B	Bridge (vocal)
A	Verse (the melodic line of the last two bars are changed)
B	Instrumental Bridge (Western instruments accompaniment)
A	Verse

⁸⁴ As the representative song of Shanghai popular music, ‘Tuberose’ was not first recorded by a Chinese singer but a Chinese-born Japanese singer Yoshiko Yamaguchi/Shirley Yamaguchi, who is well known in China by her Chinese name Li Xianglan. Yamaguchi’s recording of ‘Tuberose’ not only made it into a hit Shanghai pop song on its debut but also allowed herself to be turned into a well-known female pop star in China. However, due to the identity of this specific female singer and the strong hostility towards Japan/Japanese in Chinese society, ‘Tuberose’ was banned in China in 1945. Despite being banned, it is still considered as a classic Shanghai popular song, it regained its popularity in China when it was covered by Teresa Teng, the legendary Taiwanese female singer, in the 1970s (though it was banned again in the 1980s). Shelley Stephenson’s chapter on Li Xianglan (i.e. Chapter 10, 222-245) in *Cinema and Urban Cultural in Shanghai, 1922-1943* (edited by Yingjin Zhang, 1999) provides valuable reference to Yoshiko Yamaguchi/Li Xianglan and her musical life as well as the development of Shanghai’s film industry.

Music is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0f8D8PWhQSg>, accessed on 6th Sep 2016.

Ending (2:54-3:14)	Vocal fade out
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Similar to Chen Gexin's works, Li Jinguang also used a mixture of Chinese pentatonic scale and Western diatonic scale to contrast A and B sections. Here, Li used D major diatonic scale to compose the verse section and applied *Gong* tuning (six-tone mode D *Gong* tuning with *biangong* note C#) as the basis of the bridge section.

Through the above examples, the melodic compositional technique of Shanghainese Pops, and especially the early Shanghainese Pops established by Li Jinhui, is influenced by Chinese folk musical traditions. These folk musical elements demonstrate the Chinese characteristic, which constitute half of the identity of Shanghainese Pops and allowed interviewees to link this musical form with the sense of Chineseness and Chinese style. However, the folk elements and the strong traditional Chinese flavour seemd also cause the interviewees' perceptions of the sense of 'vulgar music'.

Kei notes that, 'folk songs or folk music was traditionally categorized in Chinese culture under "vulgar music", as opposed to the refined "elegant music"' (2000:4). For my comtemporary interviewees, the perception of 'vulgar music' – its decadent flavor, appears to lie in the presentation of the music, the vocals, the performance style and more directly, the lyrics.

2. Lyrics

Lyrics played a crucial role in the production of Shanghainese Pops by shaping the flavor and the gendered image of this musical form. During the interview process, most interviewees linked the vulgar sensation with the lyrics of Shanghainese Pops. To them, the lyrics create the unrefined impression because they are direct descriptions of love between men and women; they lack elegance, subtlety and meaning. For example, the interviewee Tian (a 25-year-old postgraduate research student) states that:

The lyrics of Shanghainese Pops are mainly about men-women love, very simple and I feel the lyrics are quite vulgar...they [lyrics] are not as elegant as China Wind songs. You don't need to imagine or think of the meaning of those words because they just mean what they literally mean.

In some Chinese studies of Shanghainese Pops, researchers (e.g. Tang and Chen 2015) claim

that the lyrics of Shanghainese Pops showed the characteristics of Chinese aesthetics – the lyrics illustrated similar elegance and beauty as Chinese classic literatures. Their works show that absorbing and using Chinese classic literary phrases was one of the main features of Shanghainese Pops creation (can be seen in the example of ‘Love of Flower’ that presented in the following section), which seems against the sense of ‘vulgar’ that perceived by the interviewees. Although some of Shanghai popular songs, especially some of Li’s earlier songs, did imitate or use Chinese classical literary phrases or poetic form as references in the lyrical creation, such as ‘New Poem of Red Bean’ and ‘Smooth Wind’,⁸⁵ the elegant attribute from the ‘high art’ has been switched to vulgar expressions during the absorbing materials process, since the text of this musical form paid more attention on the expression of personal love and romance.

In contrast to Chinese classical literature, the folk songs or tunes, as a form of ‘low art’, mainly served for rock-bottom ordinary citizens. Therefore, the sense of vulgar seems inevitably rooted in the lyrical creation of Shanghainese Pops due to the strong folk influence and the musical creation aim as Li pointed out – it should be easy for ordinary people to understand, enjoy and spread. In addition, the elegant elements did not match the ‘entertaining function’ of this musical form either. Shanghainese Pops functions as a tool, which should not only be enjoyed by its audiences, but also entertain them, save them and help them ‘escape’ from the serious war-time social environment.

The construction of feminine sexuality⁸⁶

In addition to the vulgar content, the interviewees are particularly aware of the gender dynamics that are presented through the text of Shanghainese Pops – the construction of feminine sexuality. The interviewees Xiaojie (a female office worker originally from Xinjiang, an autonomous territory in northwest China) and Zining (a female PhD student who studies in the U.K.), provide representative statements:

Xiaojie: Well, I feel that the lyrics of most Shanghainese Pops were created from

⁸⁵ Both of these two songs switched part of the poetical lines (i.e. classical literary phrases) to fit the lyrical creation based on love-themed text.

⁸⁶ This section only discusses how male musicians construct Shanghainese Pops as a feminine form through the text. The gender dynamic or multiple gender identities as well as the perception of various versions of femininity reflected by female performers of this musical form will be explored further in chapter 4.

a female perceptive; presenting women's feelings and thoughts, and also sung by women through the first person accent.

Zining: Although Shanghainese Pops as a whole, is a women's music, it was not used to serve women themselves. I mean they were sung by women but created for pleasuring men. The lyrics of Shanghainese Pops presenting how women, especially songstresses, love men or how they miss men through the female perspective. It's clear that these songs were used to satisfy men.

Both Xiaojie and Zining point out that the main subject that they have perceived from the text of Shanghainese Pops is women, and they both thought that the lyrics used the female perspective to deliver the love-themed narrative. For Zining, in addition to the subject matter, she also mentions her interpretation of the purpose and function of the construction of feminine sexuality; to let men get pleasure from women. The description of women and especially the construction of femininity through the text of Shanghainese Pops can be seen in the following examples 'Love of Flower', 'When will the gentleman come back again?' and 'Tian ya ge nü' (The Wandering Songstress).

Partial lyrics of 'Love of Flower' (by Li Jinhui)

The underlined lyrics borrowed the poetical concept from the Southern Tang lyric poet Jiang Jie's work, their meaning is similar as: *cherry blossom is getting red, pear blossom is getting white*. (The English translations are Chinese lyrics marked in Bold).

红了桃花,白了梨花, 香了茉莉花,醉了玫瑰花,前也花,后也花,春光到我家。

带着樱花,佩着兰花,拈着海棠花,抱着杏子花,左也花,右也花,春色难描画!

开了鲜花,摘了鲜花,放了心花,涌出了爱的花,春心荡荡不觉乱如麻!

每逢想他,先要恨他,再要骂他,方才饶了他,古往今来,爱情本来是假,

何忍怪了他!

I (the female perspective) am utterly confused for desiring for love,

Every time when (I) think about him, first to hate him, then scold him, finally give him a break,

through the ages, love has always been a fake, how can (I) blame him!

Partial lyrics of ‘When will the gentleman come back again?’ (by Huang Jiamo or Yan Ru, his pen name)

好花不常开，好景不长在
愁堆解笑眉，泪洒相思带
今宵离别后，何日君再来

Beautiful flowers seldom open, good times never last in,
Sorrows cover the smiling brow, eyes are covered with tears,
After parting tonight, when will you [the gentleman] come back again?

Partial lyrics of ‘The Wandering Songstress’ (by Tian Han)

天涯呀海角

觅呀觅知音

小妹妹唱歌郎奏琴

郎呀咱们俩是一条心

爱呀爱呀郎呀

咱们俩是一条心

From the end of the world, to the farthest sea

[I] searched for my soul mate

Xiaomeimei [implies ‘I’ as a woman] sings, while he accompanies me on the instrument

Our love through the hard times is deep indeed

家山呀北望

泪呀泪沾襟

小妹妹想郎直到今

郎呀患难之交恩爱深

From the mountains of [my] home, looking towards the north

Tears run down [my] collar

I [again, the female perspective] think of my man till this day

Our love through the hard times is deep indeed

Through the above lyrics, ‘I’ is used as the first person to construct ‘her’ desires, behaviours and thoughts (and ‘you’ implies men). In some cases, where the text is telling a story about ‘her’ through the narrator, it is used as the third person to speak for ‘her’, for instance, ‘Night Life of Shanghai’.

Partial lyrics of ‘Night Life of Shanghai’ (by Fan Yanqiao)

夜上海 夜上海 你是个不夜城

华灯起 乐声响 歌舞升平

只见她 笑脸迎 谁知她内心苦闷

夜生活 都为了 衣食住行

Shanghai night, Shanghai night, you are a city that never sleeps

Bright lights, the sing sounds, singing and dancing to extol the good times

People saw her smiling face who knows her inner depression

The nightlife is needed just for the basic necessities of life

Through these lyrics, the text of Shanghainese Pops presents the female perspective or a description of women. In addition, it constructs various feminine images (e.g. pitifulness) and informs audiences’ differing perceptions of this musical form and related female singers and performers (this will be discussed further in Chapter 4). However, what the majority of interviewees missed is the fact that the writers of the lyrics of Shanghainese Pops are men, and some of them are also the male musicians who produce the sound of this musical form, such as Li Jinhui. These male musicians, based on their understandings and concerns of women and feminine sexuality, especially those ‘poor women’ who were from the lower classes – the songstresses mentioned by Zining, use the female perspective to show women’s desires. Their approach to constructing female identity or feminine sexuality appears similar to that of (traditional) Chinese male writers who frequently portrayed women as virtuous, skittish or beautiful and vulnerable in their works. For instance, the seductive female character Pan Jinlian of *Water Margin*, or the role of ‘the beauty’ in various fictional martial art pieces (e.g. works by Jin Yong and Gu Long). Since Chinese traditional cultural space was based on a masculine consciousness, the description of women in these male writers’ works was then very much based on the standard of ‘cultural masculinity’ (Chen and Li 2009). In some of Shanghainese Pops, such as ‘Drizzles’, the male lyricists shared a different attitude toward women and femininity which demonstrated a partial break with the traditional male-dominated culture. However, the construction of women’s behaviors, feelings and desires, then shows that the ‘female perspective’ was still based on the dominant masculine consciousness, which will be demonstrated further in Chapter 4.

The direct expression of male-female love and the construction of feminine sexuality in combination with the girlish vocal delivery, precipitated the strong criticism of Shanghainese Pops as an ‘indecent’ musical form. This was not only because the content and the female performance style were considered ‘morally unhealthy’ but was also due to the incorrect social

value, entertaining, that it presented. As the founder of Shanghainese Pops, Li Jinhui was also considered as an ‘intellectual’ whose musical thoughts and ideology were inspired and influenced by the Cultural Movement and the ‘common people idea’ as mentioned previously. Therefore, his music was expected to either illustrate the value and impact of Chinese cultures⁸⁷ or show the patriotic and nationalist sensations – encourage people to fight against aggressors and save the country during war time (see Chapter 4), rather than overindulging the masses in entertaining themselves or to seek pleasure from women.

3. Jazz accompaniment

As James Farrer and Andrew David Field suggest ‘between the 1920s and 1940s, Shanghai experienced the Jazz Age in its decadent and hedonistic splendor. The fast tempo, dances and music that were becoming popular in America and Europe were also infecting Shanghai with their rhythms and beats’ (2015: 16).⁸⁸ The presentation of jazz materials is another element that has been strongly perceived by the interviewees. It is the main source used by the interviewees to show their decoding of the cultural hybridity of Shanghainese Pops and the local culture, as Thomas (a former BBC China journalist who works in the UK) and Tian (a PhD student from the northern Mainland) state:

Thomas: Shanghainese Pops is accompanied with jazz [big band], the jazz elements not only distinguish this musical style sounding different to others but also creates the specific foreign flavor that matches the environment of old Shanghai at that time: *shili yangchang* [urban Shanghai glamour].⁸⁹

Tian: Actually when you mentioned Shanghainese Pops, what firstly popped up in my mind is its jazz influence; the jazz band and the jazz performers. For me, Shanghainese Pops is different [compared with the other two musical forms] because most songs were arranged in a jazz style [the instruments] and more importantly, they were performed by foreign musicians.

As Thomas and Tian’s statements indicate, although Shanghainese Pops was based in part on

⁸⁷ As Li himself states, ‘musicians in that era all consider the western music as the authentic music, singing Chinese music would be laughed by others...use national (music) is also a fight’ (Zhang and Chen 1959: 171). Therefore, Li aimed to create music with distinct Chinese characteristics and promote the influence of Chinese musical cultures to balance or against this phenomenon, e.g. he insisted that children learn folk and traditional music as Sun (2007:15) suggests.

⁸⁸ According to Farrer and Field (2015:16), the reason that jazz emerged and developed in early Shanghai is associated with the colonial influence, including the International Settlement, French Concession or ‘European and American residents’ in the city (as indicated in the introduction to this chapter).

⁸⁹ This term is frequently used by interviewees to imply their understandings of foreignness of old Shanghai in 1930s and 1940s, and the blooming market of Shanghai in that era.

the Chinese traditional or folk musical materials, another key feature of Shanghainese Pops – the ‘foreign flavor’ or the ‘ethnic variety’ represented by this musical form – was created by the jazz elements.

Although audiences did not show strong interest to search or know the exact identity of ‘foreign jazz performers or musicians’,⁹⁰ many of jazz bands (especially those served for foreign and wealthy Chinese customers) in that era were organized and performed by the white Russian musicians (Figure 1.2, photo from Wong 2001:27) – one of the main figures who ‘served an important role as transmitters of popular Western musical taste and practice to their Chinese colleagues’ (Wong 2002: 249).



Figure 1.2: jazz band made up of white Russian musicians

In 1933, in response to the invitation of Du Yuesheng, who wanted to organize a Chinese jazz band for his Yang Zijiang restaurant, Li Jinhui created the Qing feng wu band, the first ballroom band that was constituted by all Chinese performers (Sun 2007:59). The music they played was rearranged danceable music that was based on the characteristics of both American jazz and Chinese folk and opera music, and came to be known as ‘Sinified Jazz’ in the West (Jones 2002). The successful practice of jazz-accompanied folk music seems to be the main reason that Li Jinhui’s pop songs were re-recorded during the mid-1930s, such as ‘Drizzles’ and ‘Special Express’ (as mentioned precedingly).

Based on the source i.e. the re-recorded jazz version of 1934, in the song ‘Drizzles’, Li imitated the arrangement of big band; he used piano, saxophone, violin and clarinet to make a jazz orchestra to perform Shanghai popular songs. However, due to the characteristics of Chinese

⁹⁰ For interviewees, they consistently preferred to use the term ‘Western’ to refer to the sense of foreignness without knowing (or caring about) the exact identity group who creates the ‘foreignness’.

traditional vocal approach, in addition to keeping some jazz (swing) features such as the foxtrot rhythm, Li varied the style a little in the performance, allowing the instruments to play the same melody as the vocals to stress the traditional Chinese folk tone (Example 1.8).

Example 1.8: accompaniment of ‘Drizzles’



Time	Jazz band accompaniment style
0:04-0:30 (intro)	Performed by big band, musical materials based on melodic line a, b and c.
0:04-0:09 (a), 0:10-0:26 (a, b, c)	
0:30-1:16 (:A:)	Instrumental accompaniment, perform exactly same melody as vocal (a, a1, b, c)
1:17-1:40 (instrumental solo)	Sax perform melodic line a, a1, b, c (with band accompaniment)
1:41-2:03 (instrumental solo)	String perform melodic line a, a1, b, c (with band accompaniment)
2:04-2:50 (:A:)	Instrumental accompaniment, perform exactly same melody as vocal (a, a1, b, c)

‘Special Express’ also shows the similar features of the jazz-like accompaniment of ‘Drizzles’. The first version of ‘Special Express’ was recorded in 1930, sung by Wang Renmei and Li Lili, it sounds like a traditional *Jiangnan* folk tune due to the arrangement of Chinese folk instruments (Sun 2007:183). The second version, the jazz version that is the source used in this chapter (Example 1.9) was recorded in 1935 (sung by Zhou Xuan), and represents a rich swing jazz flavor. Zhou Xuan, in this version, sang one lyrical section of the song; the other vocalist sections were all replaced by the band and the band played exactly same melody as the vocal.⁹¹ The Western instrumental solos and the accompanying style from this song are decoded as ‘foreignness’ or ‘foreign flavour’ of Shanghainese Pops by most of the interviewees (which I

⁹¹ The original version includes three lyrical sections with the same melodic line.

will discuss further in the last section).

Example 1.9: accompaniment of ‘Special Express’

Time	Jazz band accompaniment style
0:01-0:20 (instrumental intro)	Band imitating the sound of the train whistle and motor rhythm (slow-fast)
0:21-1:30 (lyrical section 1)	Instrumental solo, exactly same melody as vocal
1:31-1:39	Instrumental bridge
1:40-2:39 (lyrical section 2)	Foxtrot rhythm (piano) accompanying vocal
2:40-3:00 (instrumental outro)	Similar to intro, Band imitating the sound of the train whistle and motor rhythm (fast-slow)

Through these two examples, Li’s use of Western instruments or ensemble as accompaniment is not for the unison, but mainly uses different ‘timbres’ to illustrate the same melody to create a ‘Chinese style canon’.⁹² It is partly because of his musical background – he was a folk musician without formal training either in jazz/jazz arrangement or Western classical music – and partly because of his ideology regarding musical creation: ‘the western instruments should serve for the Chinese folk tunes, using the method of performing *huqin* to perform violin’ (Li 1994:20-22).

In addition to Li’s pop songs, we can take Chen Gexin’s hit song ‘Night Life in Shanghai’ as another example of the application of jazz elements of later Shanghainese Pops. Chen’s ‘Night Life in Shanghai’ sounds less folk, which are due in part to the vocal presentation of Zhou Xuan and the increased incorporation of jazz music idioms. Compared with Li Minghui’s girly, nasal, folk song voice, Zhou Xuan’s voice sounds more natural, softer and tender in this song.

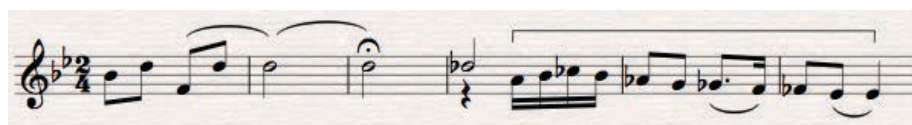
This particular song starts with an instrumental intro which imitates the sound of Shanghai’s urban life: heavy traffic on the street, and the sound of car horns. The intro features some blues

⁹² Like ‘Drizzles’, using different instrumental solos, vocals, and band to perform the same melodic line to create the polyphonic effect. However, no existing scores or evidence can clearly prove that this swing arrangement style was created by the songwriter themselves. Especially consider that the jazz style is quite different to his other modes of musical creation, such as children’s dramas (Sun 2007:59), it might instead improvised by the band performers.

influences, rare in early Shanghainese Pops.

Example 1.10 shows the main melodic line of the intro, notes from the bracket part i.e. E^b, G^b and B^b seem influenced by the hexatonic blues scale (six-note mode, C, E^b, F, G, G^b, B^b). The six-note blues scale is often used in jazz music, borrowing the specific notes from the scale might be a more direct way to show the jazz flavour of this music, especially when performed by brass.

Example 1.10: blues influence in the intro of ‘Night Life in Shanghai’



The different types of chords (triad, seventh, ninth) in the A (verse)-B (bridge) sections increase the harmonic tension and the harmonic thickness of this song, while some specific chord progressions, I–II^m–V (B^b-C^m-F), (I)–VI^m–II^m–V (B^b-G^m-C⁹-F), which can be found in verse chord progression for instance, show a more integrated and complicated chord application i.e. a stronger American-like jazz flavour, compared with early Shanghai popular songs.⁹³ In addition, the chord progressions of the first verse and bridge sections illustrate a typical musical creation method of early Chinese popular music: ‘superimposed Western harmonies on Chinese pentatonic melodies’ (Fletcher 2001:652). The chords are mainly matched with the traditional five-tone mode Gong scale: B^b, C, D, F, G as Example 1.11 and Example 1.12 show, especially the *Gong-Zhi* (B^b–F) relationship.⁹⁴ This method is frequently used in Chinese style popular song creations including Shanghainese Pops in the early years, also in China Wind songs in the 2000s.

⁹³ Some of Li Jinhui’s works though, such as ‘Special Express’, while indicating part of this characteristic, implement this simplistically and fail to illustrate the features clearly.

⁹⁴ The piano accompaniment score is provided by Zheng Deren, who was the bass player of the original Jin Jiemei jazz band of *Bailemen* in Shanghai (1940s), the full band score can be seen in Zheng’s book *Saloon Orchestra Pieces 3* (2004). The band score was also collected by Chen Chen during their interviews in 2005 (as one historical collection).

Example 1.11: chord progression of the A-verse

Chord progression of the A-verse:

B \flat Cm F A \flat C⁹ F Gm C⁹

↑ This chord, though marked as C⁹ in the score, is more like Cadd⁹ based on the notes

Chord progression of the A-verse:

F B \flat

Example 1.12: chord progression of the B-bridge

Chord progression of the B-bridge:

B \flat F B \flat Dm⁷ B \flat F

Chord progression of the B-bridge:

B \flat F B \flat Dm⁷ B \flat



The jazz accompaniment, as the audience reception shows, is the main source for the sense of ‘foreign flavour’, or the ‘*yiyu qingdiao*’ (exotic sensation) as Hung (2006) suggests.⁹⁵ Despite the discussion of whose exoticism in the music that suggested by Jones (2001) and Hung(2006),⁹⁶ this perception shows the nature of hybridity of Shanghai popular songs that developed with the specific sociocultural environment; it is not a separate Chinese or Western musical form but a ‘fluidly blended’ musical culture (Hung 2006).

IV. Conclusion: Shanghainese Pops, hybridity and the Chinese style

For most of my interviewees, Shanghainese Pops is easily perceived and decoded as a musical form of Chinese style popular music; however, it is also the most difficult case to be explained based on their stance of Chinese characteristics or Chineseness, especially when their perceptions of Shanghainese Pops are dominated by the sense of ‘foreign flavor’. It seems that only the folk musical materials match their approach of linking Shanghainese Pops and the sense of Chineseness as they used to measure the standard or quality of the concept of Chinese style. In addition, compared with other two musical forms in this research, Northwest Wind and China Wind, which are perceived as Chinese style popular music in part due to the strong presentation of nationalism and patriotism, the interviewees’ interpretations show that Shanghainese Pops is ‘less Chinese’ and more ‘international’, as the interviewees Tian (a PhD student from the North of China) and Xiaoyu (a 27-year-old teaching fellow who originally

⁹⁵ Hung considers the foreignness of jazz accompaniment in Shanghai popular songs as a kind of exotic sensation (to the Chinese audiences).

⁹⁶ Both of them point out that the exotic feeling for Chinese audiences come from the jazz accompaniment while for the foreigners (e.g. foreign jazz performers) or the jazz music itself, the exotic sensation derives from the Chinese flavor – Chinese musical materials.

comes from Southern China) state:

(Xiaoyu): Shanghainese Pops is a musical form of Chinese style [popular music], but it's different to Northwest Wind and China Wind. The other two musical forms present very obvious Chineseness or Chinese characteristics through [musical] sources. However, Shanghainese Pops doesn't show a strong presentation of Chineseness but the sense of hybridity. It sounds local but also very international. It's not as local as the other two musical forms in which you can feel the Chinese spirit immediately, like the reginal sound of Northwest Wind or the cultural influence from China Wind. The Shanghainese Pops somehow shows a sense of foreign flavor. (Tian): Especially as many of the performers of Shanghainese Pops were not Chinese but Western musicians [the jazz performers], it's very different to other Chinese style music.

Na: Then why do you still consider it as a form of Chinese style popular music?

(Xiaoyu): Because it relates with the specific social and cultural environments. It reflects the history; what Chinese people had experienced in that era, it links with the specific Chinese social reality.

Tian and Xiaoyu's statements, once again, point out the sense of hybridity of the perception of Shanghainese Pops – without the Western identity and characteristics, it is no longer Shanghainese Pops. However, what successfully allows them to link Shanghainese Pops and the concept of Chinese style is the unique historical reality and the specific cultural memories of Shanghai at that time. Even though they do not share that experience, the institutional discourses, educational materials and the related film and television sources 'create' the particular impression and memory of Shanghainese Pops as well as the old Shanghai culture for them. This accumulated understanding finally allows them to negotiate their stance of Chineseness, identity and ethnicity in this case. In other words, even though the presentation of Shanghainese Pops and the existence of Western jazz musicians, largely rubs against the interviewees' decoding of the idea of Chinese style, the specific sociocultural environment and the social reality of the lifestyle during the wartime period are interpreted as the reflection of Chineseness or a type of 'Chinese characteristic'. Consequently, the meaning of Chinese style in the case of Shanghainese Pops is different from the other two illustrated musical cases, it is neither strongly linked with Chinese cultural influence nor used as a symbol for national power – it is less 'positive'.

In addition, interviewees' decoding also question the arguments of a few Chinese researchers (e.g. Xie 2017) who claim that the use of folk music elements and Chinese classical literary materials in Shanghainese Pops could be considered as the first an attempt at nationalism in

Chinese popular music. It is true that as a foreign product, modern popular music or culture is not rooted in China. When introduced to Chinese society, the production of popular music might be reproduced in order to survive in the local sociocultural environment. Therefore, it is logical that composers like Li Jinhui or Chen Gexin and their contemporaries used and imitated a variety of forms and modes of traditional folk music and Chinese classical literary elements to produce a sense of Chineseness for this musical form. However, this kind of Chineseness cannot be the strong reason to imply that Shanghainese Pops is an attempt at nationalism in Chinese popular music. As Li Jinhui himself states ‘when I create (Shanghainese Pops) in the later phase, *it is just like squeeze toothpaste out of a tube...the music is created by pressing... no matter it is the Western tune or Chinese folk tune, no matter it is the Chinese poem or Western poetry, they are all my creative materials*’ (Li 1983:217, emphasis mine). Although Li used a variety of folk elements, he picked musical materials without a particular nationalist goal as himself stated.

Moreover, the reason that I argue Shanghainese Pops cannot be simply assumed as an attempt of nationalism of Chinese popular music is not because it relates with jazz elements or pursues commercial goals, but because of the ‘climate’ reflected by this form. Shanghainese Pops was born in a particular city in a specific war-time social condition; as an ‘entertaining tool’, it did not match the mainstream Chinese patriotic value and spirit at that time. The girly vocal (sound), the vulgar expressions, the construction of feminine sexuality (text) and the jazz accompaniment that linked with specific locations was partially inspired by a commercial motivation, and were hugely against patriotic or nationalistic sensibilities in that era. In other words, Shanghainese Pops was created partly based on the commercial aims of the special classes enjoy urban life in Shanghai at that time, rather than strictly musical aims.

Therefore, though musicians did build a specific Chinese styled music compositional model, it is hard to say that the use of folk elements or Chinese literary materials in Shanghainese Pops implies the nationalism of Chinese popular music. Especially considering the perception of the sources of this musical form, the case of Shanghainese Pops is more like an oppositional example, going against the interviewees’ interpretations of the meaning and function of Chinese style. The multiple modes of hybridity seemed to challenge audiences’ understandings of nationalism and patriotism. However, the ‘negotiated standard’ that interviewees used to measure the quality of Chinese style reflect the fluidity of their stance with regards to Chineseness, national identity and ethnicity. This kind of fluidity, caused by the fusion of

Chinese-Western musical and cultural elements, not only existed in the case of Shanghainese Pops but also in Northwest Wind and China Wind, where audiences show their ambivalent or subtle interpretations of the meaning of Chinese style.

Chapter 2: Northwest Wind (*xibeifeng*, 1980s)

‘The door is opened, we can write, but what can we write? What is Chinese style popular music?’

—Jin Zhaojun (2002:118)

I. Introduction

1. Introduction

Since the political reform and opening-up policy of 1978, Northwest Wind (*xibeifeng*) has been regarded as the classic chapter in the development of Chinese popular music. For most composers, singers and audiences who were involved in this phenomenon, Northwest Wind was a musical form that produced and witnessed the golden era of original Chinese popular music creation. More importantly, it served as a distinct symbol that represented the national consciousness and cultural criticism in that era.

Chinese musicians and critics, for example, Xu Peidong, Jin Zhaojun, regarded Northwest Wind as the first indigenous musical form to emerge on the Mainland since 1978. The emergence of Northwest Wind was part of the mid-80s *Xungen wenhua* (root-seeking cultural movement) with parallel movements in music, literature and film (Brace 1992:146). The root-seeking movement was a manifestation of the reconstruction of Chinese national identity in the specific social conditions of the 1980s which was exacerbated by the damaged Chinese identity and culture, Maoist thoughts in the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976),⁹⁷ and the new flood of foreign cultural influences (Clark 2012:115).

By analysing sound, text and visual materials of Northwest Wind music, this chapter emphasises the complex interplay of regional and national identity of this musical form – how

⁹⁷ The Cultural Revolution was a sociopolitical movement that took place in People's Republic of China between 1966 and 1976. Set into motion by Mao Zedong, who was the Chairman of the Communist Party of China at that time, the revolution was launched in order to ensure Mao's authority and 'get rid of his rivals' (*BBC News* 2016). 'The Cultural Revolution crippled the economy, ruined millions of lives and thrust China into 10 years of turmoil, bloodshed, hunger and stagnation' (Phillips 2016).

Northwest Wind has represented both ‘national’ and ‘regional’ identities for listeners. Within interviewees’ perceptions of ‘Chinese characteristics’ in this form, this chapter firstly illustrates audiences’ changing standard of measuring regional and national characteristics – the fluid decoding of Chineseness – and their (especially the younger generation) interpretations of the sense of ‘modern’ and mass and elite cultures based on interviewees’ different cultural backgrounds. In addition, it also discovers the contradictory nature of Northwest Wind music through the audio-visual perspective. The interview data will demonstrate how the audience reception and scholarly interpretations of these multimedia documents have diverged in some notable ways. Unlike the two other cases in this research, which feature a variety of works within the particular form, the distinctness of the Northwest Wind scene is that ‘everyone sings one song’ as Ai Diren (2008) and Jin Zhaojun (2002:133) point out. I then chose two of the most representative songs, i.e. ‘Huangtu gaopo’ (Hills of Yellow Earth) and ‘Xin tian you’, as main examples to reflect the characteristic of Northwest Wind style.⁹⁸

2. Previous approaches to Northwest Wind study

Jin Zhaojun’s research (1988, 2002) is not only the pioneering work on Northwest Wind music in China but also the main source for Western scholars’ studies of Northwest Wind phenomenon (e.g. Nimrod Baranovitch 2003; Steen 2000). Jin’s (1988) paper illustrates the distinct characteristics of this musical form in comparison to other types of popular music in the Mainland and indicates the masculine forces of Northwest Wind. He also pays attention to the specific sociocultural conditions of the emergence of this musical form. Jin points out that this particular musical style ‘takes typical popular music originated under the conditions of industrialisation (Western rock influence) and the typical music culture that preserved itself in its isolation (Northwestern folk music)’ to establish a ‘hard/*yang*’ style in contrast to the flourish of ‘soft/*yin*’ music (2002:278).⁹⁹ Jin’s research provides a valuable reference, and my interviewees’ interpretations of Northwest Wind music reiterate how the ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ materials have been perceived respectively based on the geographic influence, and also illustrate how audiences have decoded and linked these materials with the concept of Chinese style in this case. Qian Lijuan’s research (2011, 2016) focuses on the characteristics

⁹⁸ These two songs are considered as the classic works of Northwest Wind music by most of my interviewees and the public, they were also chosen as the representative songs of Northwest Wind style in the CCTV programme (see Chapter 5).

⁹⁹ Jin considers these soft and sentimental songs that were imported from *Gangtai* (Hong Kong and Taiwan) pop music in mainland China as a type of ‘*yin*’ music. Meanwhile, he sees the emergence of Northwest Wind music as a representation of the strength of Chinese popular music, i.e. as a ‘hard/*yang*’ musical style.

of contradiction, balance and unification of Northwest Wind music and 1980s Chinese popular music. After interviewing musicians and analysing some musical sources of 1980s popular music, including Northwest Wind music, Qian determined that Northwest Wind is a musical form based on a pair of oppositional elements, in particular, the combination of rural and modern musical materials and the ‘critical and loving’ way of expression. This contradictory feature of Northwest Wind music is articulated in my research through an alternative perspective: oppositional emotions caused by audio-visual elements. In addition, within the perception of the musical and visual materials, this contradiction also challenges the understanding of ‘hard’ or ‘masculinity’ that presented by previous studies of Northwest Wind music through the gender perspective (which will be discussed in Chapter 5).

In addition to these fundamental works on Northwest Wind, the studies of this musical style in China are mainly MA theses and brief articles or papers that are generally focused on three perspectives: the musical characteristics of Northwest Wind songs (e.g. Zheng 2010; Wu 2014); the comparison between Northwest Wind music and China Wind music (e.g. Zhao 2007; Shao 2012), and the discussion of cultural influences of Northwest Wind music (e.g. Aidiren 2008).¹⁰⁰

Compared with Chinese scholars’ works, Anglophone scholarship focuses more on the idea of political awareness and cultural criticism represented by the Northwest Wind phenomenon. Mercedes M. Dujunco’s research (2002) pays attention to the feature of hybridity and disjuncture of the Northwest Wind. When examining the musical hybridity and the text of Northwest Wind songs, Dujunco claims that the text and sound/vocal delivery of this musical form suggest that the image of this rural region represents ‘the primordial origins of the Chinese people’ and the criticism shown by the lyrics indicates the poor living environment in that region, which may go against the ideology of the Communist Party. Nimrod Baranovitch’s work (2003:18-25, 127-132), based on Jin’s research of the Northwest Wind phenomenon, shifts attention from textual analysis to the gender dynamics. Through considering Beijing as an alternate pole to Hong Kong and Taiwan, Baranovitch’s research shows how the gendered stylistic aspects become mapped onto geographical and national planes of references. Baranovitch claims that Northwest Wind music is a revival of the masculinity of China and

¹⁰⁰ Aidiren (2008) points out that the emergence of Northwest Wind music opened up the channel for Mainland popular music landing on Taiwan and Hong Kong. The Chinese popular music market was no longer only dominated by music imported from Hong Kong and Taiwan but also was derived from the Mainland.

Chinese popular music that was lost for a long period under the flood of femininity in the Chinese popular music market, and in that context, female singers of Northwest Wind music were ‘assumed in the masculine image, and women and femininity were relegated to the margins of Chinese history and culture’ (2003:130). Baranovitch’s work stresses the production of masculinity of Northwest Wind music; however, the argument is mainly built on the vocal delivery and aural effects of this style. Without connecting the visual materials, such as the live performance and music videos of Northwest Wind music, the gender identities performed by female singers and the gendered image of this musical form remains oversimplified or under-described. In my research, the ‘hard’ vocal singing approach and the related aural effects are decoded in different ways by my interviewees based on their different genders and age ranges. The audience reception shows various interpretations of masculinity and multiple links of the perception of hardness/masculinity, female singers and the regional features, which will be discussed further in the following sections and Chapter 5. Tim Brace’s research (1991) of Northwest Wind focuses on the stylistic features of this musical form. Brace compares Northwest Wind as an alternative style with *Gangtai* (music from Hong Kong and Taiwan) pop as the dominant style in the Mainland (especially Beijing) music scenes. Brace argues that although the rough vocal delivery made Northwest Wind songs sound different from *Gangtai* pop songs, the production of Northwest Wind is combined with instrumentation and arrangements characteristics of *Gangtai* style music. The combination of the distinct Northwest Wind characteristic and the *Gangtai* style, according to Brace, reflects the fact that the identity of Northwest Wind is hybridised, both nationally and internationally. In my research, even though the feature of hybridisation is perceived by the interviewees through musical sources of this style, the message of national or international influence is not decoded by them in the same way as it is encoded or interpreted by musicians and scholars. In particular, interviewees’ interpretations of ‘national characteristics’ in this case illustrates how the regional level has been ‘transformed’ to refer to the national level, and also question the identity and meaning of ‘national’ in previous research of Northwest Wind. In the same manner, the international characteristics, such as rock elements, are not simply perceived as the symbol of foreignness or Western influence but is highly related with interviewees’ impression of the geographical features of Northwest China and their own cultural backgrounds. It, in fact, blurs interviewees’ stance of Chineseness and foreignness, and also demonstrates a series of ‘transformation’ of identities: **a foreign or Western musical influence bypasses national identity and comes to represent regional identity in contrast to national identity.**

3. What is Northwest Wind?

Northwest Wind, which is widely known as *xibeifeng* in China, is a distinct musical form that emerged and spread extensively over the Mainland in the late 1980s. The Chinese character *feng* (wind) is widely interpreted as *fengge* (style) and also is used to indicate the ‘speed and scale in dissemination’ of this musical form (Zhou 2007:109). Many musical works of this style are a fusion which primarily combines Chinese northern folk musical elements with Western rock and disco. The northern folk musical materials are the main sources used by interviewees to decode the musical-regional identity – the interlink between Northwest Wind and Northwest China, as the interviewee Ruona (a 45-year-old administration worker in a Beijing educational institution) states:

Northwest Wind was the popular music that I used to listen to when I was young. Many of the musical sources in the music come from the specific region [Northwest] of China. And you can distinguish this musical form from others easily because it sounds different.

During the interview process, most interviewees shared the same opinion as Ruona, stating that the regional musical elements reflect the main characteristic of Northwest Wind music. And for them, the distinct regional characteristics are the most direct reason for linking Northwest Wind and the sense of Chinese characteristics or the idea of Chinese style. Their interpretations have shown a contradictory standard of measuring Chinese characteristics or Chinese style from ‘national’ to ‘regional’ through the decoding process, as the interviewee Xin states in the following section.

Root-seeking Movement

In addition, few interviewees mention or link the regional musical elements with the sociocultural background of the emergence of Northwest Wind. The Northwest folk elements that dominated the perception of this musical form, in fact, were associated with the ‘root-seeking movement’ (*xungen wenhua*). The emergence of the root-seeking movement, in addition to reconstructing the damaged national and cultural identity after the devastating cultural trauma of the Cultural Revolution, was also a response to the growing Western influences. After reform and the opening-up policy, and under the new social conditions, Chinese cultures regained a freedom for development, the Chinese cultural circle sought to find

ways to facilitate this evolution. As Xu Peidong states ‘in that time, the national academic community focused on exactly how to develop Chinese culture: wholesale Westernisation? Or keep on going in a distinctly Chinese way?’ (*Wuhan wanbao* 2009).

The root-seeking artists, as well as Chinese intellectuals from different areas, especially in literature, such as Han Shaogong, Ah Chen and Mo Yan, wanted to reconsider and recognise the value of national cultures and traditions to reconstruct national and cultural identity by carrying forward fine traditions while criticising the shortcomings of the nation (Zhou 2007:109; Wu 2015). Hence, the root-seeking movement focused on the exploration of local and minority cultures, in particular, the exploration of the *Huangtu* (Yellow Earth) culture of Northwest China. This was because this particular region is considered to be the root of Chinese civilization, and is also a ‘typical region that preserved itself in its isolation’; very original, as Jin (1988, 2002:278) suggests.

In that sociocultural context, Northwest Wind, as the musical reflection of the root-seeking movement, focused on the musical materials from regions of Northwest China. The Northwest Wind musicians wanted to show the inner power of the nation through the rough and original folk elements from this particular region instead of imitating music imported from *Gangtai* and the West. As Su Yue, the famous Chinese musician/critic claims, ‘after accepting foreign music to a certain extent, our national cultural autonomy of consciousness requires coverage, requires our own position, asks ourselves to occupy our musical positions’ (Wen 2006). Therefore, the use of the northern folk materials became fundamental to this style.

II. The Sound of Northwest China: decoding ‘Chinese characteristics’ and ‘Chinese style’

The main melodic sources of Northwest Wind music are based on the folk elements of northwest regions of China (Figure 2.1).¹⁰¹ These local musical elements and the specific vocal delivery reflect the geographical characteristics and the rural life of northwest China, and also caused audiences to have a different understanding about the concept of ‘Chinese style’, compared to Shanghainese Pops and China Wind music, as the interviewee Xin (a former

¹⁰¹ Northwest China includes three provinces and two regions: Shaanxi province, Gansu province, Qinghai province, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Although the five regions ‘share’ the general features of northwest folk music, they are presented differently in each specific place. For example, *xintianyou* in northern Shaanxi, *huaer* in Ningxia, Qinghai and Gansu.

Maps of Figure 2.1 come from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwest_China#/media/File:Northwest_China.svg and http://wikitravel.org/en/Northwest_China, accessed on 20th March, 2016.

musician from mainland China in his late 50s) states:

Na: You mentioned that Northwest Wind is also a type of Chinese style popular music, but it's different compared with other two musical forms. How different?

Xin: These three musical forms: Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind, are all Chinese style popular music, but Northwest Wind sounds most different. I mean the folk musical materials of Shanghainese Pops and China Wind music have been largely used in many Chinese style musical works; they [the folk elements] are not strongly linked with a particular place or region. But the specific musical elements, e.g. instruments, in Northwest Wind show the interaction between the region and this musical form, and the regional features reflect the Chinese characteristics and the sense of Chinese style directly.

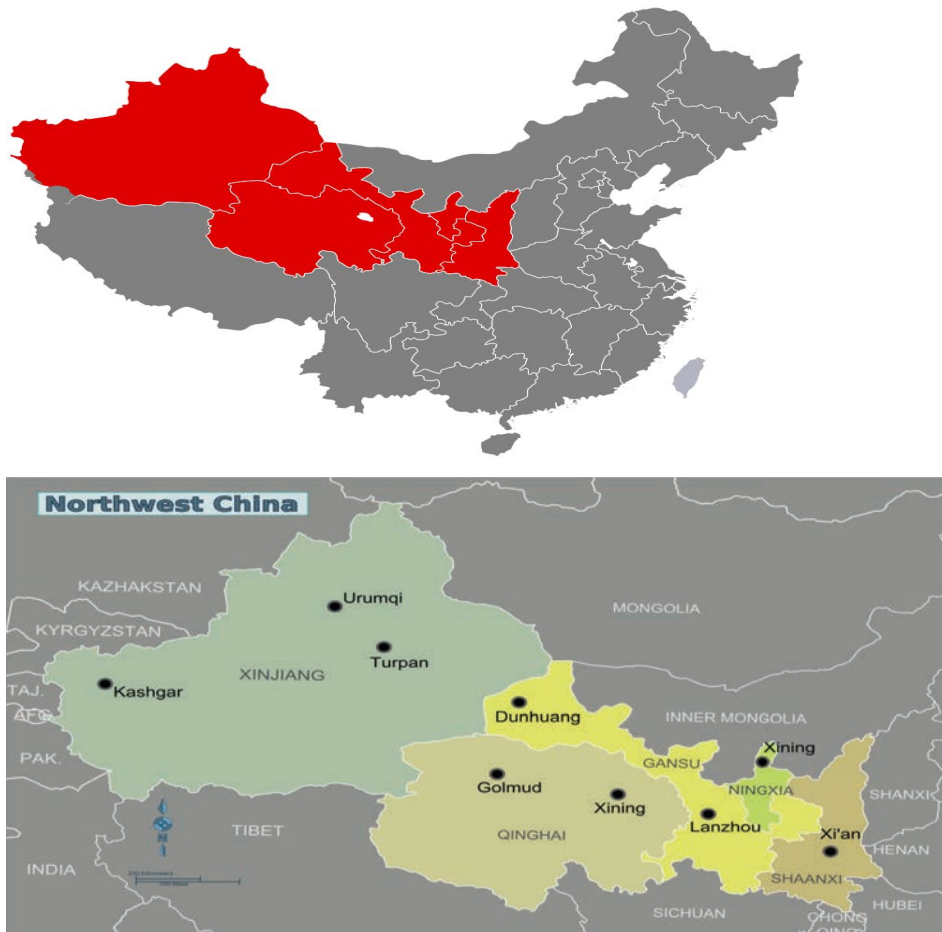


Figure 2.1: Northwest regions of China

Through the interviewee Xin's statement, the meaning of Chinese style in the case of Northwest Wind music is illustrated and influenced by the presentation of its music-region identity. The regional musical sources are perceived by the audience as the symbol of Chineseness, Chinese characteristics and Chinese style. However, Xin's statement leaves a major question in terms of the relationship between regional and national – the scope or standard of the 'Chinese style'. As Xin says the musical materials used in Shanghainese Pops and China Wind are shared by most Chinese style popular songs – the musical materials can be used in different places of China. Therefore, it is understandable how the interviewee has linked these two musical forms with the concept of Chinese style. However, the distinct north-western musical sources in Northwest Wind music clearly show its regional mark and the boundary – people in other regions of China may not 'feel their cultures' in the music, then how can Northwest Wind be decoded as the expression of the concept of the 'Chinese style'? In fact, interviewees have shown a consistently contradictory interpretation between regional/place and national from Shanghainese Pops to Northwest Wind. Even though the musical sources used in Shanghainese Pops are not restricted to the place (i.e. Shanghai), for most of the interviewees, this musical form shows a strong southern flavour due to its sense of softness. Although my interviewees can certainly distinguish the regional characteristics in both Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind music, they very naturally 'forgot' the regional mark or 'transformed' the regional identity as a representation of national characteristics when they linked these musical forms with the concept of Chinese style, especially in the context of national and international. **In other words, when the concept of Chinese style is used by audiences to distinguish 'ours' and 'others' in a broader sense – showing the Chinese ethnicity through a global aspect, the regional identity then is decoded by them as the characteristics of national identity.**

In Northwest Wind music, in addition to the certain shared folk musical tradition that can present the sense of 'Chinese characteristics', the ethnicity – the hidden Han identity, is another key signifier to link this musical form and the concept of Chinese style. Even though north-western musical materials are not widely spread in other regions of China, the largely shared Han musical aesthetic and cultures still allow most interviewees to perceive them as 'Chinese

characteristics’,¹⁰² especially when this region is symbolised as an important place belonging to China.

By illustrating the production and reception of musical materials of ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ and ‘Xin tian you’, this section will show how sound presents identity and ethnicity in Northwest Wind music and how it is decoded by interviewees to link specific musical culture and their impression or perception of the society of Northwest China. The musical analysis section is based on digital sources of two specific versions of these two songs; Hu Yue’s version of ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ and Cheng Lin’s version of ‘Xin tian you’. These two singers’ versions are the earlier versions of these songs which brought the ‘wind’ to the market. They are also the two most well-known and representative versions for audiences.

Hills of Yellow Earth, 1986¹⁰³

‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ is in the *Zhi* tuning of E *Gong* system; the whole song is developed based on the five-tone mode *Zhi* (later using the *pian* note).¹⁰⁴ The structure of this song reflects the feature of the ternary form: A + B + A¹ (see the following table), it somehow sounds like AABA form since section A/A¹ and B are created with different dynamics and emotions; like verse and bridge.

Guide phrases	Same melodic line as section A, but set in a free rhythm; borrow the music concept of Beijing opera ‘ <i>zou banqichang</i> ’ (Jin 2012:126)
Intro	Electronic instruments (guitar, bass, drum set and synthesis) <i>Suona</i> performs the main melodic line with a strong beat
A	Verse
A	Verse

¹⁰² In other words, the production and presentation of Han ethnicity influenced interviewees’ decoding of ‘Chineseness’ and ‘Chinese style’, which can be illustrated further in the case of China Wind music.

¹⁰³ The musical analysis is based on Hu Yue’s recording version.

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPg4SfBF3M8>. Accessed on 20th March, 2016.

There are different versions of this song, and each version is slightly different in melodic lines but still share the same pentatonic system as Hu Yue’s version shows; the local musical features are revealed in each versions of this song.

¹⁰⁴ Although the *Gong* note is E, the song is set in *Zhi* tuning. *Zhi* scale of this song: B (*Zhi*), #C (*Yu*), E (*Gong*), #F (*Shang*), #G (*Jue*). The keynote is B (*Zhi*).

Instrumental bridge	<i>Suona</i> performs the main melodic line
B	Bridge (more emotional expression with less energetic rhythm/tempo)
Instrumental bridge	<i>Suona</i> performs the main melodic line
A	Verse
A	Verse
Instrumental bridge	<i>Suona</i> performs the main melodic line
B	Bridge (more emotional expression with less energetic rhythm/tempo)
A ¹	Verse, first two phrases are structured in a higher fifth interval of A
A ¹	Verse, first two phrases are structured in a higher fifth interval of A
Ending	Performed by <i>suona</i>

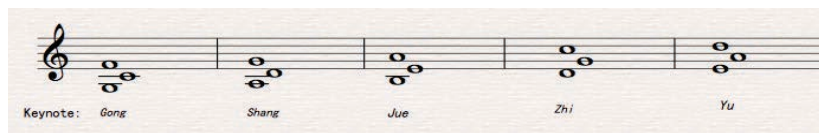
The intro and the section A of this song use the same melodic line. Compared with section A, the intro is sung by a slower and free beat, providing the feeling and visualising the image of the broad and vast land i.e. northwest of China. Both the intro and section A focus on a particular northwest folk musical trait: fourth intervals (Example 2.1). The fourth interval is the most *texing yincheng* (characteristic interval) and *xuanfa* (musical mode) used in northwest Han folk music, because it is purported to sound ‘rough and simple’ (Wang, Chen and Huang 2006:34).

Example 2.1: fourth intervals used in ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ (from intro, also appears several times in section A and A¹)

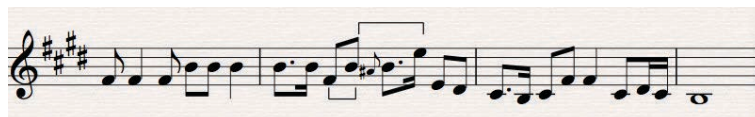


In most northwest Han folk music, the tune of a song is based on the keynote of the specific pentatonic tuning and the notes a fourth above and below it – *Shang-Zhi-Gong* interval frame (Huangpu 2012:18; Wu 2014). It is named as ‘*shuangsidu yincheng*’ (double fourth interval frame), Example 2.2 illustrates the frame by showing the specific structure formed by each keynote of C *Gong*. The double fourth interval structure appears frequently in *Shaanxi* Han folk music creations. As Yan and Wang (2016) claim, the double fourth interval usually appears at the beginning of the song, and forms a broad length, even running through the whole song. In this specific song, the keynote of *Zhi* tuning is B, therefore, the double fourth interval is formed around B, F#-B-E, as Example 2.3 shows. In the score that is adopted by Chinese (language) researchers (e.g. Wu 2014) to analyse musical features of this song, without indicating which version it is based on, the *bianzhi* note A# appears as acciaccatura in the middle of the double fourth interval structure (Example 2.3). Therefore, due to the existence of the *bianzhi* note (A#) and the *biangong* note (D#), the melody then is noted to indicate another characteristic of northwest folk music: *huanyin*.¹⁰⁵ However, throughout the recordings,¹⁰⁶ the *pian* note does not appear in this place but instead at the beginning of the third phrase (Fan and Hang’s versions), and the *biangong* note in the recordings does not appear in the place as the existing score shows (see the comparison in Example 2.4). The flavour of *huanyin*, in fact, is not reflected in this specific phrase, but is indicated through highlighting the use of double fourth interval frame and the expanded five-tone mode *Zhi* tuning (i.e. within *pian* notes).

Example 2.2: double fourth interval structure (if C=*Gong*)



Example 2.3: double fourth interval structure in ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ (from the score)

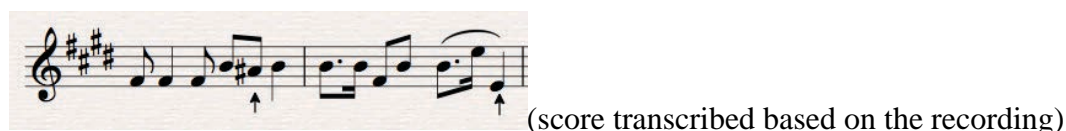
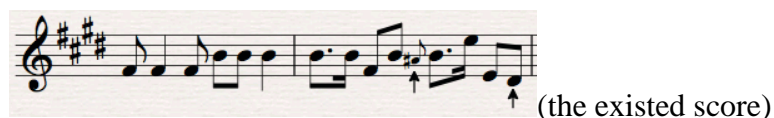


Example 2.4: the differences between scores and recordings (the places of *bianzhi* note A# and

¹⁰⁵ *huanyin* refers to a distinct mode scale of northwest folk music, or widely known as the characterised tune of *Qinqiang* or *Qin* style folk music (e.g. Wang and Du 1999: 177; Wang, Chen and Huang 2006: 300; Liu 2002).

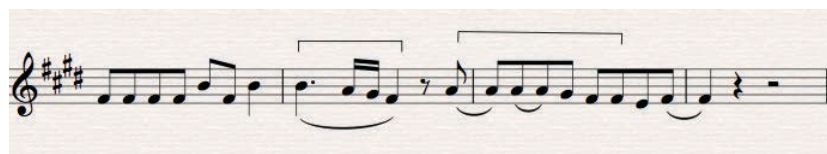
¹⁰⁶ As I mentioned before, ‘everyone sings one song’ was a particular Northwest Wind scene, it is possible that each version is slightly different. Therefore, I examined several most representative versions of ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’, i.e. Hu Yue, Fan Linlin, Li Na and Hang Tianqi’ versions. All versions illustrate that the ‘existence’ of *Bianzhi* is in a different place compared with the score.

the *biangong* note D#)



Whereas section A is developed with the specific interval around the keynote, section B is structured based on the certain musical series from the second and third phrases of section A: A, #G and #F, as Example 2.5 illustrates. In Chinese Han folk music creations, musicians preferred to compose the melody based on a certain musical pattern and developed the music within the variations of the pattern, e.g. the fish-bites-tail musical mode, as have shown by Li Jinhui's pop songs. Section B is formed by four phrases, three of them directly show the particular musical pattern from section A (Example 2.6). The application of this particular musical pattern illustrates the feature of folk musical creation mode like *lianhuan kou*, and also smoothly changes the sound of the *Zhi* tuning; B (*Zhi*) is the keynote of *Zhi* tuning. Since section B heavily uses the *pian* note A (*Qingjue*), the melody then sounds like it was created around the *pian* note; in other words, note A turns to the keynote. This kind of sound effect is called '*qingjueweigong*' (*Qingjue* is *Gong*), which is a popular compositional method within Han folk musical creations.

Example 2.5: the main musical pattern/ series from section A (A, #G and #F)

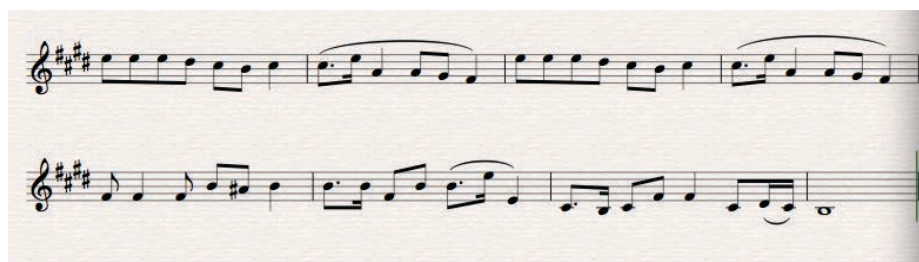


Example 2.6: the application of main musical pattern/material (heavily uses the *pian* note: *Qingjue* A)



The third section A¹ is a changed reprise of section A. It partly keeps the same melodic lines as section A, but the first two phrases use a higher fifth interval sequence of the main musical pattern to make a contrast of section A (Example 2.7). The fifth interval sequence creates the dynamics of the section and also stresses the certain musical materials used in the song.

Example 2.7: higher fifth interval sequence of the first two phrases of section A



In addition to the pentatonic tunings and traditional folk materials, the production of regional sound through the instrumental accompaniment – the use of *suona* (double-reeded shawm) – is another vital element that linked this musical form with the distinct musical and cultural characteristics of northwest China as well as the sense of ‘Chinese style’, the interviewee W (a retired office worker who comes from southern China) and Chen (a 26-year-old office worker who comes from northern China) provide the representative statements:

W: What impresses me most in Northwest Wind music is the sound of *suona*, it definitely shows the distinct characteristics of the culture in Northwest China. This is a very local sound and shows the Chinese characteristics.

Chen: When the sound of *suona* appears in the songs, I have some certain images of the region [Northwest China] in my mind; the wild and rough fields, the local life; very original lifestyle, and the local style of clothing, this instrument brings me the specific flavour of this style as well as that of the region.

In the same context as W and Chen, *suona* is frequently mentioned by most of my interviewees during the interview process. For audiences, this specific instrument symbolises the region musically, culturally and geographically. *Suona*, as a Han Chinese shawm, is used as a vital traditional instrument in folk life for weddings, marriages and festivals in (northern) China (Li 2013:31). In northern Shaanxi, many *suona* tunes are applied for those events, for instance, *suona xintianyou* (Wu 2014). The use of *suona* in Northwest Wind songs not only produces an ethnic effect, making the music sound more ‘Chinese’ in flavour, but also evokes the space and

climate of the folk who live in this particular place to the audience (as Chen indicates). Dujunco, too, points out ‘the shrill sound of the *suona* accompaniment, further reinforces these images [the rural life of northwest China]’ (2002:30). In the same way as the interpretation of melodic sources of this musical form, the presentation of *suona* is also decoded with double functions by interviewees: showing ‘regional’ and ‘national’ characteristics.

‘Xin tian you’, 1987¹⁰⁷

The song ‘Xin tian you’ was one of the inspirations for the establishment of Northwest Wind as a musical style. The melody of this song stresses a particular traditional Northwestern Han folk musical tune: *xintianyou*, which is also known as a type of *shan’ge* (mountain songs¹⁰⁸) of northern Shaanxi (Jin 2011:80).

This song is formed as a verse-chorus structure (Example 2.8)¹⁰⁹ or we can consider it as a binary form: intro + A + B + ending. The intro is performed by the electronic instruments and *suona*, similar to ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’. The song is in *Shang* tuning, the main melodic line (performed by *suona*) of the intro is settled in C *Shang* and developed around the keynote C of the tuning (Example 2.9).¹¹⁰ The use of *pian* note *qingjue* E^b transitions the melody from the electronic instruments-based part to the *suona* part. The progression of the intro performed by the electronic instruments stress on these keynotes: F-B^b-C-B^b-F-E^b-F, which presents a local flavour based on the expanded five-tone pentatonic scale in the Western music mode.

¹⁰⁷ The analysis of this song is based on Cheng Lin’s recording/version, this version is not only the most representative one but also known by the broadest Chinese audience. This is another popular version performed by Fan Linlin with slightly different lyrics: <http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/XMG1lb877UU/>, in disco style (but with same melody, will be used as an example for gender analysis). Here, I chose Cheng’s version, in addition to the above reasons, is mainly because Cheng’s version seems as the ‘original model’ of this song (for example, the later covers, like Li Na’s version, also based on Cheng’s recording).

¹⁰⁸ Mountain songs or *shan’ge* is a kind of lyrical ditty sung by ordinary people for expressing their feelings in wild open areas. Based on the geographic features of plateau mountain (the reason why it is called as mountain songs). Due to the climate and environment, people in northwest China live with poor living conditions. They used to express themselves’ feelings by singing. *Shan’ge* is formed with characteristics of long, clear tone and loud vocal delivery. Mountain songs has different names in different regions, for instance, *xintianyou* in northern Shaanxi and *pashandiao* in inner Mongolia. These folk types share the main musical characteristics since they all belong to the scope of mountain songs (Wang, Chen and Huang 2006: 37).

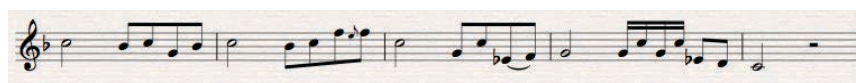
¹⁰⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9I5uK4KmX4>, accessed on 29th April, 2016

¹¹⁰ C *Shang* (five-tone mode): C, D, F, G B^b. B^b is the *Gong* note, C is the keynote of the tuning.

Example 2.8: verse-chorus structure of ‘Xin tian you’

Instrumental intro	Electronic instruments (0:00-0:31) <i>suona</i> (0:32-0:39, performs the main melodic line)
A	Verse
A	Verse
B	Chorus
B	Chorus
Instrumental bridge	Electronic instruments (partly reprise of the intro part) <i>suona</i> (musical materials derived from the intro part, scattered rhythm)
A	Verse
B	Chorus
A	Verse (sung by a male singer)
B	Chorus
Instrumental bridge	Electronic instruments accompanying a guitar solo
A	Verse (performed by male chorus, only with beats)
B	Chorus
B	Chorus
Ending (fade out)	Electronic instruments accompanying a guitar solo

Example 2.9: intro performed by *suona* (stresses on the keynote C of the tuning)



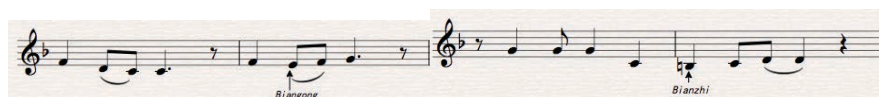
After the intro of this song, the *Gong* note changes from B^b to F, and the keynote of the pentatonic tuning changes from C to G. Thus, the pentatonic tuning changes from C *Shang* to

G *Shang* as Example 2.10 shows (the tuning is still *Shang* tuning, but the verse section is in a different *Gong* system; F *Gong*).¹¹¹ In the verse section (A section), two *pian* notes: *biangong* (E) and *bianzhi* (B), appear in the G *Shang* tuning (Example 2.11). Within these two notes, the melody reflects the feature of expanded pentatonic tuning i.e. seven tone mode.¹¹² In addition, the changing *Gong* note or the changing keynote from the tuning also indicate the idea of modulation through the Western tune aspect.

Example 2.10: the verse section in G *Shang* tuning



Example 2.11: *biangong* and *bianzhi* in the verse section



Like ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’, in the song ‘Xin tian you’, section A also illustrates the fourth interval features, as Example 2.12 shows. The A section is formed by two phrases, showing the feature of up-low structure which is a typical structure used in *xintianyou* (Wang, Chen and Huang 2006: 37). The first phrase starts from *Gong* note (F) and ends in *Yu* (D, also the dominant of G *Shang*), while the second phrase starts and ends in the keynote G of G *Shang*, indicating the fifth interval relations of Chinese pentatonic modes and the D-T relations from the Western classic musical perspective.

Example 2.12: fourth intervals used in the verse section



In addition, in section A, the melody is developed around the *Gong* note (F), *Zhi* note (C) and *Yu* note (D) by using different rhythmic patterns and different series of sound, for instance, F-D-C or D-F-G. Those particular musical patterns create the Chinese folk sound effect of this popular song. Furthermore, the octave that appeared between two *Zhi* notes in the middle of

¹¹¹ G *Shang*: G, A, C, D and F. G is the keynote of this tuning.

¹¹² All scores are transcribed based on the digital source, therefore, it is different of some of existed scores published online. For example, E (*Biangong*) and B (*Bianzhi*) are not appeared on the existed scores, they are instead by D and B^b.

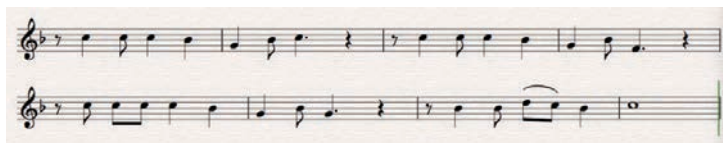
the first phrase (Example 2.13) of verse sections also shows the intervallic features of *xintianyou* and Shaanbei folk (Zhang 1989:32).

Example 2.13: octave appears in the first phrase of ‘Xin tian you’

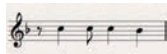


Section B (chorus) functions as a contrast to section A, and also is the highlight of this song. In this section, the regular use of *qingjue* note (B^b) creates the ‘*Qingjue* is *Gong*’ sound effect, and also leads the melody back to C *Shang* tuning – B^b is not only the *qingjue* note of G *Shang* tuning but also the *Gong* note of C *Shang* tuning (Example 2.14). The changing pentatonic tuning connects the instrumental bridges that performed by the electronic instruments in Western minor-major tonality, more smoothly.

Example 2.14: chorus section of ‘Xin tian you’

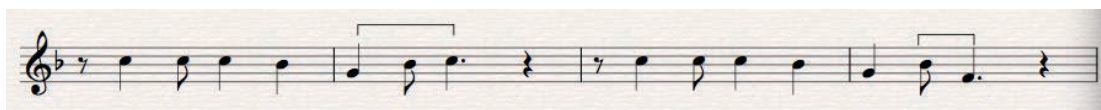


The chorus section (B) is formed in four phrases, developing with a particular musical pattern:

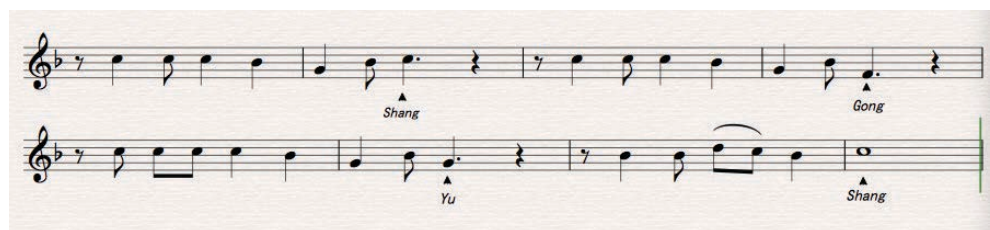


; the first three phrases use the same musical pattern, and a particular series of sound: C- B^b -G. The characteristic fourth intervals of northern Shaanxi Han folk music also appears frequently in this section as Example 2.15 illustrates. The four phrases of B section end in *Shang* (C), *Gong* (F), *Yu* (G) and *Shang* (C) respectively (Example 2.16). The progression of the melody, i.e. I-IV-V-I, in C *Shang* tuning, seems like the common chord progression of Western classic music, and the last two phrases (also the end of the melody) which end in *Yu* (G) and *Shang* (C), articulate a perfect authentic cadence.

Example 2.15: fourth intervals appearing in the chorus section of ‘Xin tian you’



Example 2.16: the ending notes of four phrases of B (chorus) section



Through section B, melodies feature upbeat syncopation. The syncopation/upbeat rhythm creates a contrasting part of the previous section driving the progress of the song, and also stresses the dynamic; it ‘cuts’ the ‘fluency’ of the progress of the Chinese folk melody (Wu 2014), which contributed to the sense of ‘modern’ that was perceived by the interviewees, particularly in the accompaniment of the strong beat (I will discuss in the following section).

III. Performance style: the modes of ‘hard’ and the sense of ‘modern’

The emergence of Northwest Wind brought a new musical culture to Chinese popular music, whilst the distinct vocal and instrumental delivery also changed the status of and audiences’ taste for the dominant soft performance style e.g. some of *Gangtai* pop songs, that had existed in the Chinese popular music market for a long period (Jin 1988; Baranovitch 2003:30; De Kloet 2010). As mentioned above, soft or sentiment pop songs are characterised as *yin* music by Jin (1988, 2002). The idea of *yin* and *yang*, according to Stock (2009:353), has roots in Daosim (a Chinese philosophy school), and literally refers to ‘female and male principles’ (also voiced by Louie and Edwards 1994:139). When the *yin-yang* philosophy is applied in Chinese music, it is not only used to refer to soft and hard musical stylistic changes but also to imply femininity and masculinity respectively (e.g. Baranovitch 2003; Chen 2007). For a few of the interviewees, especially female interviewees, the sense of hardness dominated their perception of this musical form, as the interviewee Zhou (a 45-year-old female lecturer) noted:

If Shanghainese Pops is a type of soft music, Northwest Wind is definitely a hard one. The loud and strong sound, such as the instruments and the vocal delivery, makes it sound very tough, which matches my impression of the region [Northwest China].

Based on the interviewee’s interpretations, the sense of hardness of Northwest Wind music links with the geographic features of the region and the specific approach of delivering vocals – the sound fits the image of the wild and desolate region – which is ‘definitely not soft’.

Additionally, the ‘strong and loud’ vocal and instrumental style also indicates how and why this musical form is related to masculine forces despite the fact that the dominant singers of Northwest Wind music were women, which led to audiences’ ambiguous and ambivalent feelings of hardness, masculinity and female singers (see Chapter 5).

Dujunco (2002:30) points out that ‘the loud, rough and forceful vocal delivery of the songs [Northwest Wind songs], are imitative of the singing style of the region: mountain songs [*shan’ge*].’ Folk music in Northwest China is profoundly influenced by its specific geography, climate and cultural conditions. The rough sound effect of *shan’ge*/mountain songs – loud and resonant, is because they were traditionally sung in the wild areas (mountains), within the high and loud sound effect, *shan’ge* can be heard in a great range of distance (Jin 2011: 81; Wang, Chen and Huang 2006:85). Although some *shan’ge* sound forcefull and loud, it is not enough to assume that *shan’ge* is a kind of ‘loud calls’ across the mountains; sometimes they are love songs or agricultural songs rather than merely ‘forceful’. As Antoinet Schimmelpenninck claims, ‘a single *shan’ge* tune may serve to express very different moods, from sadness or despair to happiness and frivolity...it [a *shan’ge* tune] can be used both for dirges and for light-hearted love songs. It is only through variation and continuous adaptation of the music that singers can make all their texts fit the same basic tune’ (1997:224). Therefore, the ‘hard’ sound effect of characteristic of Northwest Wind music is an imitation of part of the characteristics of *shan’ge*/mountain songs.

However, even though the vocal style is widely considered as the presentation of hardness or masculinity, many of my male interviewees (especially those below 35 years old) claim that the ‘hard sound’ from female singers is not always ‘hard’, for instance, Cheng Lin’s recording of ‘Xin tian you’.¹¹³ Especially when they were listening to songs while watching visual materials, the hardness is weakened and the sense of soft and feminine arises, in particular, Cheng Lin’s stage performance and the Chinese characterised male role – the peasant – in the music videos, which I will discuss further in Chapter 5. In addition, these male interviewees claim that if these songs were performed by male singers, the sense of ‘hard’ might be more ‘authentic’. This certain understanding of ‘hardness’ illustrates the perception and social value

¹¹³ Cheng Lin’s vocal expression in this song is frequently used as an example by my interviewees to show their opinions of ‘not hard’. As many of them mentioned, Cheng’s ‘girly’ voice and her emotional singing approach in this song are very ‘soft and feminine’.

of men and women, masculinity and femininity of the Chinese society under the impact of Chinese traditional cultures (i.e. patriarchal values).

Moreover, even though the majority of my interviewees have connected the sense of hardness with the instruments, they seemed to ‘forget’ (or did not think about) the ‘foreignness’ of the instrumentation. Excluding *suona*, the main accompany instruments are Western electronic instruments, and especially the four main instruments: electric guitar, bass, drum set and synthesizer, that are known collectively as *diansheng yuedui* in Chinese music circles.¹¹⁴ Unlike the jazz ensemble, which is directly decoded as the representation of ‘foreign flavour’, interviewees’ perceptions of the rock-based instrumentation are more complicated and ambivalent in this case. Although these electronic instruments create the sense of ‘modern and fashionable’ for a few interviewees from the southern China, this specific sensation is not decoded as the quality of foreignness by interviewees as it used to be in other two cases. In a similar manner, since the strength presented by the electronic instruments match most interviewees’ impression of the region – ‘tough and valiant’, the electronic instruments and the sound seemed to be perceived as an imagery to reflect the distinct geographic features of North-western China and Northwest Chinese folk culture rather than the Western influence of the production of this musical form. In other words, due to the ‘unification’ of the sound and the rural features of this region, audiences’ stance of Chineseness and foreignness is changed – their decoding position of the quality of Chineseness or foreignness is blurred and negotiated in this context.

In addition, as noted previously, ‘modern’ or ‘fashionable’ is frequently mentioned by the interviewees in relation to their interpretations of this style, especially by young adults, as the interviewee Xiaoyu (a male teaching fellow originally from southern China) states:

Na: How do you feel about Northwest Wind music?

Xiaoyu: Honestly, I thought Northwest Wind songs might be presented in a very traditional way, I mean, it may sound very old or unfashionable. But they’re not, they don’t sound like 30-year-old songs. The presentation of the music, like the electronic instruments, I don’t know how to describe it specifically, is very modern and fashionable.

Na: Is the Western-based instrumentation mainly provides you the sense of modern and fashionable?

Xiaoyu: Yes, the musical accompaniment, and the dynamic progression of the music.

¹¹⁴ Although the term *diansheng yuedui* is translated as electronic band or acoustic-electronic band in many Chinese academic works, the meaning of this term in China/Chinese is very different to the Western context. The term neither implies the real live band music, nor electroacoustic music.

I was surprised to receive the perception of ‘modern’ or ‘fashionable’ from the younger interviewees since in this internet or social media generation they have access to a variety of ‘fashionable’ music, and Northwest Wind music is absolutely ‘out of date’ for professional musicians¹¹⁵ or in a modern popular musical context. However, the electronic instruments and the musical accompaniment and instrumentation, mentioned by Xiaoyu indicate that this feeling was caused by the rock influence. Those interviewees who shared the same feeling as Xiaoyu mainly come from southern China, where rock music is not perceived as a ‘popular’ or familiar type for them. In his research, De Kloet (2010: 119-129) uses Shanghai’s rock music and rock musicians as one special example to reflect how the ‘authentic sound’ of rock music from this southern international city has been shaped between local and global. However, my interviewees’ perception of ‘modern or fashionable’, in this case, is not tightly linked with the economic strength or cosmopolitan impact of a region/place (or at least they do not notice this factor), but influenced by their musical experiences and tastes that interacted with local cultures and traditions.

What is more, due to the rock influence in the production of Northwest Wind music, researchers and musicians often consider Northwest Wind as the embryonic form of Chinese rock music – it is considered as a ‘hard’ musical form. To this end, we need to consider one specific question: why was this musical form dominated by female singers, since rock is a male dominated musical form? I am not focusing on categorising music into boxes – what is rock or what is Northwest Wind music; however, the idea of differing hardness and masculinity should be noted here. The difference between these two forms indicates the construction of gender identities and sexualities based on the different ideologies of rock music and Northwest Wind. The multiple gender identities that are presented by female performers of Northwest Wind music illustrate that female singers were not ‘designed’ in one certain gendered image, especially with the consideration from the reception perspective. This question will be further explored and discussed in Chapter 5.

IV. Text: interpretation and decoding of patriotism, nationalism and criticism

The influence of root-seeking idea

As the musical branch of the root-seeking cultural movement, the text of Northwest Wind

¹¹⁵ As my friend who is a professional composer states: ‘Northwest Wind songs sound too old’.

focused on the exploration of the Chinese root. Baranovitch states that ‘for many Chinese, songs belonging to this musical form [Northwest Wind] were instrumental in re-establishing a connection with China’s lost past and in regaining a new sense of collective identity’ (2003:20). Compared to the lyrics of Shanghainese Pops, which pay more attention to the individual theme of personal love, the lyrics of Northwest Wind music have a different, collective meaning and function. In many Northwest Wind songs, in addition to show the feeling of loss and longing, the text also depicts the features of the particular geographic area (Northwest China) as a symbol of the cultural root of Chinese people, as can be seen in the following two examples, ‘Xin tian you’ and ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’:

‘Xin tian you’

我低头，向山沟，追逐流逝的岁月。
I look down to the ravine, chasing the passing years
风沙茫茫满山谷，不见我的童年。
Sandstorm over vast valleys, cannot find my childhood
我抬头，向青天，搜寻远去的从前。
I look up to the blue sky, searching for the passing times
白云悠悠尽情地游，什么都没改变。
White clouds swimming like fishes, nothing has changed
大雁听过我的歌，小河亲过我的脸，
Wide geese heard my songs, rivers kissed my face
山丹丹花开花又落，一遍又一遍
The flowers bloom and fade, over and over again
大地留下我的梦，信天游带走我的情
Earth leaves my dream, *xintianyou* takes away my love
天上星星一点点，思念到永远
Little stars in the sky, missing lasts forever

The lyrics of ‘Xin tian you’ (1987) were written by Liu Zhiwen and Hou Dejian. They used a northern traditional musical type *xintianyou* (the local folk musical type mentioned in the sound section) as the title to show the specific northern regional musical context.

The lyrics focuses on the concept of homeland. The first two lines of the lyrics (a line is up to the full stop) indicate that I did not find out my childhood in the new days, and the latter two lines expresses the feeling: everything kept exactly the same as its old appearance. Therefore, the first four lines show an interesting image: although nothing has changed, I did not find my beloved homeland. This specific imagery indicates a hidden message; the ‘reality’ of the rural life: my homeland looked exactly same as its past, it was supposed to have a ‘better look’ in the development of socialist road (Dujunco 2002). The dissatisfaction that encoded through

the lyrics illustrates the concept of criticism of Northwest Wind – the love of home is not presented through a ‘mainstream’ way (Jin 1988, 2002:134-135; Qian 2011), which, can be further reflected through the second example and the visual materials of this musical form.

‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ (English translation comes from Dujunco 2002:31)

我家住在黄土高坡
大风从坡上刮过
不管是西北风还是东南风 都是我的歌 我的歌
My home is on the high hills of yellow earth
Strong winds blow down from the slopes
It doesn't matter if it's the northwest wind or the southeast wind, it's all my song, all my song
我家住在黄土高坡
日头从坡上走过
照着我的窑洞 晒着我的胳膊 还有我的牛跟着我
My home is on the high hills of yellow earth
The sun rises up to over the slopes
Shining into my cave house, tanning my arms, then there's my cow and me
不管过去了多少岁月
祖祖辈辈留下我
留下我一望无际唱着歌
还有身边这条黄河
Doesn't matter how many years and months in the past
Generations of ancestors handed it down to me
Left me a boundless song to sing
With this Yellow River still by my side
我家住在黄土高坡
四季风从坡上刮过
不管是八百年还是一万年 都是我的歌 我的歌
My home is on the high hills of yellow earth
All four seasons the wind blows down from the slope
It doesn't matter if it's 800 years or 10000 years, it's all my song, all my song

The lyrics of the second song i.e. ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ were written by Chen Zhe. This song used the concept of landform; the Loess Plateau is the common topography of northern China, to indicate the relationship between Northwest Wind music and the root of Chinese people. The Loess Plateau (Yellow Earth) of the Northwest is perceived as the birthplace of Chinese Civilization. During a long period; Zhou-Qin era to Sui and Tang dynasties,¹¹⁶ Northwest China was the political economic and cultural centre of ancient Chinese society. As Dujunco claims ‘the lyrics of many xibefeng (Northwest Wind) songs, with settings in the rugged loess plateaus of the northwest, often refer to the primordial origins of the Chinese people’ (2002:31). The lyrics of this song conjure up the vision of a Chinese legendary past, while the line ‘My home is on the high hills of yellow earth’ that appears repeatedly obviously illustrates the strong relationship between Northwest China (‘yellow earth’) and Chinese roots (‘my home’). Thus, the meaning of regional – the customs and culture of Northwest China, in this context, exceeds

¹¹⁶ Zhou-Qin era: c. 1046 BC-226 BC (Zhou) to 221 BCE-206 BCE (Qin), Sui and Tang dynasties: 581-618 (Sui) and 618-907 (Tang).

the concept of region. It is applied to symbolise the Chinese nation and national culture, which is also the reason for interviewees to link the regional flavoured musical form and the idea of Chinese style.

These two examples both show the exploration of Chinese or national identity through searching of the past collectives. In previous research of Northwest Wind music, scholars have either focused on the political implication or the disjuncture of the expressions of the text, such as the presentation of nationalism and criticism. However, the majority of my interviewees, no matter whether from southern or northern China or older or younger generations, do not interpret the code in exactly the same way as they were encoded by musicians or interpreted by scholars. The messages from the code are decoded with two themes: the sense of nationalism or patriotism, and the rural lifestyle, while some hidden implications such as criticism of the social life from the message are not as easily received or interpreted by the interviewees in a different way.

Decoding nationalism: patriotism and the nationalistic sense of pride

‘Nationalism and patriotism’ are the key words for many of the interviewees in relation to the decoding of the lyrics of Northwest Wind style. For them, the patriotic sentiments from the lyrics of this musical form contribute a direct ‘positive meaning’ for Chinese style in comparison to Shanghainese Pops. For example, the lyrics from ‘Zuguo zanmeishi’ (Hymn for the Motherland) and ‘Wo reliande guxiang’ (My Beloved Hometown).

‘Hymn for the Motherland’ (written by Wang Xiaoling)

我们是相同的血缘	We have the same consanguinity
共有一个家	We have the same home
黄皮肤的旗帜上写着中华	China is written on the flag of yellow skin
盘古开天到如今	From the dawn of heaven and earth to nowadays
有多少荣辱和忧患	How much honor and disgrace (we have experienced)
泪可以流 血可以洒	Tears may flow, blood can be shed
头却不能低下	But we cannot bend our heads

‘My Beloved Hometown’ (lyrics by Meng Guangzheng)

亲不够的故乡土 Not enough to kiss to the soils from hometown
恋不够的家乡水 Not enough to love the waters from hometown
我要用真情和汗水 I want to use the real sentiment and sweat
把你变成地也肥呀水也美呀 Turn you (hometown) into fertile ground and clean waters

Through the lyrics of above two songs, the hometown; the root, does not simply refer to a specific geographic place or region but is used as a metaphor to mean the motherland. Here, the root that this style seeks is the unique cultural characteristics of the Chinese ethnicity. In addition, the patriotic feeling of the lyrics illustrates the sense of love and pride for the homeland and also indicates a main purpose of root-seeking: revitalizing the Chinese nation, which matches the value and goal of the production of Chinese style and successfully allows interviewees to receive the specific message from the text to be connected with the concept of Chinese style.

Furthermore, though the lyrics of Northwest Wind songs also show the theme of love, unlike Shanghainese Pops or some love-themed China Wind songs, which focused on love between men and women, lyricists of Northwest Wind paid more attention to promote the idea of love for the country i.e. patriotism (Wu 2015), as can be seen in ‘Yueliang zou, wo ye zou’ (The moon walks, I walk too):

‘The moon walks, I walk too’ (lyrics by Qu Zong)

月亮走我也走 The moon walks, I walk too
我送阿哥到村口到村口 I send brother (my lover) to the gate of the village
阿哥去当边防军 My lover is going to be the border guard
十里相送难分手难分手 It is so hard to say goodbye
...
月亮走我也走 The moon walks, I walk too
我送阿哥到桥头到桥头 I send my lover to the bridge
阿哥是个好青年 My lover is a good youth
千里边防显身手显身手 Show your talent during the work
...
阿哥阿哥听我说 My lover, my lover, listen to me
早把喜报捎回头 hope to hear the good news (of your work) from you soon

The lyrics use the first person ‘me’ and ‘brother’ (the lover) as main characters to deliver the sense of love. However, the love between ‘me’ and ‘brother’ in this song is not about the man and the woman but broadened to illustrate the love between Chinese youth and the country. In

other words, ‘me and brother’ are metaphors used to show the ‘motivated young people’ and their consciousness of the future of the nation. The collective identity or the idea of broad love that is constructed in Northwest Wind music shows the possibility of multiple encoded sociocultural meanings of ‘popular music’ with Chinese traditions or values: not about personal love, but turns to the music with humanistic connotation (Huang 2009), despite the fact that audiences do not always receive the meanings from these messages, for instance, their reflection of reality.

Decoding the criticism: the rural lifestyle, the mass and the elite cultures

In addition to the sense of patriotism and nationalism, interviewees’ interpretations of the text of Northwest Wind are also tightly linked with the feeling of ‘hard lifestyle’, as Lan (a young adult from southern China) stated:

Lan: I feel many Northwest Wind songs describe the farm work that people used to do in that region and also the poor lifestyle: how hard people have to work in order to get a smooth life.

Through the above examples and interviewees’ perceptions of ‘poor and hard lifestyles’, the expression of nostalgia or the praise of Chinese traditional cultures in many Northwest Wind songs somehow indicates that ‘old is not good’. For example, the last line of ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’: ‘It doesn’t matter if it’s 800 years or 10000 years, it’s all my song, all my song.’ According to the songwriter Chen Zhe, in this song he wants to express a fact: ‘in traditional Chinese cultural legacies there exists inexorable conventions. Chinese people are used to keeping the exact same living pattern. They [the place and people] look exactly the same as they did in the “old times”’ (Jia 2006, also cited by Wu 2015).

Similarly, the expressive way of the lyrics of the song ‘My Loved Hometown’ (as illustrated below) further illustrates the ‘no-hope’ lifestyle in that particular region; the reality. The symbolised terms, for example ‘barren land’, ‘yellow earth’ and ‘bitter well water’ and later ‘dry brook’ and ‘infertile soil’ transform the text to a specific image of backward rural life, which exactly matches interviewees’ impression of this region (Northwest China).

一片贫瘠的土地上 On a barren land
收获着微薄的希望 Harvesting a meagre hope
住了一年又一年 Staying year after year
生活了一辈又一辈 Living generation after generation
忙不完的黄土地 Endless working on the yellow earth
喝不干的苦井水 Endless drinking the bitter well water
男人为你累弯了腰 Men are tired and hunched because of you (hometown)
女人也为你锁愁眉 The women of furrowing their brows for you

As Dujunco (2002: 31) points out ‘they (lyrics) conjure up visions of a hardy rural folk with 5000 years of history.’ The lyrics sketch a poor and backward picture of ‘my hometown’, which criticises the environment of Chinese rural areas; the ‘hometown’ is not only ‘my hometown’ but also the epitome of Chinese villages, despite that the interviewees do not link the ‘poor or hard lifestyle’ with the concept of criticism. For interviewees, the ‘hard and poor’ lifestyle presented by the lyrics is a description of the characterized feature of the region; either the political implication nor the concept of criticism is truly perceived.

In addition, from the patriotism or intellectuals’ consciousness to the criticism of tradition and reality, the feature of ‘elite culture’ is also indicated through the production of Northwest Wind music (Qian 2011, 2016:166-184). However, even though some certain ideas are perceived by the interviewees in a similar way as they were encoded or interpreted, the idea of ‘elite culture’ is not received. For the majority of interviewees, what they have perceived and consumed are still based on the mass nature of Northwest Wind music; the popular ‘product’, rather than the idea of ‘intellectuals’, ‘elite culture’ or ‘criticism’. The national consciousness and the reflection of reality are more linked with the sense of nationalism/patriotism or interpreted as musicians’ ‘natural choice’ in presenting their comments of the phenomena that ‘masses also do’. However, when the interviewees interpreted or decoded messages in this way, they seemed to forget their ‘intellectual identity’; most of them are well or highly educated and many of them have overseas study experience, while they have assumed that the national consciousness and the criticism do not belong to a specific group or class of the society but the general masses.

The interviewees’ interpretations show the complex relationship between the masses and the elite on the one hand, different qualities and attitudes of ‘intellectuals’ from different generations on the other hand. Zang Hongfei, the famous keyboardist and the member of Long Shen Dao (the Taichi reggae band), states that ‘the biggest difference between the “old

motivated youth” (in the late 1980s and 1990s) and the younger ones is that they (the young youth) compromise far more easily with the society. They don’t have the idea of “criticalness” (Da Wang Jiu Guan 2016).¹¹⁷ Zang’s critiques show the blurred boundary between the elite and the masses in this generation; however, since many of my older interviewees also failed to mention the idea of criticism or reflection, it illustrates the difficulty for a mass cultural product such as Northwest Wind to deliver ‘elite culture’. In other words, the contradiction between masses and elite that existed in the production of Northwest Wind music also caused the crisis of this musical form (Jin 1988, 2002:126).

Even though Northwest Wind songs contained critique of the reality of poverty and its related traditions, the essence of this musical form still emphasised conformity and obedience to patriotic values. As Xu Peidong (the composer of the song ‘My Loved Hometown’) says, ‘when we say “my hometown is not beautiful”, we actually hope it can become more beautiful’ (Huang 2009). Xu’s explanation further illustrates that the criticism from Northwest Wind was based on the nationalist sense of love for the country. Therefore, the nature of the criticism still worked in favour of the authorities (i.e. the Communist ideal) since it was promoting a positive message.

V. The reality: the hometown (image)

In 1981 the Music Television (MTV) network launched in the United States. MTV was produced by the American music and the entertainment industry. In China, Guangzhou firstly established its mainland MTV production centre, and completed the first MTV album, *Cheng Lin xin’ge* (New songs of Cheng Lin) in 1987. CCTV (China Central Television) and Shanghai TV stations broadcast the MTV program later, and MTV quickly spread throughout the country which has continued to this day. With the rise of music television, people’s visual organs were mobilized, the variety of backgrounds, such as the setting of the story, clothes of actors, and appearance of singers and performers all attracted audience’s attention.

For Northwest Wind music, the sound is still the most important factor to demonstrate the distinct characteristics of this musical form. However, the music videos visually reflect the

¹¹⁷ *Da Wang Jiu Guan* is an online programme hosted by Zang Hongfei since 2016. He invited various important rock and hip-hop musicians to discuss the history of Chinese popular music as well as the popular music industry. This programme is available at Zang’s public Wechat (Chinese social media) Subscription *Fei Fei Shi Da Wang*.

feature of hybridity and disjuncture and also emphasize the contradictory nature of this style.

Simon Frith's theory about the connection of sound and vision in music videos categorises music videos into three types: Performance, Narrative and Conceptual (1988: 217). Based on Frith's theory, Karyn Charles Rybacki and Donald Jay Rybacki (1999) define Conceptual music videos as those which 'do not tell a story in a linear fashion, but rather create a mood, a feeling to be evoked in the experience of viewing'. Their definition of Conceptual fits the majority of videos of Northwest Wind, which deliver particular sensations of 'wild and rough land' and 'poor and backward lifestyle' as perceived by interviewees. For the majority of my interviewees, these specific perceptions allow them to feel more confident about their decoding of this musical form since the visual elements match their audible interpretations and impressions of Northwest Wind songs and the region itself.

Similar to the recordings of Northwest Wind songs, the music videos of Northwest Wind also have different versions of the same song, for example, Hu Yue and An Wen's versions of 'Hills of Yellow Earth'. Although music videos differ based on different singers/versions, most of them focus on three particular concepts: local cultural characteristics, urban versus rural, and revealing the rural life, as the following examples illustrate.

'Hills of Yellow Earth'—Hu Yue's version¹¹⁸

Hu Yue's version of this song mainly shows three characterized scenes: geographical features of Northwest China, local rural life and the singer singing in a modern outfit. The text of this song illustrates the sense of root-seeking while the music video pays great attention to the image of the 'root'.

This music video uses a lot of images to visualise the geographical features of Northwest China (Figure 2.2), especially the Loess plateau and the yellow river scenes. The visual elements bring the atmosphere and the geographic attribute of Northwest Wind music and show the 'Chinese root' vividly from the text to images.

¹¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPg4SfBF3M8>, accessed on 10th May 2016.



Figure 2.2: geographical features of Loess plateau presented in the music video

Although this music video seems to index the specific local life or culture in this area, it does not depict the particular rural life directly as the text does, but uses symbols, such as the poor cottage and the cave, to deliver this message (Figure 2.3). The white hat-like accessory (*baiyangdujin*, Figure 2.4)¹¹⁹ that appears in the video is the most common northern Shaanxi look, especially for men. This distinct cultural symbol provides audiences the source to identify

¹¹⁹ Due to the specific landform and environment, people have to use some stuff to scrub dusts on their heads and faces, the *baiyangdujin* then appeared.

the male role appearing in the earlier shot in this music video: the peasant (Figure 2.5).¹²⁰ The male role with the image of *baiyangdujin* is largely interpreted as the symbol which reveals the regional characteristics and the sense of masculinity, as the interviewee Lin (a 25-year-old female PhD student) indicates:

The peasant is a Chinese characterised role that existed in Northwest China. When he appears in the music video, the image of Northwest China is vivid because this role is rooted in the local culture. It is also one of the important reasons why would I link Northwest Wind with masculinity.

Lin's statement shows the visual production of local identity of Northwest Wind music and the link between localness and the perception of Chinese style. It also hints why and how the sense of masculinity would be connected with this musical form (however, with different understandings of masculinity). Thus, due to geographical features, the distinct local cultures and specific female and male characters (e.g. the songstress and the peasant), the soft and hard images of Chinese popular music have been perceived and distinguished by Chinese audiences.



¹²⁰ The simple and honest male farmers with this particular look were frequently used in movies and literatures focusing on northern cultures.



Figure 2.3: images used to illustrate the rural life in northern Shaanxi (the 'reality')



Figure 2.4: the image of *baiyangdujin* (the white wool hat appears as the background)



Figure 2.5: the peasant appears in the music video

Throughout the whole music video two issues arise. First, Northwest Wind music, as we have analysed before, is a fusion of traditional folk and modern popular musical elements. However, in addition to the female singer's look, no other signs can clearly indicate the 'modern' identity. The female singer is dressed in an urban outfit and her image is juxtaposed with old and traditional rural life images, just as Figure 2.3 and 2.4 illustrate. Since the music video does not tell a story like the lyrics, the female singer is more likely to portray herself (the singer of the song) rather than representing a modern identity to contrast the traditional images.

The second issue is related to the presentation of criticism, nationalism and patriotism in the music video. Although the visualised poor and original rural life in northwest China reflects the idea of criticising the Chinese traditions, the video does not place emphasis on promoting patriotic sensibility, which is a vital element of the production of Northwest Wind. In contrast, the reality delivers a particular message to the audience: after the open-door policy (1978), our ‘hometown’ still had the same look, poor and backward, and nothing has been changed. This particular message raises one certain issue, as Dujunco points out ‘considering that present conditions in the area remained as poor as ever, listeners could hardly fail to realize that the Communist Party had failed to transform Chinese life for the better... [this] led listeners to ponder the efficacy of the communist project as a whole’ (2002: 32). Since the ideology of Northwest Wind is contradictory, when it aims to show the nationalistic sentiments to the audience, it also illustrates the negative issues that existed in reality, which might be read as unexpectedly against Communist ideals.¹²¹

‘Xin tian you’—Fan Linlin’s version¹²²

Compared with the video of ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ or other video versions of ‘Xin tian you’ (e.g. Li Na’s version), Fan Linlin’s music video neither shows clear local features nor an obvious scene to indicate the specific regional identity. Fan performs as the real her (the singer) and sings in two different models; either dressed in a variety of modern outfits and walking through the urban streets (Figure 2.6), or dressed in local costumes and walking in a rural area (Figure 2.7). The two different looks illustrate the two lifestyles and cultures between rural and urban, also portray different versions of femininity (will discuss further in Chapter 5).

¹²¹ Northwest China is not only the place where Chinese civilization starts, more importantly, northern Shaanxi is the birthplace of Mao ideology. It was the base of the Chinese Communist Party around the 1940s, and is called the ‘holy land’ of Chinese revolution. The application of the local features is expected to show the strength of the region and the policy; however, the criticism represented by the lyrics and the images may illustrate the gap between ideals and reality.

¹²² In the music analysis section, I used Cheng Lin’s recording as the example because Cheng’s version made this song widely known in public. However, Cheng did not shoot and perform a music video for this song (other singers, like Li Na, had one music video of this song). In 1993, CCTV *dongfangshikong* shot an official music video for this particular song, and it was performed by Fan Linlin. Therefore, I chose Fan’s music video as the example to analyse. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_hT53d53Yo, accessed on 12th May 2016



Figure 2.6: Fan dressed in modern outfits



Figure 2.7: Fan dressed in a local-featured look

Throughout this music video, the expression of the idea of root-seeking or losing and longing is not as direct as the text shows; however, a few scenes slightly express the sense of nostalgia

(Figure 2.8).¹²³ The scenes of this music video keep shifting fast between urban and rural lives, and between black-white and colourful images, which provides the sense of past and present, and traditional and modern. However, since the video does not stick on the narrative illustrated by the text, the sorrowful sensations that created by lyrics is not clearly received by most of the interviewees through the visual means. In addition, even though the comparisons between two lifestyles have been stressed in the video production, the shaky and shifting shots mainly deliver an incomprehensible narrative to audience, which strongly weakened the expression of the sense of nostalgia. As many of my interviewees mentioned that Fan's music video is 'not emotional' and 'looks like multiple collaged images or unlinked scenes rather than a story'.



¹²³ For example, Fan sitting on the grass, looking at the passing trains, and she is taking her bag and walking through the street aimlessly, or Fan walks on the railroad tracks. These scenes deliver a particular feeling that the modern/urban Fan (Fan in all of these scenes performs a modern look) is missing a particular place/space: the rural hometown.



Figure 2.8: the expression of loss and longing/nostalgia

VI. Conclusion: Disjuncture and contradictoriness of Northwest Wind

Fan Linlin and Hu Yue's music videos also highlight another issue – the opposing emotions that reflected by the audio-visual sources of this form (Qian 2011 voices the contrariness between the text and aural materials partly matches this viewpoint). When my interviewees, especially the younger interviewees, were listening and watching these Northwest Wind songs, many of them mentioned having ambivalent feelings towards this musical form, as Hang (a 25-year-old female PhD student who originally comes from southern China) and Peng (a 23-year-old male PhD student who originally comes from northern China) state:

Hang: I feel the sound and imagery of Northwest Wind songs are not always in the same context. I mean the sound is powerful and energetic; however, the images and with the text in the music video deliver the sense of being powerless and lonely because they either look backward or in a desolate manner.

Peng: I get the sense of disjuncture from this musical form. These sources show very different feelings to me, for example, the image and text are very sorrowful but the sound is too lively.

Through interviewees' statements, the sound, text and visual materials of Northwest Wind music produce the sense of disjuncture – the liveliness of the music and the sorrowfulness of the video and the text. By re-examining Hu Yue's music video, in addition to the outfit of the female singer, the other scenes of the music video are all set into a dim and murky tone and atmosphere. For example, these poor rural images and the scene of the old man (i.e. the farmer)

stands on the wild Loess Plateau. However, Hu in her music video does not look down, from her appearance, gestures to the vocal delivery, she uses an energetic and dynamic performance style to accompany the dark and dim images. In particular, she sings smiling from the beginning of the music video and even moves a bit with the beat. Furthermore, the expressions in her eyes and most of her hand gestures offer the sense of ‘firm determination for the future’ (Figure 2.9), which can be observed in many of Chinese songs that serve for authorities, for example, *hongge* (Red Songs). Hu’s behaviours and gestures seem to deliver a message that the future of the rural region is bright, which contradicts the reality represented by the images from the music video.



Figure 2.9: the firm eyes and gestures of Hu’s performance in the music video

Similar to Hu’s work, Fan’s disco version music video is also a combination of the cheerful

and danceable rhythm and the undynamic visual elements.¹²⁴ The shaky and fast shifting shots between black/white and colourful images in this music video help create the dynamic of the vision; however, the scenes are more likely presented based on the beat rather than the content of the song. In other words, it is difficult to connect such a sentimental text with an energetic sound (or electronic dance style) and collaged-like vision. Although Fan's look – the way she performs the song is more sentiment than Hu's performance – and her subtle behaviours in the music video slightly show the message of losing and longing, the shifting images break the fluency of the expression of the sorrowful theme.

Hence, another contradictory point in Northwest Wind music appears among the expression of text, sound and vision. The image/text and sound illustrate two realities, one showing the poor living environment and another indicating a cheerful and bright life. The 'problematic' delivery of emotions that perceived by audiences, in addition to the insufficient early music video production techniques and conditions, also hints a deliberate encoding process on the part of the video production; the gloomy atmosphere and the dim images of the video seem to symbolise a deep confusion of people in that era who was searching the 'past' and thinking about the 'future' – to rethink and reconstruct the individual and national identities. While the disjuncture of the musical sources also links with the unstable and contradictory ideology of this form – indicating the flaw of the idea of Northwest Wind. As Jin claims, Northwest Wind, as a musical style, undertakes 'too demanding missions'... 'It existed as one component of the broad cultural background, the trend of criticism and the exploration of national identity from the root-seeking cultural movement have already shown its fickleness, which cannot last for long' (2002: 136).

Northwest Wind was not the first music type that combined Chinese folk music and Western popular music elements; however, it was widely considered to be the first wave of nationalised Chinese popular music. Compared with Shanghainese Pops, my interviewees are more confident to link Northwest Wind to the concept of Chinese style, largely due to the local marks, and the representation that Northwest Wind makes of the culture of Northwest China. However, as mentioned previously and behind the production of local identity, another vital factor that truly allows the interviewees to decode Northwest Wind as a form of Chinese style popular music is the presentation of Han ethnicity.

¹²⁴ Though Fan's music video looks more 'colorful and modern' than others, the climate of the visual is still perceived or interpreted as 'soulless' by most of interviewees.

Although Northwest China includes different ethnic minorities (e.g. Hui and Uighur)¹²⁵ and minorities constitute one third of the total population of the region (*The state council of People's Republic of China* 2005), the musical materials of Northwest Wind still rely on the largely shared ethnic majority (Han) cultures, for example, the Chinese pentatonic tunings, double fourth interval and the folk type *xintianyou*. Therefore, even though Northwest Wind produced distinct local sound and characteristics, the presentation of Han culture influenced interviewees' stance and measurement of the quality of regional and national, and allowed them to connect the concept of Chinese style and Northwest Wind music.¹²⁶ The later China Wind music can further demonstrate the significance of presenting Han culture or ethnicity in the production and perception of the concept of Chinese style more directly.

¹²⁵ However, Hui cannot be simply treated as an ethnically distinct group, but an ethnoreligious group.

¹²⁶ The specific status of the region – the birthplace of Chinese civilisation, is still an important factor for this musical form to be linked with the concept of Chinese style despite that this historical background is not frequently mentioned by my interviewees, especially younger interviewees.

Chapter 3: China Wind (*Zhongguo feng*, 2000s)

I. Introduction

1. Introduction

The expression and exploration of national identity continues to be an important factor in Chinese musical discourses and practice in the 21st century despite the increasing impact of globalization. From Shanghainese Pops to Northwest Wind, Chinese popular music has been involved in the construction and reconstruction of national identity in various contexts and ways. Local and global, national and international synthesis has taken an important role in the production and reception of popular music in the Greater Chinese community developing its own popular music genre – Mandopop (Wang Yu-wei 2011). Taiwan was considered to be the epicenter of Mandopop after the decline of Shanghainese Pops in the mainland China, but the consumers of this Mandarin-language music are usually Mandarin speakers from the Greater Chinese community (Moskowitz 2010), especially in mainland China where Mandarin is the official language.

At the turn of the 21st century, Jay Chou¹²⁷ developed a unique style under the category of Mandopop, ‘*Zhongguo feng*’, with a literal meaning of China Wind but which also be widely interpreted as Chinese style since the Chinese character *feng* (Wind) is used to imply *fengge* (style). China Wind refers to a hybrid of Western popular styles and Chinese traditional or folk musical elements. This musical form has experienced great success in the broader Chinese market since it first debuted. Jay Chou’s success with China Wind has encouraged many other Taiwanese Mandopop composers and singers – for example, Leehom Wang, David Tao and Kenji Wu – to adapt similar styles in their music, incorporating their understandings of ‘Chinese style’ based on their cultural backgrounds.

Since the China Wind music that widely spread across mainland China was firstly created and defined by Taiwanese musicians and strongly associated with the work of its founder Jay Chou,

¹²⁷ Jay Chou is a songwriter, singer and musician from Taiwan. He earned his reputation and popularity in the Greater China areas (e.g. Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, Singapore) and also other Asia regions (e.g. Japan, Korea) after releasing his debut album *Jay* in 2000.

this chapter focuses on the work of the Taiwan-based musicians, especially Jay Chou and Leehom Wang. By examining the sound, text and visual elements of this musical form, places emphasis on revealing how the sense of Chinese style or the ‘wind’ has been decoded by audiences through various musical materials. In particular, it will focus on how the specific Chinese characterised artistic concept *yijing* has been perceived and how the ‘Chinese nation’ has been imagined. In addition, the chapter discusses the understanding of national identity and the self-identification of Chinese audiences with different cultural backgrounds in this generation. Furthermore, by analysing interviewees’ different interpretations of China Wind and Chinese style, the chapter will show that in addition to the presence of Chinese cultural influences, which precipitated the huge success within the Greater Chinese community, the expression and presentation of Chinese nationalism and patriotism allow this style and its performers and musicians to gain access from authorities to transmit China Wind music from Taiwan to the Mainland.

2. Previous approaches to the study of China Wind research

Research on China Wind first emerged in the 2000s when Jay Chou’s works started to gain popularity. Most China Wind studies in China are MA theses and brief papers or articles, which have generally focused on three aspects. First are the generic characteristics, especially its musical and lyrical features (without detailed analysis, Wu and Wang 2004; Qi 2008; Wang 2008). Second is the cultural study of the China Wind phenomenon (Li 2012; Sun 2014). Third are explorations of the concept of ‘China Wind’ in other areas, such as film and painting (Mei 2008; Cai and Liao 2009; Nie 2009). These works mainly explore how Chinese cultural elements are applied to the text and sound, which opens it to Chinese and Western audiences, through the idea of ‘China Wind’ or ‘Chinese style’ in a cross-cultural context. Some of the authors (e.g. Nie, Cai and Liao) claim that this is a revival of Chinese traditional culture, and also signals a trend for Chinese contemporary music and art to enter into the ‘global art circle’.

Compared to Chinese scholars’ research, Anglophone scholars are more interested in exploring China Wind phenomenon within studies of celebrity and culture. Anthony Fung’s work focuses on Jay Chou’s hip-hop style in China, illustrating ‘how a cultural product can be marketed in an authoritarian regime that values the political over the economic’ (2008a:79). Fung’s research shows the importance of showing ‘national identity’ and ‘Chinese characteristics’ for ‘foreign

singers and musicians' in Chinese popular music in order to gain authority and audiences' support in the mainland. This viewpoint is also partially echoed by my interviewees through a different angle, who perceived the cultural symbolism from China Wind style as an example of the power of the nation – the soft power of China. Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet's work (2010) specifically explore the China Wind phenomenon in music videos made in Hong Kong. In their work, the presentations of Chineseness in Hong Kong-based China Wind music resist the dominant expressions of Chineseness that exist in traditional Chinese communities (e.g. mainland China). Their research reflects a very different sense and meaning of Chineseness and Chinese style compared with that in Taiwan, which also illustrates two different gendered images of this musical form within the music-place contexts. In addition to Jay Chou, some researchers have focused on Leehom Wang and his Chinese style music – Chinked-out style. By examining the presentation of Chineseness and Chinese cultural elements, Han Le (2007) claims that 'the derogative word (i.e. Chink) used to refer to Chinese has been given new meanings through the label "Chinked-out" as a new type of music by Leehom Wang'. Chinked-out, then, is another form of expressing China Wind or Chinese style. Additionally, Boxi Chen's (2012) research pays more attention to the comparison of American-born Chinese (ABC) Taiwanese singers, in particular, Leehom Wang and Vanness Wu. Through a comparison of Wang and Wu, Chen asserts that Wang as an ABC background singer is more willing to show his Chineseness in his music, especially the Chinked-out style, than Wu. Wang's pride in his identity and the expression of Chinese cultural influence are the main reasons for his high popularity in Greater China (2012:78). However, in my research, the reception shows extremely different attitudes between Jay Chou and Leehom Wang's China Wind brands with regard to audiences' perceptions of authenticity. Although Wang's *huaren* (ethnic-Chinese) music idea allows him to gain the broadest range of support from the Greater Chinese community, his Asian-American identity also challenges audiences' stance of Chineseness and Chinese style.

The world of these scholar highlights one of the major problems associated with the study of China Wind music: it is heavily orientated towards researching text. Without valuing the reception, it is not possible to reveal the meaning of 'China Wind', nor the conceptualisation of Chinese style. In this research, audiences' decoding of the sound, lyrics and visual materials associated with this musical form illustrates the diversity implied in the meaning of Chineseness, the Chinese nation, ethnicity and the specific Chinese artistic concept of *yijing* (from an idea to an image, see further explanations). In this way, it expands upon the findings

of previous studies. While the national and cultural consciousness of the younger generation in mainland China and Chinese students studying in the U.K that are the focus of this study demonstrate multiple connotations and functions of ‘Chinese style’ that have been neglected by previous studies of the China Wind phenomenon.

3. What is China Wind?

The term ‘*Zhongguo feng*’ appeared in the world premiere of Jay Chou’s new song ‘Faraway’ in 2006. Chou stated that ‘there will be at least one China Wind song in each of my albums’ (Huang 2006, 2007).¹²⁸ Although he labelled his fusion of Chinese-Western musical elements as China Wind, Chou never exactly explained what China Wind is. In previous studies, the framework of China Wind music is largely based on Huang Xiaoliang’s (the grassroots internet musician from Mainland China) ‘three old three new’ principle. He states that China Wind is a combination of ‘traditional *cifu* (a Chinese literary form), traditional culture, traditional tune’ (i.e. three old) and ‘new singing style, new arrangement and new concept’ (i.e. three new). Huang (2006, 2007) further claims that China Wind is a unique Chinese style of popular music, wherein ‘the poetic lyrics show Chinese cultures, the vocal delivery and song arrangement heightens the Chinese atmosphere, the combination of nostalgic Chinese text and pop rhythms produce a subtle, sad and elegant style’.

Based on Huang’s principle, China Wind music is either defined lyrically by the expression of traditional Chinese literary elements or musically by the fusion of Chinese traditional melody and Western popular styles. However, Huang’s definition, although pointing out the main sources of China Wind music, dismisses the musical and cultural diversity and hybridity of this form. Rather than pin down the exact definition of China Wind through its musical sources, the perception and decoding of China Wind by the audiences is the key point here to show the characteristics and meaning of this musical form.

Although the form of China Wind established by Chou includes a variety of musical elements, what has most impressed audiences about this style, is the sense of the ‘new’. Solo, a 32-year-

¹²⁸ Most of my interviewees mentioned that they firstly heard of the term China Wind from Jay Chou and his music. Indeed, the majority of them directly linked Jay Chou with China Wind. However, Jay Chou cannot be simply understood as the creator of the concept of China Wind; it is more like a musical concept used by musicians from different eras to promote their works across Chinese communities in different regions. This is especially important when China Wind is interpreted as Chinese style (as in the three cases under investigation here).

old office worker who works as the manager of a mainland company, provides a representative statement of the understanding of China Wind:

For me, China Wind is a new thing, a new musical form. Old Chinese popular music like Fei Yu-ching or Teresa Teng's songs are not what I call China Wind pop music, while the most known *Gangtai* pop [for the 80's generation] is another musical form, they sound more like westernized pop. China Wind is still in the Chinese flavour, but it is more fashionable, like the rap style of Chou and Wang's music.

Solo's interpretation of 'neither traditional nor an adaption of Western pop music' once again exhibits the approach for Chinese style popular music creation: combining Chinese and Western musical elements, the same as Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind music. However, Solo's sense of 'new and fashionable' is very much based on the presentation of the rap and hip-hop style specifically contained in this form.

II. Localising hip-hop by hybridising Chinese cultural influence

The differing rap styles, especially those of Jay Chou and Leehom Wang, were frequently mentioned by the interviewees. Yiren, a 26-year-old teacher working in the Mainland, has liked Jay Chou and his music since 2000. She offers up her specific perception of Chou's music:

Yiren: Chou's China Wind is outstanding. It sounds more modern, more fashionable because his rap style is unique. I never heard of this kind of rap before his music.

Na: How unique? Or what is his rap style?

Yiren: His raps so fast and unclear! It's very new, no one else raps like him.

Like Solo, Yiren's words also suggest that the sense of 'new and modern' that she received from Chou's China Wind music is linked with the rap style and hip-hop culture. Deborah Wong argues that 'rap is a site where the body and ground can come into conflict... In a global context, rap is consistently associated with youth and social criticism' (2004:180-181). In addition, Fung states 'The poverty, violence and drug-use that are reflected in the bad-language lyrics of hip-hop are intrinsically anti-hegemonic and have greater appeal in the Western society' (2008b:97). However, during the interviews, no matter whether with fans or normal Chinese popular music amateurs, none of the interviewees linked the hip-hop or rap style with political concerns or social criticism. Most liked Chou's style of rap because his approach to rap is very distinct and were not subject to Western cultural influences as a result of listening to the lyrics.

In contrast, audiences were mainly reminded of elements of mainstream Chinese culture and installed with a sense of patriotism. As Patrick, a 23-year-old college student who studies in the UK states:

A lot of Chou's China Wind songs are about Chinese martial arts, like 'Huo yuan jia' and 'Dragon Fist'. What Chou rapped in these songs are the Chinese martial arts spirit, the strength of the nation (e.g. we are not the "sick man of East Asia", we are strong) or very positive content.

Although Patrick noticed the representation of hip-hop and rap in Chou's music, he treated it more like a musical form rather than a part of Western culture. What impressed Patrick (and others) was the strong sense of patriotism and nationalism that pervaded the music. Chou repoliticizes and localises Western hip-hop/rap culture by combining them with Chinese cultures or cultural values. Chou's approach of repackaging hip-hop with Chinese cultural influences established a model for the later China Wind musicians, and more importantly, it guided audiences' perception of hip-hop and rap in this musical form and linked it with nationalism and patriotic tradition – part of the value and function of the concept of Chinese style.

In the same manner, Leehom Wang's Chinked-out style is also largely interpreted as a type of China Wind by the audiences.¹²⁹ Wang's states that "Chinked-out" is a school of hip-hop that incorporates Chinese elements and sound' (CNN 2006). In the 2010 movie *Love in Disguise*, directed by Wang himself, Wang acted as mega-pop singer Du Minghan.¹³⁰ When he finished a concert, a foreign journalist asked Du (Wang) about his music: 'what do you call this kind of music?' Du (Wang) answered that 'I call it Chinked-out, a combination of Beijing opera and hip-hop.'

W. Anthony Sheppard (2013:613) analyses the development of Chinked-out style and points out that Wang '[keeps insisting] on a Chinese rather than Asian American or Taiwanese identity, however, [Wang] has traded on his foreign or exotic status in East Asia, most obviously by conspicuously inserting English words into his by now fluent Mandarin'. Sheppard's viewpoint

¹²⁹ Leehom Wang was born in America and formally trained in music studies at the Berklee College of Music. He got back to Taiwan and started his musical journey in Asia in 1995. After establishing himself as a 'quality idol' (*youzhi ǒuxiang*) with Decca Records (1996-1997), Wang gained considerable popularity amongst the Grater Chinese community. In 2004, he established his brand of China Wind – the Chinked-out style – based on the fusion of hip-hop and Chinese musical elements.

¹³⁰ Du in the movie wants to create a new musical style that combines Chinese ethnic features and hip-hop in exactly the same way as Wang has done in reality.

highlights two issues: firstly, how Wang has used certain strategies to negotiate his identity in order to successfully promote his Chinked-out style and broaden his fan base, and place himself in a win-win position in different regions of East Asia (especially in mainland China); and secondly, why and how Wang and his music have been critiqued as ‘too western’ by most of my interviewees, for differing reasons. Both of these two issues will be addressed further in the following sections of this chapter (and again in the conclusion to this thesis).

What is more, although Wang aims to present a distinct hip-hop style in his Chinked-out music, the perception of Chinked-out leans towards a sense of ‘Chinese characterised’. Without connecting his audiences – especially mainland audiences – with the hip-hop culture, Wang lost the root of ‘chink’ and consequently audiences still noticed the Chinese expressions in this style rather than the meaning and culture of ‘chink’ in the U.S. context. As Geyi, a 24-year-old college student who has studied in U.S., UK and Hong Kong claims:

Geyi: Wang’s Chinked-out is also a type of China Wind music despite the word “chink” made me feel his music may show a stronger image of hip-hop than Chinese characteristics. When we listened to Wang’s Chinked-out music, me and my friends thought they are similar to those China Wind hits. We don’t feel the significant difference between China Wind and Chinked-out though Wang and Chou’s rap styles are different. But basically they sound similar based on the same approach of combining Chinese-Western musical elements.

Geyi, although noticing the original cultural influence of ‘chink’ and the different rap style in Wang’s music, still decoded Chinked-out as a type of China Wind music. The reason for this is mainly because of the strong link between Chinese audiences and Chinese musical elements, almost all interviewees admitted that they are more easily attracted to Chinese sounds and cultures. In addition, during our discussions on Wang and Chou’s music, the interviewee Geyi, also mentioned the feeling ‘awkward’ when listening to Leehom Wang’s music:

Na: You mentioned that Chou and Wang’s rap styles are different, can you further describe how different they are?

Geyi: Well, Chou is famous for his unclear rap style, right? He used to rap very fast in some of his songs, but China Wind ballads are not that fast and I can follow the lyrics. Wong’s raps are also unclear, but in a different way. The Chinese verses of his songs always sound a bit “awkward” to me.

Na: “Awkward”?

Geyi: As in, not very Chinese. Sometimes it is because of his ABC [American born Chinese] tone, it doesn’t sound like a Chinese singer singing. And sometimes it’s because of the way he presents of his music. It’s hard to say what exactly caused this feeling but I actually have the same feeling toward most of

his songs, not only chinked-out style.

Na: Does Jay Chou also sound “awkward” to you?

Geyi: No, no. Chou’s China Wind songs are definitely very Chinese, even though sometimes his raps are unclear.

As Geyi suggests, the ‘awkwardness’ of Wang’s music is partially because of his Asian-American identity, which is also a key factor influencing audiences’ decoding of Wang’s work being ‘too western or inauthentic’. However, what is interesting here is that neither Jay Chou nor Leehom Wang speaks very standard Mandarin; their rap styles are generally perceived as being ‘unclear’ (albeit in different ways), however, they still successfully conjure up notions of the ‘China Wind/Chinese style’ to most of their Mainland audiences. In this context, their efforts to create Chineseness in their brand of the China Wind style and the perception that Chinese listeners have formed (through the discussion/interviews between me and my interviewees) are linked with the presentation of Chinese cultural influence through audible, text and visual means.

III. Representing Chineseness in the Wind: the sense of China Wind

1. Sound

Chinese pentatonic tunings

Audiences may not be able to interpret exactly what China Wind is since it could be defined in various ways, but they could immediately recognise it. Since the sense of China Wind is quite abstract and hard to present in words (as most of my interviewees mentioned ‘it is hard to describe what exactly is China Wind’), the interviewees were asked: ‘if you cannot “say” what is China Wind, how do you distinguish it and other music/songs when you hear them?’ They mostly responded that ‘China Wind sounds different’, for example, Emma, a 24-year-old college student studies in the UK states that:

The melody definitely presents the feeling of China Wind or Chinese style. When I played Jay Chou’s China Wind songs to my uncle-in-law [British], he can immediately tell me it’s a Chinese-style popular song. He doesn’t know the scale or Chinese pentatonic modes, but he can feel its Chineseness... I think the Chinese flavour is the main factor to show the sense of China Wind, and it is

very obviously reflected by the sound.

As Jones points out ‘Chinese melody is predominantly characterized by pentatonicism, as opposed to the chromaticism of the Western tradition. Chinese music...and its preferred musical instruments evince a remarkable sensitivity to timbre and tone colour that is lacking in the West’ (2001:27). China Wind is decoded as a Chinese style popular music form mainly because of its representation of Chinese flavour, in particular, the use of Chinese pentatonic scales and instruments as Emma states.

In addition to the infusion of symbolic Western popular styles to enrich the sound of Chinese popular music in a way that the sense of ‘new and modern’ can be received, musicians also use local musical elements to illustrate not only the characteristics of Chinese popular music but also the national and cultural mark in the ‘wind’ – the meaning of Chinese style.

An example is the song ‘Juhua tai’ (Chrysanthemum Terrace, 2006) from Jay Chou.¹³¹ The melody of this song is based on the Chinese pentatonic *Gong* tuning (F *Gong*). The verse and chorus sections of the song focus on certain notes (e.g. *Jue* A, *Shang* G and *Zhi* C) from the F *Gong* five-tone mode scale, as Example 3.1 and Example 3.2 show. The use of the traditional *Gong* tuning brings out a strong Chinese flavour of the song, whilst the characteristically Chinese melody with the instrumental accompaniment also creates a sorrowful mood to match the narrative of the film based on specific instrumental timbres (will discuss further in the section of Instrumentation).¹³²

Example 3.1: ‘Chrysanthemum Terrace’ 0:35-0:50 (from verse sections)



Example 3.2: ‘Chrysanthemum Terrace’ 1:36-1:49 (from chorus sections)



¹³¹ Jay Zhou, ‘Chrysanthemum Terrace’, Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdjbRvvJAZg>, accessed on 5th March, 2016.

¹³² This particular song is also the theme music of the film *Curse of the Golden Flower* (directed by Zhang Yimou) in 2006.

qingjue note D^b, and A^b major; VI^b (F^b).¹³³ The combination of these characteristic notes from Chinese pentatonic and Western musical scales creates a different sound in the pentatonic-based melody and increases the atmosphere of the theme of this song, *Shangri La*; the mythical paradise. Wang created this song and the related album during his fieldwork trips in Tibet, Xinjiang, Yunnan and other ethnic-minority regions. Thus, it is not surprising why this song sounds different from ‘classic’ China Wind songs, such as those of Chou’s. Considering Wang’s musical concept of Chinked-out, the goal of his brand of China Wind might be the place where West meets Chinese ethnicity rather than ‘Chinese’ (I will discuss this further in the following sections).

Instrumentation: Chinese traditional and folk instruments with Western instruments

According to the audience, another important factor that helps to portray the sensibility of China Wind relates to the timbre and tonal colour of the instrumentation. Yang, a 29-year-old office worker from the mainland China, provides a representative statement:

When I hear China Wind songs, I feel those songs use a variety of Chinese instruments e.g. *pipa*, *guzheng*, but they put those traditional instruments in a popular music form, combined with Western instruments. It doesn’t feel like Chinese folk or old pop music. Because it sounds fresh, especially with the Western musical elements, like those Western instruments... I know they are not Chinese stuff, but they match the Chinese flavour. I mean the combination illustrates the feeling of China Wind. The Western instruments do not weaken the sense of Chineseness but make a comparison to Chinese instruments that show different feelings.

Yang’s opinion highlights how, for audience, the sound of China Wind is tightly linked with the arrangement of the Chinese-Western instruments. As a representative of the China Wind form, Jay Chou is constantly searching for ways to take different musical materials as inspiration to produce different sounds in the creation of China Wind music.

An example is Jay Chou’s hit ‘Chrysanthemum Terrace’. Based on the timbre of different strings, a variety of tonal colours appear in this song (Example 3.5). Cello and violin are used at the beginning, and the timbre of the strings is close to that of the human voice creating a sympathetic response which more easily matches the particular narrative (the tragedy). This is

¹³³ Liu (2013:21) also mentions the fusion of Chinese and Western musical systems in Wang’s brand of China Wind songs.

followed by the tonal structure of the percussion instruments, acoustic guitar and *guzheng* (a Chinese traditional plucked string instrument) that appear later. Throughout, the interplay between acoustic guitar and *guzheng* appears several times during the verse sections, causing a softer and dolorous sensation that matches the vibe of this ballad song and also creates the space to fit with the narrative taking place in ancient China. While the combination of strings (cello, violin, *guzheng* and acoustic guitar) increases the thickness of the traditional tune-based sound and show the dynamics of the melody. At the end of the song, *hulusi* (cucurbit flute, a Chinese wind instrument) is used as the primary instrument to change the string-based timbre and also to re-stress the sense of Chineseness.

Example 3.5: instrumentation of ‘Chrysanthemum Terrace’

Time	Instruments (different timbres)
0:01-0:31	cello and violin
0:30-0:36	percussions
0:37-1:03 (verse)	acoustic guitar
from 1:04 (verse)	<i>guzheng</i>
1:04-1:30 (verse)	acoustic guitar and <i>guzheng</i>
1:31-2:06 (chorus)	<i>guzheng</i> , cello and violin
2:07-2:31 (instrumental bridge)	acoustic guitar, <i>guzheng</i> , cello and violin
2:32-3:00 (verse)	acoustic guitar
3:01-3:26 (verse)	acoustic guitar, <i>guzheng</i>
3:30-4:30 (chorus)	acoustic guitar, <i>guzheng</i> , cello and violin
4:31-4:38, 4:47-4:53	cucurbit flute, strings
4:49	triangle iron

Chou’s other two hits, ‘Shuang jie gun’ (Nunchaks, 2001) and ‘Long quan’ (Dragon Fist, 2002) also show the juxtaposition of the timbres of Western and Chinese instruments. These two songs both focus on the theme of Chinese martial arts (*gongfu*) and use repetitive synthesized riffs and clapper rhythms in the background music. The prelude of ‘Dragon Fist’ is introduced through the rhythm of traditional Chinese drums to make the music sound more majestic, whereas ‘Nunchaks’ uses the gong, drum and *erhu* (a two-stringed bowed instrument) solo to symbolise the traditional Chinese culture. Although the texts of these two songs concern Chinese martial arts, they are presented in a western rap-rock style. The use of electric guitar, bass guitar and drums creates a different arural effect compared with Chinese instruments.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Even though western cultural influences are not always perceived by the audience, the difference in sound still exists in their minds.

For example, in the song ‘Nunchaks’, Chou used the sound of the piano solo (2:24-2:33) as a comparison to the *erhu* solo (1:46-1:56) to show two different sounds and musical cultures with pentatonic melodies and Western harmonies in the China Wind music as shown in Example 3.6. Similarly, in ‘Dragon Fist’, though Chou raps from the beginning to the end, the *guzheng* solo (Example 3.7) appears frequently to remind the listener of the Chinese cultural influence of the song.

Example 3.6: solos from ‘Nunchaks’

Piano solo ¹³⁵ (2:24-2:33)	
Erhu solo (1:46-1:56)	

Example 3.7: *guzheng* solo of ‘Dragon Fist’, 1:11-1:20, 1:21-1:30 and 2:49-2:57



Through these examples, China Wind musicians like to use Chinese folk and traditional instruments to guide the audience back to a specific time and space – ‘old’ (traditional/ancient) China. While Western electronic musical instruments are used to create a contrasting atmosphere that completes the hybridity of traditional and modern on the one hand, ancient and contemporary on the other. The fusion through instrumentation builds the distinct sense of spatial-temporality, which recalls the memories and values of traditional Chinese culture to the 21st century and also signifies the ‘timbre’ of China Wind style.

¹³⁵ The piano solo score comes from: <http://www.gangqinpu.com/html/6792.htm>, accessed on 5th March 2014.

Chinese traditional opera

Amanda Brandellero states that ‘individual and community understandings of popular music heritage are created via their interaction not only with institutional discourses but also local articulations of cultural memorials’ (2014 et al:222). China Wind cannot only be defined by its creators but also has to resonate with Chinese audiences and recall audiences’ musical and cultural memories in order to demonstrate the ‘authenticity’ of Chinese style.

Therefore, another important way to shape China Wind as a Chinese style musical form is the use of the traditional operatic elements. As the quintessence of Chinese culture, traditional operas, such as Beijing opera and *kunqu*,¹³⁶ is perceived as the most important cultural and musical form of Chinese art. Chinese opera uses a specific nasal tone and vocal performance practice that creates a particular theatrical sound effect with a distinctly Chinese flavour, and also presents Chinese national and cultural identity to the audience, as Shuyan, a 29-year-old postgraduate student in the mainland states:

The elements involved in China Wind music are used to show the Chinese culture, like the Chinese opera, and also instruments and the lyrics. I am not a professional [in music] who can tell you the exact Chinese musical characteristics, but once I heard Chinese operatic vocals in China Wind music, I immediately got the sense of Chineseness. It’s our culture, we can feel it.

As representative songs of China Wind style, David Tao’s ‘Susan shuo’ (Susan Says, 2005),¹³⁷ Leehom Wang’s ‘Hua tian cuo’ (Error in a Flower Field, 2005)¹³⁸ and Jay Chou’s ‘Huo yuan jia’¹³⁹ (2006) all use traditional Chinese opera as one vital element to construct a sense of Chineseness of their musical works. Tao’s use of Chinese opera in ‘Susan Says’ is based on the famous Chinese traditional theatre story *susan qijie*. Tao imitated the Peking opera’s vocal delivery (2:49-3:12) to match the narrative. Wang’s ‘Error in a Flower Field’ was inspired by a traditional Beijing opera libretto *huatiancuo*; indeed, he kept the same name *huatiancuo* as the song’s title. In the music, Wang did not really sing in a Chinese operatic form, but used typical

¹³⁶ *Kunqu*, also known as *Kun* opera, is perceived as an important representation of Chinese cultures (similar to Beijing opera). It is one of the oldest forms of Chinese opera.

¹³⁷ David Tao, ‘Susan Says’, Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4_ctWHnD18, accessed on 5th March, 2016.

¹³⁸ Leehom Wang, ‘Error in a Flower Field’, Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruCXTls3IIQ>, accessed on 5th March, 2016.

¹³⁹ Jay Chou, ‘Huo yuan jia’, Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGvi_VEEyxY, accessed on 5th March, 2016.

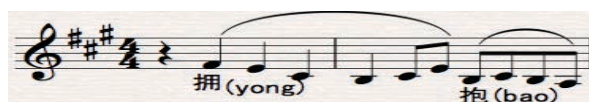
Chinese instruments and the spoken parts of Chinese opera to show cultural influences. While Chou's 'Huo yuan jia' is not based on operatic librettos or stories, Chou only imitated the nasal tone and vocal skills to symbolise the Chinese culture in this song.

Although the presentation of Chinese opera gives China Wind music its Chinese identity, this musical or cultural element is combined with Western hip-hop and R&B styles. If the Western rap and hip-hop culture is localised to match the concept of Chinese style, then Chinese opera culture, in contrast, is modernised to illustrate the sense of 'new' of China Wind music. For example, none of these three singers sing Chinese opera in its original way, and the presentation of this culture is very Western in places. In Wang's 'Error in a Flower Field', he seemed to imitate the Beijing opera's special theatrical pronunciation in some places of the song (Example 3.8). However, within his R&B's singing approach; free melismatic runs, the hybridised sound is neither similar to Chinese traditional opera nor R&B. This characteristic sound fusion appears several times throughout the song and some of the written Chinese characters have been sung in a similar way (Example 3.9), but the vocal delivery of *Qing* and *Hao* is different. The pronunciation of other characters and their melodic lines, such as *Yong* or *Bao*, still have the sound of the natural voice, whereas *Qing* or *Hao* and the melodic line appear to have been technologically enhanced in order to stress the pronunciation and sound; it is not fully sung by Wang's voice.

Example 3.8: 'Error in a Flower Field', 1:22, 1:03



Example 3.9: 'Error in a Flower Field', 1:08



As well as the combination of different vocals, technology also plays a vital role in both the production and reception of the instrumental sound of this style. Although my interviewees recognise that Chinese instrumentation is used in songs, they were not confident to say exactly

what these instruments were. For example, the interviewee T1, an office worker in his early 30s who works in the mainland, says that:

I am not sure if it's the sound of *guzheng* or *pipa* in this song...it's definitely a Chinese traditional string instrument, but I am not certainly sure which one it is.

T1's confusion about the Chinese instrumental sound is not because of his unprofessional background; even music performance majors specialising in violin (like Geyi) or Chinese instruments (like Huan) could not provide a definitive answer. Chinese traditional instruments are not always presented as their original sound in China Wind music but are instead sampled and sequenced. We can see this in the sound of *guzheng* and *dizi* in Chou's 'Huo yuan jia'; indeed, this occurs frequently in China Wind songs. The sampled and sequenced sounds create uncertainty in the reception because 'they sound similar'.

The specific scales used in pentatonic melodies, the sound of traditional instruments and the unique vocal delivery of Chinese operas can instantly reveal a mark of locality or Chineseness; however, the arrangement of Western popular elements, is the biggest factor in modernising Chinese cultures. The progression of modern rhythm focuses on the bass, while traditional Chinese musical cultures, whether instruments for Chinese opera or Chinese folk music, have no concept of a bass line (Wu 2008, also pointed out by Robert Zollitsch in his concert in 2016).¹⁴⁰ When the sound of the beat and the bass elements are incorporated into traditional Chinese music, the 'old melody' has a new rhythm that makes it sound more integrated and has a new package that allows the China Wind style sound different from 'old Chinese popular songs'.

2. Lyrics

From text to image: feeling the Wind during imagination

¹⁴⁰ The notes about concert and interview with Lao Luo are organised by Liang Nie, available at: http://www.gonglinna.com/linna_Music_appraise.htm#5, accessed on 16th March, 2016.

When the interviewees were asked about their perceptions of China Wind music, many of them suddenly paused and said that they were unable to explain it very clearly. Tina and Julia (two college students from Chinese conservatories of music) said:

China Wind is a kind of *yijing*, it cannot be explained very clearly. It is a kind of feeling created through the melody and especially the lyrics. The lyrics are like poems and very elegant, they let us see a variety of Chinese images in our mind.

We can see through discussions with interviewees that their particular perceptions and the Chinese artistic characteristic of China Wind music, i.e. *yijing*, are greatly based on lyrics. The concept of *yijing* is extremely difficult for my interviewees to explain. For most of them, *yijing* cannot be described or explained in words but can only be perceived as a specific feeling. *Yijing*, as a Chinese aesthetic concept, is interpreted as ‘idea-image’ by Farquhar (2009). Through realising an idea as an image (Farquhar 2009:100), *yijing* in China Wind style not merely reflects how audiences have conceived and responded to Chinese traditional cultural influence in popular music, but also indicates their approach to visualising the text in order to reveal the image of this musical form. In other words, the stream of images articulated through text of China Wind songs creates the space for audiences to ‘see’ the Wind. As Vincent Fang, the most popular China Wind lyricist states:

Technically “China Wind music” is not a music style (*yinyue qufeng*), it does not have a “form” (*geshi*) that can be classified accurately. Unlike those Western music genres, hip-hop, R&B jazz, etc... all types of music that can be classified are based on their “compositional style” (*zuoqude fengge*), there has never been a music type classified by the meaning of lyrics. However, what we called “China Wind” has this trend. (2008:3)

Fang’s statement and audiences’ interpretations all show the importance of lyrics in the construction of this musical form. For most of my interviewees, China Wind cannot be named as China Wind or Chinese style without poetic lyrical presentation. The lyrics function as the main source through which they can distinguish China Wind style from others, and visualise the characteristics of the Chinese style. In other words, the poetic lyrics or the *yijing* facilitates an emphasis on the characterisation of the concept of Chinese style in China Wind music

through an artistic perspective. This can be seen in the Example 3.10¹⁴¹ and Example 3.11¹⁴² from Chou's hits 'Fa ru xue' (Hair like snow) and 'Qing hua ci' (Blue and White Porcelain, lyrics all written by Fang).

Example 3.10: lyrics of 'Hair like snow' by Vincent Fang (2005)

狼牙月 伊人憔悴
我举杯 饮尽了风雪
是谁打翻前世柜 惹尘埃是非
A wolf fang moon, (my) lady is grieving
I raise my cup, drinking the wind and the snow
who has upset the box of yesteryears, awaking the dust of forgotten past?

缘字诀 几番轮回
你锁眉 哭红颜唤不回
纵然青史已经成灰 我爱不灭
Destiny has been written, for every reincarnation
with a frown etched on your brows, you wail as time cannot be rewound
even if history has turned into ashes, my love will never perish

繁华如三千东流水
我只取一瓢爱了解
只恋你化身的蝶
In majesty like three thousand miles of water flowing east
all I ask is one ladle of love
for I yearn only for the butterfly reincarnation of your soul

你发如雪 凄美了离别
我焚香感动了谁
邀明月 让回忆皎洁
爱在月光下完美
Your hair is like snow, farewell is a bitter serenity
who is moved by the fragrance of my burning incense?
Inviting the full moon to shine upon (our) memories
beneath the moonlight, love is a reflection of bliss

¹⁴¹ Translated by musicalpoems

<https://musicalpoems.wordpress.com/2011/09/27/translation-hair-like-snow/>, accessed on 5th March, 2016.

¹⁴² Translated by Ho@multistars.com

<http://jaychoustudio.com/jay-chou-translations/hair-like-snow/81>, accessed on 5th March, 2016.

你发如雪 纷飞了眼泪
我等待苍老了谁
红尘醉 微醺的岁月
我用无悔 刻永世爱你的碑

Your hair is like snow, tears are flying everywhere
who have I been waiting for as I grayed?
In this mortal world drunk, with days of intoxication,
I carve my eternal love on the tablet with no regrets

啦儿啦 啦儿啦 啦儿啦儿啦
啦儿啦 啦儿啦 啦儿啦儿啦
La er la La er la La er la er la
La er la La er la La er la er la

铜镜映无邪 扎马尾
你若撒野 今生我把酒奉陪

In the bronze mirror was a reflection of innocent, ponytail hair
if you're bold enough – this life, I'll raise this cup of wine and keep you company.

Example 3.11: lyrics of ‘Blue and White Porcelain’ by Vincent Fang (2008)

素胚勾勒出青花笔锋浓转淡
瓶身描绘的牡丹一如你初妆
冉冉檀香透过窗心事我了然
宣纸上 走笔至此搁一半

On the Su-embryo, the Chinese flower is mapped out, the stroke turns from strong to light

*The Peony flower that is portrayed on the vase body is like your initial makeup
The Sandalwood fragrance gradually passes through the window, I understand the matters*

On the Xuan paper, the moving pen is placed here half way

釉色渲染仕女图韵味被私藏
而你嫣然的一笑如含苞待放
你的美一缕飘散，去到我去不了的地方

*Washes of glaze colour on the drawing of the lady hide the attraction
And your captivating smile is like a flower waiting to blossom
Your beauty scatters into a wisp
Going to a place I cannot go*

天青色等烟雨，而我在等你
炊烟袅袅升起，隔江千万里
在瓶底书汉隶仿前朝的飘逸
就当我为遇见你伏笔，

*The azure colour is waiting for the misty rain
And I'm waiting for you
The chimney smoke gracefully rises
Separated by the river millions of miles apart
On the base of the vase is inscribed with Hanshu imitating the grace of the former dynasty
Just pretend I am foreshadowing my meeting with you*

天青色等烟雨，而我在等你
月色被打捞起，晕开了结局
如传世的青花瓷自顾自美丽，你眼带笑意

*The azure colour is waiting for the misty rain
And I'm waiting for you
The moonlight is fished up
Blurring the ending
As if the Chinese flower pot that is passed on from generation to generation,
caring only about it's own beauty
Your eyes carry a smile*

The lyrics of these two songs are most frequently mentioned by the interviewees, especially ‘Blue and White Porcelain’. Nearly everyone used the lyrics of this song to explain how they ‘see’ the image of China Wind or the sense of Chineseness, as Shuyan claims:

The lyrics, especially Fang’s works, definitely show traditional Chinese culture.

For example, through the lyrics from ‘Blue and White Porcelain’,¹⁴³ Fang is drawing porcelain through words. He uses specific symbols to indicate Chinese culture indirectly. I have an image of traditional China in my mind when I read the lyrics, and due to the indirect expression, the lyrics create a space for me to combine the music and Chinese traditional culture.

Shuyan’s imaginative process shows how she visualised China Wind music and also highlights the significant characteristic of Fang’s lyrics of China Wind music – from text to image. Fang claims that ‘I told myself that, my lyrics must have abstract/visionary imageries and a sense of history. [It] should be like a movie, within vivid images, tight pace. Texts like edited films, lyrics show full shot, medium shot, close shot and extreme close-up shot....[our perspective] can be arbitrarily switched, Montages of jumping pictures formed a kind of floating beauty of clips’ (*Epoch Times* 2005).

Fang’s statement clearly demonstrates that his lyrical creation is not based on the idea of language but instead on visual representations. According to the interviewees, the poetic and symbolic lyrics provide them an indexical process to link specific terms with certain images. Through particular terms, for instance, *peony flower*, *sandalwood fragrance*, *xuan paper*, *hanshu* from ‘Blue and White Porcelain’; *yiren* (maiden, the traditional Chinese way to refer women), *hongyan* (beauty), *ponytail hair* from ‘Hair Like Snow’ or *kongmen* (Buddhism), *nianlun* (tree-ring), *shanmen* (mountain gate), *gucheng* (lonely city), *yecun* (bleak village) from ‘Faded Firework’, audiences not only perceived the traditional Chinese culture and literary terms as words but also paired terms with certain Chinese images through imagination. The audience reception and Fang’s ideas about lyrical creation indicate that the relationship between text and image in most of Fang’s China Wind lyrics is a combination of the symbolic and indexical. The poetic lyrics create a stream of images and imageries that allow the audience to visualise the sense of Chinese style, despite the fact that they cannot depict their sensations or express what exactly constitutes the image of China Wind.¹⁴⁴

However, Fang’s lyrical thoughts and perspectives switch rapidly – the imageries show a big gap. It is interesting to note that in the first four lines of this song ‘Blue and White Porcelain’ (Example 3.11, in italics) we cannot read the story as a logical progression of concepts because

¹⁴³ The lyrics are: ‘On the Su-embryo, the Chinese flower is mapped out, the stroke turns from strong to light, The Peony flower that is portrayed on the vase body is like your initial makeup’.

¹⁴⁴ However, that might be the intention of the production of China Wind music, especially for Fang and Chou’s brand of China Wind. The producers intended to create an abstract concept rather than a physical ‘object’.

the lyrics or imageries rapidly ‘jump’ from one to another. The four lines show a variety of imageries and images, from object (Su-embryo) to object (stroke), from object (peony flower, vase body) to figure (you). From object (sandalwood fragrance) to figure (I), then back to objects (Xuanpaper and the moving pen); all appeared in one section of lyrics.

Similarly, the latter lines of the lyrics of ‘Hair Like Snow’ also illustrate Fang’s ‘arbitrary thoughts’; ‘In the bronze mirror was a reflection of innocent, ponytail hair.’ The ‘bronze mirror’ and ‘ponytail hair’ are two objects used to create two specific images. However, it is difficult to understand how these are linked with the imagery of the next line, ‘if you’re bold enough – this life, I’ll raise this cup of wine and keep you company.’ In fact, to understand why ‘the bronze mirror was a reflection of innocent’ and its relationship with ‘ponytail hair’ also requires imagination – these individual objects that shown in the narrative are unlinked. Furthermore, through these lyrics, it appears that most of these images and imageries refer to discrete physical objects rather than other things that might be imagined, such as abstract concepts or moods. These physical objects that described as traditional literary terms facilitate an indexical process for audiences, which finally lead to the perception of a particular aesthetic in China Wind style.

Although Fang applies the Chinese classical aesthetic to build his lyrical works, the lyrics cannot be interpreted through a system of Chinese classical aesthetic because the imageries that Fang creates in order to illustrate his particular China Wind style do not conform to a stable artistic concept; they are ‘fragmented’ (Zhou 2013:138). The fragmented imageries, though providing space for the audience to imagine and visualise China Wind or Chinese style, also create confusion and uncertainty of this musical form. For example, Lan (a 27-year-old music teacher working in the mainland) and Lin (a 25-year-old psychology PhD student studying in the UK) state:

Lan: Fang’s lyrics are gorgeous. I mean, he uses a lot of elegant or classical words and phrases to describe a story and to create Chinese characteristics and imageries. However, without the “gorgeous clothes”, his lyrics lack of a central concept and have no central idea.

Lin: I can’t say that I fully understand Fang’s lyrics of China Wind music, because I am not sure what exactly he wants to express...his lyrics portray beautiful Chinese imageries that allow me to imagine the image of China Wind music, but the lyrics are very indirect and do not focus on a steady theme. For me, the lyrics definitely sketch the picture of China Wind or Chinese style, but

it's incomplete and uncertain.

Fang's lyrical style of China Wind music is neither like Shanghainese Pops nor the Northwest Wind; it has a different language form and cultural meaning. The lyric is no longer a simple mode of popular culture but has developed into a kind of visual phenomenon that presents multiple Chinese cultural imageries. As Zhou claims, 'in the contemporary cultural context, the audience has moved from the edge to the centre of the text. Their cultural mentality has changed from "surrender" to "surpass"' (2013:140). The audience is not only listening to music but also listening to representations of objects, which can help them to link the music and their imaginations. Lan and Lin's lyrical confusion have not really effected their imaginations of China Wind or the sense of Chineseness since they all claimed that they sense the 'wind' through the lyrics. However, their uncertainty of the understanding of lyrics, similar to others' confusion over the Chinese folk instruments, reflects one certain issue of this musical form in general and Chou's works in particular: the Chineseness and the image of the nation represented by China Wind style are not constructed based on reality.

Unlike Shanghainese Pops or Northwest Wind which are rooted in certain sociocultural conditions, China Wind creators have formed an 'imagined Chinese nation' (Anderson 1983). The concept of imagined nation in this case is not exactly same as Benedict Anderson states in his work, but has extended due to the influence of audio recording technology. The interviewees' confusions over the sound and lyrical content of this musical form show how audio recording technology and mass mediated recordings have facilitated the development of nationalism in China and Chinese popular music. Anderson defines the nation as 'an imagined community – and as imagined as both inherently and sovereign' (1983:6), in other words, the 'nation' for Anderson does not exist. However, the interviewees' decoding of 'Chinese sound' or the interpretation of 'Chinese and national cultural influence', and especially their consistent understanding of 'Chinese nation' illustrates that they considered the idea of China as an unproblematic given – i.e. the nation exists 'naturally'. Even though the provenance of the idea of China (and also Han ethnicity) points towards a complicated and comprehensive history, the interviewees, based on their educational background and life experiences, have perceived China or the Chinese nation as a simple, certain concept.¹⁴⁵ In addition, nearly all of my interviewees did not notice or comprehend their role as one of forming a nation or a community.

¹⁴⁵ Although many of my interviewees knew the long history of 'China' or noticed different development phases of 'China' as a nation, they still perceived and interpreted 'China' as a certain fixed concept.

Although my interviewees liked to decode ‘Chineseness’ or ‘Chinese national characteristics’ based on their self-identification, as Chinese people themselves, they seemed to use the concept of nation in a ‘one way’ manner – they did not consider themselves to be involved in forming a nation. However, for the producers of the China Wind style, the ‘Chinese nation’ is defined or imagined in relation to their understandings of Taiwan. In other words, the Taiwanese musicians have created a cultural product that inscribes a sense of Chineseness specific to mainland audiences (and ethnic Chinese audiences) due to their understandings of the relationship between Taiwan and mainland China, and between Taiwanese and (ethnic) Chinese– the imagined sense of shared cultural belonging.

Furthermore, based on perception of musical sources of this style, it is not a real imaginary of the social life of the nation, but an imaginary one that is based on the interpretation of Chinese traditional and folk cultures, classic literatures and Chinese aesthetics amongst producers (from Taiwan) and receivers (from Mainland). Although it can provide the sense of Chineseness because of the underlying Chinese cultural symbolism, this imagination cannot be recognised by the audience as a certain image of the ‘nation’ because it neither relates to real social and cultural conditions nor links to a specific historical Chinese era. The imagined ‘Chinese nation’, though presenting Chinese cultures and values, has also blurred the concept of national identity; for example, in Taiwan and mainland China (as will be discussed in detail in the last section).

Chinese and *huaren* (ethnic Chinese)

If Fang and Chou’s China Wind songs used poetic lyrics to portray an imaginary of Chinese nation to achieve resonance with Chinese audiences, Leehom Wang, on the contrary, used very explicit lyrics to show his idea of a *huaren* identity.

Although the interviewees considered Wang’s Chinked-out as a type of China Wind music, they did not get a strong feeling of Chinese style through ‘seeing’ Chinese images or Chinese cultures, a totally different reaction compared with Jay Chou’s music. Some even claimed that Wang’s brand of China Wind music is too ‘Western’. However, most of them agreed that the reason that Wang’s music still has the sense of ‘Chineseness’ is because the text illustrates a particular feeling of ‘back home’, as Geyi states:

Wang’s Chinked-out music doesn’t always use the same Chinese characterised

sources as Chou's China Wind, and he likes to rap with his ABC accent all the time which made me feel it was less Chinese style. But I can see his Chinese heart inside his music, for example, 'Luo ye gui gen' (Getting Home). He knows where home is. Similarly, he made a cover of 'Long de chuan ren' (Descendants of the Dragon) to show the Chinese root. I think Wang likes to show his nostalgia complex.

Lyrics from 'Getting Home' (2007)

喔~远离家乡不甚唏嘘 Wo... Leaving my homeland without excessive sighs,
幻化成秋夜 With all the dreams melting into the autumn night.
而我却像落叶归根 And I am akin to the falling leaves returning to their roots,
坠在你心间 Hanging heavily in your heart.

几分忧郁几分孤单 No matter how much the resultant worries or loneliness,
都心甘情愿 I am willing to bear them all.
我的爱像落叶归根 My love is like the falling leaves returning to their roots,
家唯独在你身边 Home is when I am at your side.

As the above lyrics illustrate, the text of 'Getting Home' can hardly be perceived as China Wind form if Fang's lyrical approach of sketching Chinese imageries is perceived as a standard of presenting Chinese culture. However, through the lyrics of 'Getting Home', the audience (like Geyi) perceived a sense of Chineseness because of the idea of seeking root. According to Wang, he wrote the lyrics by himself and got the idea from the role he played in the movie *Lust, Caution* (2007). Wang states that: " 'Getting Home' means a return. I was born in New York, I moved across the world and found myself in Asia. I used to represent the fashion and new wave, singing my Chinked-out songs, but the movie took me back to 1930s Shanghai, I feel I was reborn. Although I wrote this song through my role's perspective, I also speak for the lonely wanderer, we are on our way home. A person residing away from home eventually returns to his/her native soil' (*shugaoqianzhang, luoyeguigen*)" (Shi 2007).

Unlike Chou, who is considered to be the local king of Chinese popular music or Mandopop, Wang's Asian-American background meant he had a 'foreign flavour' from the beginning of his music career in Taiwan, as illustrated by many interviewees, who liked to refer to his music as being Western. His overseas cultural background made Wang's music sound less Chinese to the audience and also challenged his ability to present 'authentic Chinese music', but Wang started to gain the audience's sentiment when he positioned himself as the 'abroad child' of the nation.

Wang's idea of 'a Chinese heart of an Asian-American' did not appear in his music until he tried Chou's style of China Wind music (i.e. Chinked-out). Although Wang's brand of China Wind is also popular with the public, it did not receive the same recognition as Chou's music. Indeed, most of my interviewees' first impression of China Wind is of Jay Chou. Later, Wang's thematic songs united under the theme of 'Chinese heart' started to emerge in his music. In addition to 'Getting Home', another song in the same album illustrates the presentation of 'Chinese heart' and also exhibits Wang's idea of *huaren* identity, 'Huaren wansui' (Hail to the Huaren); Wang created this song for encouraging athletes at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

Lyrics from 'Hail to the Huaren' (2007)

I'm born in the USA but made in Taiwan

虽然 *whatever* 我马不停蹄流浪 Although I move across the world
但落叶归根在东方才找到我的家 But eventually I return to my home in the East

王建民的棒球 华人万岁 Wang Jianmin's baseball, Hail to the huaren

马友友的琴声 华人万岁 Yo Yo Ma's music, Hail to the huaren

李安的电影 华人万岁 Ang Lee's movie, Hail to the huaren

刘翔的跨栏 华人万岁 Liu Xiang's hurdle, Hail to the huaren

朗朗的钢琴 华人万岁 Langlang's piano, Hail to the huaren

成龙的拳头 华人万岁 Jackie Chan's fist, Hail to the huaren

十几亿个华人 华人万岁 A billion huaren, Hail to the huaren

This song sounds like a slogan shouted by the audience in the gymnasium. Chinese music critics, for example Ke'er Qinfu, point out that 'this song is too deliberate, it is a slogan song based on the "Chinese heart" theme' (*Sina News* 2007). The song may not have achieved the critic's acclaim, but it did help Wang to gain audiences' supports. Compared to other singers from similar backgrounds such as David Tao and Vanness Wu, Wang is more willing and proud to show his Chineseness in order to gain positive responses from those in Greater China, especially those in mainland China.

Instead of showing the direct implication of Chinese identity, Wang is trying to use the specific *huaren* identity to break the restrictions of nationality. Naming Chinese and ethnic Chinese people as *huaren* instead of indicating a certain geographical location (e.g. Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland) in Wang's works, on the one hand, helps his music to appeal to a broad audience; on the other hand, it re-constructs the sense of Chineseness for the audience, not just Chinese nationality but also ethnic Chinese of any nationality. In reality, Yo-Yo Ma, Liu Xiang and Ang Lee all have different nationalities but in the song 'Hail to Huaren', they all represent the image of Chineseness.

Additionally, Wang's positioning of himself as *huaren* in his music, though, shows a gap between Chinese and ethnic Chinese,¹⁴⁶ it offers a 'safer' situation that would allow for his musical works to be spread in the mainland China.¹⁴⁷ Wang uses the *huaren* identity to find a win-win position to promote his Chinked-out style in both Taiwan and mainland China without putting himself in the position of conflicting national identities. Similarly, a certain 'Chinese' flavor, one that avoids stressing a strong local identity, i.e. 'Taiwanese', is one of the main reasons that the China Wind music can be successfully transmitted from Taiwan to the Mainland.

3. Image: visualising Chineseness and the cultural influence (music video)

In addition to musical and lyrical elements, visual materials also are widely used to create an understanding of China Wind or Chinese style. The introduction of MTV to China in the late 1980s, and the role it placed on image as a component of the musical form, was a big move for Chinese popular music. With the expansion of visual media in Chinese popular music, the importance of the body of performer increased. This is another key feature of China Wind style.

The majority of my interviewees mention that they discovered new pop singers and their music through televised music videos and musical programs before they went to buy physical cassettes and CDs (especially around the end of 20th century or early 21st century) or downloaded music online (in the 2010s). Audiences are not only listening to China Wind but are also watching this musical form, as Patrick states:

Patrick: The music videos are filmed very delicately, especially Chou's music videos. They look very charming and, incredibly, match the artistic concept of China Wind.

Na: How do they [music videos] match the artistic concept of China Wind?

Patrick: Well, again, the [artistic] concept of China Wind cannot be explained very clearly, it is a kind of feeling. The music video illustrates the feeling through Chinese landscape painting-like scenes. The traditional Chinese items, such as opera costumes, paintings and calligraphy works, are set to a dark and quiet scene, which not only brings me immediately back to the old times, but also creates the feeling of China Wind/Chinese style.

Na: I see... then does the music video have a specific topic related to the feeling

¹⁴⁶ It causes audience's feeling of lacking real Chinese cultures, which will be discussed in detail in the Conclusion chapter.

¹⁴⁷ Though Wang states 'he was made in Taiwan', it certainly has a different meaning as 'Taiwanese' for mainland Chinese audiences. Being from Taiwan (or anywhere else in Greater China) is not the issue, the point for mainland audiences and authorities is how he defines himself. His *huaren* identity definitely helps him find a 'safer' position in the Chinese/mandarin market.

of China Wind or Chinese style?

Patrick: Most China Wind music videos are love stories. But they are not only one love story, the story firstly happened in traditional China, then passed through to the modern world, and many of them ended sadly, like 'Blue and White Porcelain'.

Na: Does the singer show himself/herself in music videos?

Patrick: Yes. They either perform as the leading actor/actress or the storyteller.

Patrick's perceptions about China Wind music videos were primarily based on Chou's China Wind works. In fact, the majority of interviewees showed their passion for Chou's music videos since it is where they 'saw' the sense of China Wind. In relation to Frith's categorisation of music videos into performance, narrative and conceptual types (as discussed in the second chapter), and drawing on audiences' viewpoints, the music videos of China Wind music are narrative-based, especially in the case of Chou's music videos.

Through the following examples (mainly focusing on Chou and Wang's China Wind hits since their works especially strike a chord with audiences), I will examine how the concept of China Wind or Chinese style is reflected, delivered and promoted through visual elements based on Goodwin's (1993) identification of music videos: illustration, amplification and disjuncture. These representative video examples will: highlight how visual materials are used to reflect the meaning of the text in a visual form; fill the 'gaps' caused by poetic or symbolic lyrics (illustration); show how the narrative, performer and performance are used to connate the meaning behind images (amplification); and reveal how images have created a different meaning of the song's content (disjuncture).

'Blue and White Porcelain' by Jay Chou

As mentioned above, the song 'Blue and White Porcelain' is one of the most favoured China Wind songs by interviewees. They were impressed by its poetic lyrics and also the sorrowful love story. For the audience, this specific song not only sounds very Chinese but also looks very Chinese, too. For example, Mimosa, a 27-year-old office worker in mainland China, provides a representative statement:

Many of Chou's China Wind songs show the concept of time travel, for example in 'Blue and White Porcelain'. I have a strong impression of this music video. The narrative matches our taste, it is a very popular topic in the Chinese society.

You can see many Chinese dramas or television series which use this topic, i.e. time-travel television series.

As Mimosa points out, ‘time travel’ is the key concept in Jay Chou’s China Wind music videos. This is true not only of ‘Blue and White Porcelain’, but his other music videos too, including ‘Hongchen kezhan’ (Worldly Tavern).

In the music video for ‘Blue and White Porcelain’, Chou appears in the first shot, but does not act as the leading actor but instead as the storyteller. As Goodwin points out ‘when a pop singer tells a first-person narrative in a song, he or she is simultaneously both the character in the song and the storyteller’ (1993:75). Although Chou is not the actor in this music video, the position of storyteller allows him to sing and tell the story to the audience as ‘Jay Chou’, which gives the audience a specific connection to both the narrative and the song.

Chou’s image is superimposed on a traditional Chinese landscape painting (Figure 3.1), which brings the Chinese artistic characteristics and also shows the feeling of ‘China Wind’. Although Chou’s image is not particularly in the Chinese style and lacks specific symbolism, his role in his music video is to create the cloud of Chinese imageries rather than a comparison between traditional and modern. The past and present story is not used to refer to different cultures but instead to a Chinese-style theme of love.





Figure 3.1: Chou's image as a storyteller

This music video pays attention on the scenes of beauty, hero and villain (Figure 3.2). The sword-love themed narrative and the dynamics of these specific characters (Figure 3.3) indicate the hero-beauty convention that existed in Chinese literatures and novels (e.g. Huang 2006: 8). This specific theme increases the tension of the narrative, and also constructs multiple gender identities based on Chinese cultural values (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 6).





Figure 3.2: images of the beauty, the hero and the gangster





Figure 3.3: scenes of the hero rescuing the beauty

In this music video, the image of blue and white porcelain firstly appears in the confrontation between the hero and the villain in the traditional Chinese world. It then emerges in the contemporary Chinese world (Figure 3.4). This brings out the theme, showing the function, meaning and relationship between this item and the love story and fills in the gap between the symbolic lyrics and the imagination process. With these images, the jumping imageries of Fang's lyrics can be linked¹⁴⁸ and the audience then perceive the sense of China Wind more vividly.

¹⁴⁸ For example, the line 'As if the Chinese flower pot that is passed on from generation to generation, caring only about its own beauty' turns to the images of Chinese porcelain in two eras and the image of the beauty directly. It fills in the blank that is created by the incomplete lyrics.



Figure 3.4: images of blue and white porcelain in the traditional (the first picture) and contemporary (the latter two pictures) Chinese worlds

The end of the music video keeps shifting between two scenes that span across two different eras: the hero with the dead beauty in ancient China and the beauty with the dead hero in contemporary China (Figure 3.5). The recurring two shots show the tragedy in order to attract the audience's eyes on the one hand, as many of the interviewees recall, and strengthen the idea of past and present, i.e. time-travel, in to deliver the specific feeling of China Wind ballads on the other hand.



Figure 3.5: the tragic ending in the old (beauty is dead) and modern (hero is dead) Chinese world

‘Huo yuan jia’ by Jay Chou

In addition to the presentation of time-travel love stories, this musical form also pays attention to a specific type of Chinese culture – Chinese martial arts/*gongfu*. Chinese *gongfu* is widely used to promote national spirit in various screen-based works i.e films and television series, such as the *gongfu* movies released by Shaw Brothers Studio.¹⁴⁹ In particular, it is used to counter Western and Japanese aggression and imply that the Chinese are not the ‘Sick Men of Asia’. ‘Huo yuan jia’, for example, is a theme song for the same titled movie. The movie aims to show the power of national spirit by representing the experiences of a Chinese *gongfu* artist, Huo Yuanjia, who fights for the Chinese people against foreign aggressors.

The music video shares the same atmosphere as the movie; it shows the Chinese martial arts morality and the strong pride of the Chinese national spirit. In the video, the scene of children playing Chinese drums is perceived as an encouragement of national morale building (Figure 3.6). The image of Huo Yuanjia and the fighting scenes point towards the power of Chinese *gongfu* and the morality of Chinese martial arts – to remove the cruel and protect the good (Figure 3.7). In some scenes, Chou is dancing in a western style and sporting a modern hairstyle. However, the clothes (buttons and Chinese traditional pattern on the cloth), the furniture (chairs) and paintings in these scenes (Figure 3.8) all show a clear sense of Chineseness, especially when accompanied with his Chinese opera-like vocal delivery. In fact, unlike other music videos, which attempt to present the fusion of Chinese-Western cultures, in the martial arts themed videos, both traditional and modern visual elements serve to index its Chineseness, especially for the Chinese spirit and value. This is used to promote national strength and a strong Chinese identity to a broad Chinese and foreign audience. As Fung points out, ‘the *gongfu* movies from the Shaw Brothers and Bruce Lee’s productions in Hollywood epitomize martial arts as a symbol of the Chinese’ (2008a:75).

At the end of this music video, the focus shifts between the images of Huo Yuanjia in the movie and Chou in the music video (Figure 3.9). This delivers a specific message that Chou is Huo Yuanjia, the person who fights for his people and country, especially when Chou sings in the first person, portraying himself as Huo Yuanjia, the male hero.

¹⁴⁹ For example, the film *Heros of the East* (1978).



Figure 3.6: children playing Chinese drums





Figure 3.7: image of Huo Yuanjia and the fighting scenes



Figure 3.8: modern Chou with traditional Chinese decorations



Figure 3.9: the image of the ‘hero’ Huo Yuanjia in the movie and the image of Chou in the music video

In his music videos, Chou either acts as the leading actor or performs as the storyteller. His performance in the music video connects the singer more tightly to the narrative, meaning that it is easier for the audience to follow the story, bring themselves into the narrative and link the song or the narrative with their own experiences. While the choice of performing the ‘hero’ – a morally positive character – seems to be a deliberate strategy to shape Chou’s persona in the eyes of the public.

Leehom Wang’s music videos: ‘too western’

Compared to Chou’s music videos, the interviewees’ reactions to other China Wind musicians’

video productions can be described as ambivalent and subtle. They neither mention a particular music video from other singers nor recall the narratives in the way they can repeat the whole story of Chou's videos. Since Chou is the founder of China Wind music and owns the largest number of China Wind songs, it is not surprising that audiences are more attracted to his works. Although the interviewees do not specifically mention other singers' music videos, they do pass generalised comments on Leehom Wang, mentioning that 'Wang's works look more western', as Shuyan (also backed up by most of other interviewees) states:

Shuyan: The sense of China Wind [through music video] between Leehom Wang and Jay Chou is different, Wang's style is more like Western pop singers. Chou likes to use a very direct way to deliver the concept of China Wind while Wang seems to prefer to use symbols from Chinese cultures, such as facial makeup in Chinese operas to represent his style [of China Wind music].

In fact, in some of Wang's Chinked-out songs, for example 'Error in a Flower Field', 'Zai mei bian' (Beside the Plum Blossom) and 'Bo ya jue xuan', the presentation and symbolism of Chinese cultures is not hidden. We can also point towards the traditional Chinese instruments performed in 'Error in a Flower Field' or the *kunqu* costumes and performances in 'Beside the Plum Blossom'. Through the interviews and our discussions, my interviewees' common decoding of 'Western' in Wang's music videos seems to be derived from his hip-hop style appearance and the presentation (atmosphere of the settings) of the video.¹⁵⁰

Unlike Chou, who aims to present himself as the image of Chinese spirit or the bringer of Chinese cultures in his video productions, Wang, in contrast, insists on showing the impact of hip-hop culture in his Chinked-out music videos (Figure 3.10).¹⁵¹ From Wang's clothes and accessories to his gestures and dances, there is hardly a link between Wang and the sense of Chinese style. If interviewees perceived Wang's Chinked-out style as a branch of China Wind because they heard Chinese sounds and Chinese cultural elements, such as the spoken parts of Chinese operas or the Chinese folk instruments, the visual materials then brought about a sense of ambivalence.

¹⁵⁰ In fact, my interviewees did not provide a very clear explanation for why they thought that Jay Chou uses 'a very direct way' to deliver the concept of China Wind visually and for why they thought Wang's approach is too 'Western'. The way they used the terms 'direct' or 'indirect' was also confusing, as I discussed earlier. However, as the interviews progressed, they started to offer up more details of their understanding of notions of 'westernness' in Wang's music videos, such as the setting or his use of hip-hop gestures and imagery.

¹⁵¹ Still images from his music videos of 'Error in a Flower Field', 'Beside the Plum Blossom', 'Gai shi ying xiong' and 'Descents of the Dragon'.



Figure 3.10: Wang's hip-hop looks

For example, 'Descendants of the Dragon' was a song mentioned several times during the interviews. Descendants of the Dragon is perceived by audiences in different regions and across different generations as a symbol to refer to Chinese ethnicity. This song was written in 1978 by Hou Dejian, a songwriter from Taiwan. After its performance at the Chinese Spring Gala 1985 and subsequent covers by various singers, this song spread to mainland China. Wang covered this song in his album *Yongyuande diyi tian* (Forever's First Day, in 2000), re-arranging a Chinked-out version for a younger generation. Most of the interviewees agreed that 'Descendants of the Dragon' is a Chinese-style song because the title is the symbol of the Chinese ethnicity and the lyrics portray a strong sense of patriotism. However, what made them feel ambivalent is the very Western presentation of the song itself. In addition to the English rap segment, which immediately cut out the Chineseness and the sense of this song, a few interviewees, for instance Peng and Patrick, also point out that 'there are no Chinese cultural symbols on the screen'. Throughout the music video, none of the scenes, dances, gestures and the dancers' appearances, with the exception of the inexplicit dragon symbol indistinctly

implying the message of ‘Chineseness’, relate to Chinese cultures, values, or spirit. For my mainland interviewees, they do not understand why this song was set in such a Western presentation, since the lyrics convey the image of Chinese nationalism and patriotism. The decoded problematic delivery of Chinese cultures in Wang’s music also indicates Chinese youth’s understanding and perception of authenticity in this generation (which I will explain further in the Conclusion chapter).

In addition, if we compare Wang and Chou’s works, Chou has a way of incorporating pre-1949 history¹⁵² into his visual constructions (as the above mentioned examples show). This specific strategy allows Chou to explore Chineseness or Chinese characteristics without directly touching upon PRC or Taiwan state identities, even while his music is strikingly contemporaneous. In this regard, Chou seems more deft than Wang; most of my interviewees do not discuss identity related issues thrown-up by Chou’s video productions.

However, the contrasting perceptions of Jay Chou and Leehom Wang’s works are not simply caused by the presentation of their music videos, but associated with their physical personas and linguistic abilities. For most of my interviewees, Chou sounds regional/Taiwanese, whereas Wang sounds like an ABC i.e. not a native speaker of Mandarin. Even though neither of them speak very standard Mandarin, their cultural backgrounds¹⁵³ and the linguistic abilities influence the audience’s acceptance of Chou’s cultural authenticity¹⁵⁴ and raise suspicions regarding Wang’s understanding of Chinese/Chinese cultures/Chinese history. Meanwhile, Wang is a good-looking ‘quality idol’ and is dreamy and hunky, Chou is more like a tough street guy. Therefore, they activate different visual dynamics, which might also be a factor that influences the reception of their claims to historical connectivity (though the interviewees do not present very clear opinions on this regard).

IV. Nationalism and patriotism in the China Wind

Through Jay Chou’s China Wind music, it is not difficult to ascertain that he has an enthusiasm for promoting themes of heroism or swordsmanship that tap into Chinese national spirit, mainstream values and patriotic traditions. In portraying these particular themes, Chou’s China

¹⁵² Before the establishment of People’s Republic of China (PRC).

¹⁵³ Chou as a Mandarin speaking Taiwanese singer while Wang as an Asian-American singer.

¹⁵⁴ And audiences’ relief that Chou is not articulating Taiwan independence claims, see the following section.

Wind music videos frequently involve a hero and villain and the narrative usually focuses upon how the Chinese hero fights the (foreign) villain in order to save the person he loves or for his country. This can be seen, for example, in the narrative of ‘Huo yuan jia’ and ‘Nunchaks’.

By examining Chou’s performance in China Wind music, especially martial arts-based music videos, it is clear that Chou never played the role of the villain in his music videos. Instead, if he was involved in the music video, he usually performed as the Chinese hero. Xingyu, a 26-year-old PhD student in the UK, states that:

When Chou appeared in his music videos, he normally acted as the good person, i.e. the hero, like in ‘Nunchaks’. He can get our sympathy and support easily because the hero he acted as fights for his people and the country [Chinese nation].

Xingyu’s feelings illustrate how Chou earns the support of Chinese audiences by positioning himself as the hero through visual materials. As Diane Railton and Paul Watson suggests ‘music videos can be seen as a key site through which the star image of certain performers is established and circulated’ (2011:69). Chou’s video constructions and his personal preference for roles related to a specific Chinese traditional cultural value – swordsman, whereby the hero rescues the damsel in distress – illustrate his approach to building a positive public image through visual elements and the construction of a specific gender identity that focuses upon the ‘hard’ hero (see Chapter 6). For Mainland audiences, Chou earns his reputation as the foremost representative of China Wind or Chinese style popular music not only because he is the founder of this musical form, but because he has portrayed a strong image of Chinese nationalism and patriotism.

Similarly, Kenji Wu’s ‘Jiangjun ling’ (A General Order) was also successful among Mainland audiences as a China Wind song because of the strong sense of Chinese patriotism. Although interviewees did not provide much information about the music video or melody of this song, they believe the lyrics speak for Wu as a patriot directly.

Lyrics from 'A General Order' (by Kenji Wu, 2006)

我知道将军说的话不一定对	I know the general may not be right
我知道对或错我自己能分辨	I know what is right what is wrong
请你安静点 请你安静点	Be quiet, be quiet
我知道外国的月亮没比较圆	I know the foreign moon is not rounder
我知道 yo yo yo 不是我的语言	I know yo yo yo is not my language
请你安静点 请你安静点	Be quiet, be quiet
不同的肤色说不同的话语	Different colour different words
相同的节奏有不同的旋律	Same rhythm has different melodies
自己的文化要自己来说明	Our own culture has to be explained by ourselves
自己的舞台有我们自己顶	Our stage has to be controlled by ourselves
学西方人念经忘了自己先生贵姓	[He] follows Westerners to speak and forgets
[his] own last name	
他们满口 check out	They are full of Check out
想叫他 get out	[I] want tell him to get out
在你的世界学你说 ABCD	In your world you speak ABCD
在我的土地对不起请说华语	In my land you have to speak Chinese/Mandarin
我知道对 我们有种	I know [it is] right, we have balls
我知道对 我们敢冲	I know [it is] right, we dare to challenge
我知道对 骄傲的龙	I know [it is] right, the proud dragon

Like Chou, Wu also uses the same approach to strike a chord with the Chinese audience, one based upon on the strong presentation of 'national dignity'. In this song, Wu compares himself with the young soldier; he shows his braveness by 'educating' the General 'we have our language and culture, in my soils you have to speak Mandarin/Chinese'. This very explicit way of showing proudness and the power of Chinese ethnicity of course receives positive response from Chinese audiences despite the fact that the interviewees simply equate Chinese ethnicity as Chinese or the nation, as the interviewee Lan states:

We love our country, we have a strong sense of national pride. The lyrics from China Wind songs, like 'A General Order', show the sense of being proud to be Chinese. We like China Wind music not only because we are familiar with the Chinese tunes or instruments but also it matches our patriotic heart.

Musicians such as Jay Chou, Leehom Wang and Kenji Wu realise that their Chinese audience, especially in the Mainland, has a strong sense of consonance with the presentation of Chineseness and patriotism because of their cultural and educational backgrounds and because of their self-identification with the understanding of national identity. Although the Chinese popular market is receptive to Western musical styles, such as rock, R&B and hip-hop, it might be inappropriate for both commercial reasons and audience retention to adopt a completely Western style. Musicians, therefore, do not merely bring elements of Western popular genres to the Chinese market but also insist on recalling Chinese national cultures and values in their

works.

In addition to connect their audiences, gaining access from the authority is also a major concern for China Wind musicians to develop their career in mainland China. As Groenewegen claims ‘the PRC grants access to its market to singers that never go against the state’s interests, and sometimes actively deliver what the state requires’ (2011b:123). China Wind is the most persuasive product created by Taiwan-based musicians and is an effective means through which they can show their Chineseness and appease the expectations of the authorities. Thomas, a former BBC China journalist states (through my interview):

I think one of the reasons that China Wind music is popular is because it matches the Chinese mainstream values. It helps musicians gain access from the authorities. If we take *The Voice of China* [in mainland China] as an example, it can be seen that when Jay Chou was chosen as one of the mentors, the program actually focused on propagandizing the concept of Chinese style and the sense of Chineseness. And Chou himself mentioned frequently “Chinese lyrics are the coolest/best”. His statement expresses the strength of Chinese cultures directly and also shows his positive attitude, i.e. as a “Chinese” singer, to the audiences and authorities.

Although musicians choose different ways to build their persona through the idea of China Wind as well as Chinese style, they are all trying to make a morally positive and healthy image, not merely to audiences but also to the authorities. Wang builds a positive persona to attract the broadest Chinese audience and develops his musical career in the Mainland by illustrating his culturally derived *huaren*. Chou and Wu, as local singers from Taiwan, illustrate a willingness to present Chinese cultures and values in their works and also show a strong sense of Chinese (ethnicity) patriotism in order to gain access to major venues in the Mainland. In this vein, Chou and Wu have also evaded making direct position (or ‘aggressive’ statements) on the question of Taiwanese separatism, which the mainland authorities would find problematic.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ For example, in 2000, Beijing pulled the plug on Taiwan pop star Chang Hwei-mei (A-mei) for singing the island’s anthem at President Chen Shui-bian’s inauguration. Even though she was allowed to perform in major venues on the Mainland in later years, she was still rejected by a few Mainland audiences since they considered her to be a separatist force for Taiwan independence. In addition, Chou Tzuyu, a Taiwanese singer and a member of Korean girl group TWICE was widely rejected by Mainland internet users in 2015 because she waved the Taiwanese flag in a Korean TV show. Her group TWICE and her agent JYP faced calls to be banned from performing in China by Chinese audiences until JYP arranged for her to apologize in public (though this caused further tension between Taiwan and China).

V. Conclusion: The national identity of China Wind

1. The Han culture

Although the interviewees could not provide a clear definition of China Wind in words, the decoding of China Wind is related strongly with their understandings of Chinese ethnicity and the ‘link’ between Chinese ethnicity and Chinese identity, as Lan states:

We like China Wind because we are Chinese. We are naturally easier to be attracted by Chinese characteristics. China Wind definitely shows these kinds of Chinese characteristics, and I think the Chinese features and the sense of Chineseness of China Wind come from our nation, from us, the inside of us.

According to Lan, China Wind is accepted by the audience because ‘we are Chinese’, the Chineseness represented by this form; the music and culture only ‘we’ have but ‘others’ do not have. However, the identity of ‘we’ or ‘our nation’ is nuanced.

Similar to their interpretation of Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind music, the interviewees like to use ‘Chinese characteristics’, ‘ethnic characteristics’ or ‘national features’ to depict the China Wind as well as the concept of Chinese style, and it seems that these terms mean the same to them. Some use Wang’s songs (from his album *Shangri-La*) or the song ‘Zui xuan minzufeng’ (Hottest Ethnic Trend) by Fenghuang chuanqi¹⁵⁶ as examples to explain their understandings of ‘Chinese characteristics’ of China Wind style, as Huan (a university student from one Chinese conservatory of music) and Mimosa state:

Huan: The name of ‘Hottest Ethnic Trend’ has already shown its Chineseness right? I mean Ethnic Trend means it’s Chinese, tells us it’s a Chinese pop song, otherwise, what does Ethnic Trend mean?

Mimosa: If you heard Wang’s songs from the album *Shangri-La*, ‘The Heart’s Sun and Moon’, for example. You will know it’s different, it is in Xinjiang or other Chinese ethnic-minority area sounds. I don’t know the exact place, but it definitely belongs to the Chinese ethnic-minority region, Wang already said that. So it’s Chinese, it comes from our cultures.

Huan and Mimosa’s opinions raise questions about the connection between China Wind and

¹⁵⁶ *Fenghuang chuanqi* known as Phoenix Legend is a band with a female leader vocal from Inner Mongolia and a male rapper from Hunan, China.

ethnicity: does China Wind reflect ethnicity to the audience? And does China Wind mean ‘Ethnic Wind’ (*minzufeng*)?¹⁵⁷ Therefore, I asked them ‘China Wind refers to Ethnic Wind?’. Interviewees’ reactions to this question seemed to imply that they may not really link China Wind with Chinese ethnicity, though they use ‘ethnic characteristics’ or ‘representing our ethnicity’ to explain their views about the musical form and the concept of Chinese style. After a short pause to reflect, they replied ‘no, it is different.’, as Thomas and Hui (a Chinese specialist works in the UK) state:

China Wind is not Ethnic Wind, China Wind sounds more like Ethnic-majority Wind, it matches the taste of the broadest Chinese people: Han. We know the tune, the instruments or the voice while Ethnic Wind focuses on specific ethnicity, like Uighur, Mongol or Tibetan, we may be unfamiliar with their music cultures though we can recognize the specific sound. Additionally, based on the wide acceptance, China Wind could be considered as a kind of musical mode which has not only become a mainstream musical form, but has also gained commercial success. Ethnic Wind, on the other hand, can hardly be appreciated by the majority of Han Chinese because it is too regional.

The audience’s reception indicates that the China Wind style mainly reflects (or at least is perceived through) the impact of the Chinese ethnic majority’s (Han) cultural values rather than those of the nation as a whole. Music from ethnic minority bands like Hanggai or Haya can hardly be perceived as China Wind or Chinese style, as claimed by my interviewees and can observed through audience viewpoints and reactions from music television programs such as *I am a Singer*.¹⁵⁸

In addition, the interviewee responses, once again, illustrate their ‘fluid’ stance of regional and national characteristics – the presentation of Han culture in this case is used by audiences to distinguish the difference between ‘regional’ and ‘national’. Therefore, from Northwest Wind to China Wind, the regional and national characteristics in both cases are not measured by audiences on the basis of the geographical features or spatial influence, but instead on the basis of ethnicity.¹⁵⁹ In other words, the link between Han ethnicity and Chineseness or Chinese

¹⁵⁷ The meaning of ‘Ethnic Wind’, or *minzufeng*, emphasises ethnicity and the ethnic characteristics of the nation (and thus shares some values with China Wind). For my interviewees, this term is strongly linked with a particular pop song “Zui xuan minzufeng” (Hottest Ethnic Trend) by Phoenix Legend. For the audience, the difference between Ethnic Wind and China Wind is the production and presentation of ethnic-minority elements.

¹⁵⁸ Not only Hanggai (as musicians) and *I am singer* (as a music television show), Qian Lijuan’s recent article (2017) further explores the production and presentation of ethnicity in Chinese popular music through examining performances of ethnic minority singers-musicians in a bunch of music talent shows in China between 2012 and 2017.

¹⁵⁹ As mentioned previously, in the case of Northwest Wind, the regional makes are widely interpreted as the representation of national characteristics due to the place’s cultural status and the hidden Han identity in the music production.

characteristics is one of the most important factors of the production and perception of Chinese style popular music; it is essential when audiences to interpret and measure the quality of Chinese style.

2. The national identity

Furthermore, from the above interviewees' viewpoints, no matter whether they like or dislike China Wind music, they perceive and define it as 'our music'. What's more, the sense of 'we or us' seems much stronger among overseas Chinese students. For example, Zining and Xiaoyu (two PhD students study in the UK) state:

Zining: We like China Wind because we have strong national dignity. China Wind illustrates clear Chineseness, which not only got our attention easier, more importantly, bringing out our national pride because it's ours. With the trend of globalization and China's quick socio-economic growth in 2000s, we need to have something that can represent our Chinese identity from the soft power aspect. China Wind has become such a popular music type because it achieves the goal; it speaks for us [Chinese].

Xiaoyu: We are not only trying to learn Western cultures from popular music but also showing off our unique culture to the Western world, that's why China Wind can be quickly spread and accepted/appreciated by the Chinese audience.

Like Zining and Xiaoyu, many other interviewees state that the reason behind China Wind's popularity is 'because we are Chinese and China Wind represents the value of Chinese cultures'. They believe that China Wind represents an image of national identification of the Chinese people despite the fact that this style is originally created by Taiwan-based musicians.

As Bhabha states, 'the question of identification is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming the image' (1994: 45). Chinese popular music, from its beginning in the 1920s Shanghainese Pops, has served as a mirror of social reality for specific social conditions. However, China Wind, on the contrary, does not completely represent social reality due to its symbolic Chinese cultural materials and the imagined 'Chinese nation'. When China Wind music appeared in public in 2000, tension between mainland China and Taiwan was exacerbated due to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in Taiwan winning the presidency with the election of Chen Shuibian. The Mainland authority insisted on the 'One China' principle, while Taiwan's DPP claimed its position as an

independent authority. Consequently, audiences on the Mainland and in Taiwan, as a result of their different educational and political systems, started to fight for their understandings of national identification using the internet and social medias. This manifest itself more recently in the Vicky Zhao incident.¹⁶⁰ The main argument between audiences from the Mainland and Taiwan, in addition to their understandings of freedom and democracy, is the difference in self-identity, in particular, Chinese and Taiwanese.¹⁶¹ Taiwanese audiences stress the difference between these two communities, whereas Mainland audiences insist on their sameness; however, more recently, statements and emotions on this topic have become more forceful for Mainland audiences towards Taiwan, as can be seen in Weibo posts and comments.¹⁶² Although audiences may experience an ‘increasing’ sentiment (i.e. more forceful) of this issue, the mainland position has always been a forceful one, since the government keeps encouraging a forceful statement of such values. The massive current power and especially China’s rapidly rising economic strength (i.e. the economic difference between mainland and Taiwan), allow China to exert hegemony over Taiwanese musicians, as the China Wind case exemplifies.

China Wind has spread widely in Taiwan, mainland China, and other areas in Greater China. This is because it is based on common memories of Chinese history and culture that are shared by the broadest Chinese audience (Wang Yu-wei 2011). People from different regions of the Greater Chinese community can have their own relation to China Wind music because it does not articulate one particular era or distinct region, but rather a Chinese historical and cultural heritage derived from 5000 years of history. Although it is decoded by Mainland audiences as the representation of Chinese national identification, audiences from Hong Kong, Taiwan or *huaren* audiences from Western regions may have different interpretations.

In conclusion, Chou’s China Wind songs are perceived by audiences as representative of this

¹⁶⁰ Zhao was harshly criticised by Chinese netizens and nationalists for casting Leon Dai in her new movie *No Other Love*. Dai is alleged by Chinese nationalists to have been a Taiwan independence separatist. After being censured by millions of Chinese netizens (and Dai did not make a clear statement about his political proposition as Zhao requested), Zhao and her team officially apologized to the public through her Weibo account. Zhao states that ‘I am Chinese, I am always be proud as Chinese. Art goes beyond boundaries but artists have nationalities. There is no room for compromise on this major issue.’

¹⁶¹ In a UK conference in 2017, I met a Taiwanese scholar whose research pays attention to the construction of Taiwanese identity in Taiwan music. During the conference presentation, he stated that ‘no matter our nation’s name is what, our self - identification is very important.’ And later he told me that ‘when I heard A-mei (the Taiwanese pop singer) identified herself as “ethnic-minority in Taiwan” (*Taiwan de shaoshuminzu*) in the program *Voice of China*, I felt very uncomfortable. For me, she is denying her identity just to please Mainland authorities and ain access to the Mainland market - just for money.’

¹⁶² There are several certain topics related to Taiwan and Mainland relationships in the ‘hot searching board’ (*resoubang*) of Weibo (the most popular Chinese social media). The posts and comments from mainland Chinese netizens show strong (but also changing) attitudes towards Taiwan, e.g. the comments followed by Global Times’s post of Taiwan and Mainland’s relationship: http://www.weibo.com/1974576991/EAFigaNEb?refer_flag=1001030106_&type=comment, accessed on 23rd March, 2017.

musical form. Other Taiwan-based China Wind musicians who employed Chou's style incorporated their own understandings of Chineseness or Chinese characteristics that has caused China Wind to be a continuously evolving, hybrid, style. As the recognised originators of China Wind music, Jay Chou and Leehom Wang use different approaches to express Chineseness through their brands of China Wind. Chou localises Western cultural influences by combining strong presentations of Chinese musical and cultural elements in his works, while Wang's idea of Chinked-out uses a *huaren* identity to attract the broadest Chinese audience and to position himself in a 'safe' place in the mainland China. Additionally, Chou's China Wind songs present Chinese nationalism and patriotism with reference to Chinese cultures and values, which allow mainland audiences to 'recognise' the image of the 'nation' through their imaginations. In comparison, Wang's Asian-American identity and Chinked-out style saw him bring hip-hop culture and Western flavour to re-package his Chinese popular music or, as he claimed, to restructure the hip-hop style and 'expand' the understanding of Chineseness from the Chinese to *huaren*; without the restrictions of spaces and places.

From Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind to China Wind, the three different types of Chinese style popular music from the 20th to 21st century all represent the production and exploration of national symbolism. Compared with the two other musical forms, the sound, lyrics and images of China Wind music, though illustrating Chinese culture and tradition with reference to the country's history, have constructed an imagined Chinese nation – neither the real traditional China nor the real contemporary China. In addition, due to largely shared common Chinese values and the presentation of Chinese cultures derived from age-old Chinese history, China Wind does not show a real difference of the understanding of 'national identity' as the reception illustrates. The variety of Chinese imageries without defined local identification has meant that China Wind has become popular in different regions of the Greater Chinese community, and is also the main reason that China Wind music has been successfully transmitted from Taiwan to the Mainland.

Part II: Gender and Performance

Introduction

1. Introduction

Research focusing on gender dynamics in Chinese popular music is mainly built around the concept of *yin* and *yang* – two contrasting systems that are used to refer to soft and hard musical characteristics or used as gendered terminologies to imply femininity and masculinity, as discussed in Chapter 2. Through the explanations and interpretations of *yin* and *yang* in Robin R. Wang's work (2012), the opposition between the two sides, from a certain aspect, is based on two contrasting sensibilities; *yin* is associated with the sense of weakness, while *yang* is linked with the feeling of strength.

Whereas Part I focuses on the production of musical identity and audiences' various interpretations of Chineseness, foreignness, national and self identifications in Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind, Part II emphasises the productions and perceptions of the gender identities of Chinese style popular music through these three particular musical forms. The following three chapters will explore the constructs of femininity and masculinity together with the representations of softness and hardness in these forms through live and stage performances and music videos. This will examine the distinct senses of softness and femininity of Shanghainese Pops, 'hardness' and (alternative) masculinity of Northwest Wind and '*xiagu rouqing*' (chivalrous tenderness) and '*wenrou weimei*' (tender and *weimei*) of China Wind, that are perceived by Chinese audiences based on the understanding of 'gender identity as performative' (e.g. Goffman 1979; Butler 1988, 1990; Auslander 2004). In particular, I will focus on female performers and their multiple feminine images in Shanghainese Pops, the hardness and softness of female singers in Northwest Wind, and bifurcated versions of masculinity of male singers and characters in China Wind music.

2. Previous approaches to gender dynamics in Chinese (popular) music

Although the gender tradition i.e. male-female, female-male, that has existed in Chinese operatic music for a long period indicates the specific historical status of gender and the importance of gender dynamics in Chinese music, the research of gender in Chinese music in

China took place more recently. For example, Harris and Pease (2013: 3-4) claims that the research of gender study and especially works on female participants in music 'had not begun to take root in China' until the 2000s when Su Zheng's pioneering attempt of female music making studies attracted public attention. Prior to her commendable feminist work (2002), which not only demonstrates the impact and contribution of the 'forgotten Chinese female musicians' but also writes these marginalised female musicians back into Chinese music history, Zheng's earlier research has already shown her interests in exploring women's participation in Chinese music. Zheng's paper, published in 1997, examines multiple female identities in different types of Chinese songs. From the youthful feminine image which emerged in school songs, the heroic feminine image in mass songs, the romantic feminine image in artistic songs to the seductive femininity in popular entertainment songs, Zheng explores women's paradoxical identities, i.e. elegant women in Chinese art music and seductive women in the early pop songs, constructed in the text and music of modern Chinese songs from the 1900s to 1930s. In addition, by relating the analysis of women and their representations in Chinese modern songs and 20th century Chinese history, Zheng discusses the concept of 'women' in different contexts in contemporary China, and also points out how women's identities and images were created and shaped through the fantasies of men. In other words, how female identity had been shaped based on men's 'privilege' on satisfying women's desires with the Chinese sociocultural values or men's understandings of feminine and feminine sexuality, for instance, how 'moon' or 'butterfly' was frequently used to imply the elegance of women in the literatures or art songs by men. Unlike Zheng's approach of analysing women's roles and status of Shanghai popular songs, Hung Fangyi's (2008b) research pays more attention to revealing the female same-sex desire of Shanghai popular music. Fung's research explores the homosexual and androgynous sensibility of female performers of Shanghainese Pops through the examination of women's voice and body. Zheng's approach to exploring female identities and women's desires in Shanghai popular songs offers valuable reference for the study of gender dynamics of Shanghainese Pops of this research. While Fung's research shows an interesting, but as of yet untested, alternative reading of the gender/sexuality of the female performers of Shanghai popular music.¹⁶³ However, my research not only explores the

¹⁶³ In fact, Hung does not address the question 'why would the reception in that era did not show any voice about the presentation of female-same sex desire in Shanghai popular songs?' (2008b: 122), that is repeatedly asked in her work due to the lack of archival resources as she states. Although the idea of Shanghainese Pops being gender non-conforming from the female versions of male-female duets and female performers' body/vocal/clothing styles 'complicates' the conventional notion that Shanghainese Pops was solely about feminine sexualized sing-song girls, it remains untested yet. This is especially pressing as most of the text in Shanghai popular duets clearly demarcated 'gender' – the lyrics were divided into male singing parts and female singing parts.

production of female identities of Shanghainese Pops, but more importantly, it discusses how these gender identities or gendered images of musical styles have been perceived by Chinese audiences with their different cultural backgrounds and their understandings of gender.

Following these significant works, there has been increasing attention given to study of gender in music in China. The rapidly expanding research on gender in the Chinese academic area show the continuing impact of gender studies in the 21st century, despite most of these works have largely taken women, female music and feminists as their subject, and a few of these works are very much based on the textual analysis, e.g. Lin 2011; Song 2012; Zhang 2014 and the *Journal of China Women's College*.

The discussion of gender dynamics in Chinese popular music among English-based ethnomusicological studies is more central to the research of Chinese rock or Mandarin/Chinese pop music. In addition to Moskowitz's influential work, discussed in the Introduction, Jonathan Stock's (2016) recent research on The Chopstick Brothers' 'Little Apple' examines the production of bromance in contemporary Chinese popular music. Through musical and visual analysis of this particular case (along with other musical examples), his work pays more attention to revealing how 'male-on-male love' is presented and depicted in music and dance. Stock's research illustrates how audiences 'hear, sing and dance in the act of refashioning this experience for themselves' (2016: 168) on the one hand and the complexity of the construction and perception of brotherly love, masculinity and musical genres in the Chinese context on the other hand. In addition, Nimrod Baranovitch (2003) and Jeroen de Kloet (2010) both partially pay attention to gender in the Chinese rock scene. In Baranovitch's work, ethnic minority musicians and 'unusual female' musicians are regarded as central concepts that focus on the alternative subgroups. Baranovitch focuses on the representation of the image of masculinity in the area of rock music and examines the reconstruction of womanhood by comparing different feminine imageries, specifically the dominant feminine image of the 1990s and what he terms the 'neotraditional feminine image' (2003:145). De Kloet's book provides further research in the Beijing rock scene, he explores the voice of women, specifically female rockers in China at that time. This gender study in de Kloet's book discusses the various ways for female rockers to negotiate the stereotypical gender identities in order to be identified as 'rockers' by the public, and he also explores the issue of the gender dynamics of Chinese popular music by highlighting two specific cases – Li Yuchun's androgynous appearance as a 'female singer' and Anthony Wong's multiple vocal expressions with his 'male gender',

examples which both aim to illustrate the theme of homosexuality and the diversity of gender (and sexuality) in China. Stock, Baranovitch and de Kloet's works provide analysis of Chinese popular music through the gender perspective in depth, and also echo the concept of gendering sound that has been further developed in the area of ethnomusicology and popular music (as mentioned in the Introduction chapter). This particular concept is also explored in Chapter 5 (Northwest Wind) and Chapter 6 (China Wind) in Part II through the audio-visual materials. In particular the connection between sound qualities and Chinese natural and cultural landscapes will be discussed. In the case of Northwest Wind, audiences' interpretations of gender identities and their perceptions of the gender dynamics of this style are tightly linked with the geographical features and the specific lifestyle of the region. Whereas in the case of China Wind music, the presentation and perception of the gendered image of this musical form are connected with Chinese natural elements.

In comparison to scholars who pay more attention to a specific music genre e.g. rock, (part of) Groenewegen's work (2011a: 98-137) neither focuses on a specific form of music nor a certain identity group (e.g. Taiwanese or Hong Kong pop singers), but shifts attention to the tradition of the gender role and character in Chinese literature and culture, for example, the beauty or brother. He uses a psychological approach to analyse how Chinese popular music links and challenges issues of loyalty and desire. Groenewegen's research provides the reference of the distinctions and catalogues of Chinese male and female gender types in different texts and contexts, for instance, different gender identities in traditional China and Chinese classic literatures or contemporary Chinese society.

In addition to gender studies which emphasises popular music, Rachel A. Harris, Rowan Pease and Shzr Ee Tan's edited volume (2013) explores gender in Chinese music from different socio-cultural contexts. Their research illustrates a wide-range of both geographic and spatial scopes of gender dynamics of Chinese music (e.g. from late Ming Dynasty to contemporary China, from ethnic minority performers to international stars). They claim that 'the links between "local" formations and the West are fundamental to our study' (2013:3). Therefore, by exploring the theme of tradition and modernity, the twin concepts gendered as femininity and masculinity, respectively, scholars in their study examine (for example) the female domination of professional Chinese traditional music performance and the male domination of Western classical music performance in contemporary Chinese conservatories; the position and representations of ethnic minority women in Chinese art forms (e.g. music, film) and their

difficulty in representing Han women and their different positions to men in the ‘rituals of internal orientalism’. Additionally, by arguing the sense of emasculation that was produced by the political system through presenting a study of male entrepreneurs and their attitudes towards prostitutes in karaoke bars (i.e. Zheng Tiantian’s chapter), this volume also echoes the theme of gendered sounds and politics. Although this volume does not specifically focus on modern popular music, it offers different approaches and perspectives on gender studies in the Greater Chinese community. Furthermore, the understandings of Chinese music or Chineseness between local and global from this volume also broaden the scope of ‘Chinese music’ and inspire the concept of Chinese style in my research. Hence, this volume provides reference to gender dynamics of Chinese music on the one hand and the production and perception of Chinese characteristics (e.g. musical or cultural) on the other hand.

What is more, some important research focuses on the construction of gender identities or gender traditions in Chinese society. These include Zheng Tiantian’s a series study of gender and sexuality (2006, 2013, 2015) in contemporary Chinese society, Kam Louie’s research (2002, 2014) of theorising the concept of *wen* and *wu* of Chinese masculinities and Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom’s (2002) edited volume of exploring Chinese femininities and masculinities in different periods with various historical, cultural and social contexts. Although their research on Chinese gender study are not specifically centered around Chinese music, they provide valuable reference of the cultural frames of China in different periods through the gender perspective, and also show the multiple links between gender identities and the socio-cultural environment. Especially Louie’s research of Chinese masculinities/*wu-wen* concepts provide vital reference not only for the discussion of Chinese male gender types but also the link between gender dynamics and the national symbolism – the voice of the nation.

3. Organization of Part II

The study of gender dynamics in this research thus focuses on the construction of hardness and softness, masculinity and femininity of Chinese style popular music within different sociocultural contexts. Following this introduction, the exploration of gender dynamics of these three musical forms starts with Shanghainese Pops (i.e. Chapter 4). Chapter 4 pays more attention to exploring the production and perception of multiple female identities of Shanghainese Pops, in particular, Li Jinhui’s all-female performance manner and the

construction of a particular female role (i.e. songstress) of this musical form. Through audiences' interpretations of *genü* (songstress) of Shanghainese Pops, Chapter 4 discusses how softness and femininity has been linked with this musical form and also how female performers and the specific songstress role have been shaped through the production of Shanghainese Pops. After discussing the feminine and soft scenes of Shanghainese Pops, by exploring the construction of hardness and masculinity in this form through stage performances and music videos, Chapter 5 emphasises the polysemic nature of the gendered image of Northwest Wind music. From the senses of '*nühanzi*' and 'wild and tough region' that are perceived by interviewees, Chapter 5 not merely explores interviewees' confusions caused by the interaction between masculinity/hardness and female singers, it also discusses the influence of geographical features on the perception of gender identities in this specific case. In addition, it examines various gender identities presented through the female singers and performers of Northwest Wind music. By analysing the production of recordings, music videos and performances, the last chapter of this part (Chapter 6) is centered by the exploration of harmony and opposition between softness and hardness, and between femininity and masculinity of this specific musical style. From two distinct senses of 'chivalrous tenderness' and 'tender and *weimei*' that are perceived by Chinese audiences, it firstly examines the various modes of masculinity presented through the male characters and performers, then explores the interaction of softness, hardness and tenderness which shapes not only the male singers' tender male identity (Moskowitz 2010) but also creates the specific artistic sensibility (*weimei*) and the gendered image of China Wind music. One key feature that shared by Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 is the connection between gendered images (or sensations) and Chinese natural landscapes.

Although the presentation of the concept of Chinese style has changed over time, the producers have been dominated by male musicians, from Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind to China Wind. Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind were both created by male musicians but widely performed by female singers or performers, while the Taiwan-based China Wind is a male dominated style which is primarily created and performed by male musicians. Therefore, in addition to analysing the perception of different gendered images of these three musical forms, Part II also explores: i) how male musicians have enjoyed the way that they designed and addressed women's desires and emotions in the case of Shanghainese Pops, ii) how they have built up women's hardness and masculinity in the case of Northwest Wind, iii) how male musicians and performers have portrayed different masculine images and delivered their vocals in various ways to present multiple gender identities to the audience in the case of China Wind.

The link between the production and perception of the concept of Chinese style and gender dynamics will be further discussed and concluded in the Conclusion chapter.

Chapter 4: The multiple feminine images presented by song and dance girls in Shanghainese Pops

Through the production and interpretation of sound, text and visual materials, the perception of Shanghainese Pops was tightly associated with women. The multiple feminine images presented by female performers and characters illustrated the importance of women in Shanghainese Pops, and also indicated the construction of softness and femininity of this musical form. Nearly all of the interviewees' impressions of Shanghainese Pops concern its strong relationship with female singers and performers. Xiaoyu (a 27-year-old male PhD student) and Lin (a 25-year-old female PhD student) provide representative statements of this opinion:

Xiaoyu: My impression of Shanghainese Pops is that it is a feminine musical form. Those songs are sung and performed by women, like Zhou Xuan, and they are very soft and tender. Further, most movies related with Shanghai and Shanghainese Pops in the Republican era focus on female performers' lives and the entertainment industry.

Lin: For me, Shanghainese Pops is a musical form performed by female singers. They were singing and dancing on the stage in entertainment venues, for example, the famous *bailemen* (the ballroom) during that era. I got this impression from a lot of films/TV series and posters. When the narrative is about Shanghai in the Republican era, female singers are the "must have" elements, they are an important part of Shanghai life, especially nightlife, at that time.

Although Shanghainese Pops in Shanghai lasted for nearly 20 years (1920s-1940s), the impact of this musical form goes far beyond the boundaries of this location and time. For most Chinese people, Shanghainese Pops is an important part of Chinese history and culture, not only because it witnessed the emergence of Chinese popular music and the early Chinese music industry but also the nation's rise and fall. Furthermore, it indicated the importance of women in modern Chinese history, as Zheng claims 'women, either as an ideal subject matter in social political debates or literary imaginations, or as real participants in the national salvation and

modernization movements, have had a strong presence in Chinese modern history. They have been portrayed or designated by politicians, revolutionaries, educators, writers, and filmmakers into many paradoxical roles' (1997: 93). Shanghainese Pops is defined and perceived as a feminine style, mainly because of the female domination of this musical form. For example, the examples of Shanghainese Pops discussed in Chapter 1 – 'Drizzles', 'Special Express', 'Night Life in Shanghai', 'Rose, Rose, I Love You' and 'Tuberose' – were all performed and sung by female singers. Through various feminine images presented by those female singers and performers, the influence of constructing women's roles in this particular musical form is illustrated.

I. The influence of the May Fourth Movement, the new aesthetic: women's liberation

The early twentieth century is regarded as the period of Chinese modern women's awakening. As Li Dazhao¹⁶⁴ (1888-1927) states, 'the twentieth century was the era of liberation of the oppressed class, and also the era of women. It was the era for women to find themselves, and the era for men to discover the significance of women' (Sheng and Qiao 1995:1; Chen and Li 2009:85).¹⁶⁵ Chinese women, for a long period under the Chinese traditional and patriarchal system, were in the position of '*taixia*' (off-stage), more directly, the 'slave of slaves' (original in Lu 1980:209, quoted from Chen and Li 2009:85). The May Fourth Movement (1919)/New Culture Movement¹⁶⁶ was the prelude to the '*rende shidai*' (humanity) of modern China and has become an essential cause of the awakening Chinese women consciousness.

When the New Culture Movement spread across the country, the city of Shanghai was also on the way to becoming an international metropolis. In the pursuit of freedom, women strove to break the shackles of feudal tradition and become 'new women' (*xin nüxing*) with a spirit of independence. Within the women's liberation movement in Shanghai,¹⁶⁷ musicians of early Chinese popular music, such as Li Jinhui, was also trying to build an independent feminine

¹⁶⁴ Li Dazhao was the co-founder of the Communist Party of China (with Chen Duxiu) in 1921, also the leading intellectual in the May Fourth Movement.

¹⁶⁵ http://epaper.voc.com.cn/kjxb/html/2017-01/18/content_1182364.htm?div=-1, accessed on 20th December 2016.

¹⁶⁶ The May Fourth Movement was a political movement with cultural and anti-imperialist goals. It was made up largely of Beijing students, who met on May 4th, 1919. The term May Fourth Movement is used more commonly through to refer to the general period between 1915 and 1921 and is sometimes referred to as the New Culture Movement. Its goals were to undermine traditional thought and traditional Chinese values, which it argued were weakening the country politically. In their place, they called for the promotion of science and democracy.

¹⁶⁷ In 1921, within the influence of the May Fourth Movement and the establishment of the Communist Party of China in Shanghai, the Shanghai women's liberation group gained stature, the emancipation of women was obtained in the struggle against imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat-capitalism, which became the mainstream of the Shanghai women's liberation movement during the New Democratic Revolution era (*Shanghai nüxing*).

image through musical productions. The use of women as the main subject of Shanghai's early popular music, to some extent, was a logical result of the culture movement in this specific city.

Women, as the main characters of misunderstanding in a world of male aesthetics started to re-identify themselves with new 'meanings'. As Lu claims, based on the central spirit of the New Culture Movement, Chinese women should not only be 'women', but more importantly, they should conduct themselves as 'humans' (1994: 158-159). Chinese women began to demand their own social rights and started to penetrate different levels of social life to discover their social values. Shanghainese Pops, which was born in this particular social and historical background, functioned as the medium of new thoughts for this era, logically and inevitably focused on the cultural theme of 'new women' (women's consciousness).

Therefore, the perspective of female descriptions, using 'I' as the first person to express 'her' own thoughts and desires, frequently appeared in the text of Shanghainese Pops. The focus of female descriptions reflects the new aesthetic that formed through the liberation of women of the May Fourth Movement.

The 'new women' that the May Fourth Movement pursued were those who especially aimed for a new social identity.¹⁶⁸ They were characterized by having the skills to make a living, pursuing new thoughts, and differing significantly from traditional housewives. These 'new women' were a kind of new group shaped by the progress of the society in that era. As a cultural product, Shanghainese Pops naturally absorbed the new thoughts and was affected by the new feminine aesthetic. The description of women and the all-female performance of the musical style not only reveal the specific social contexts – the contradictory status of Shanghai (i.e. the bloom of the entertainment industry and the 'dark' reality) – but also establish the multiple identities of women.

¹⁶⁸ The idea of women's liberation/'new women' as understood by the New Culture Movement was not geared towards a particular class of women, but Chinese women in general. Carlton Benson's research (1996) indicates how women from the middle classes and above were involved in this issue through an examination of the relationship between women, radio and song in 1930s Shanghai. While Joanthan Stock's book (2003: 63-64) on Chinese traditional opera suggests that some working class women, such as the female actresses in traditional opera (*huju* female performers), who either 'enjoyed relative professional freedom and mobility' or were 'able to take leading positions in troupes, typically in collaboration with a male singer (often their husband)' in Shanghai during the same period, should also be included in the account.

II. Li Jinhui's song and dance girls

Between 1922 and 1927, Li successively established the Ming Yue troupe and Zhong Hua Music and Dance College, which specialized in training people in singing, dancing and performing (Sun 2007:25-29). The members of this troupe and college were largely women, and Li's musical works (i.e. children's dramas) were almost all performed by these female members; his song and dance girls (Figure 4.1).¹⁶⁹ According to Jones (2001:87), the all-female performance style was inspired by the Japanese performance style Takarazuka, a commercial performance style established in Tokyo. In addition to Takarazuka, Li's musical works, through their performance manner such as leg kicks, combined several commercial musical elements from the West, especially from Broadway musicals and Hollywood films which spread widely through urban Shanghai (Jones 2001). Within the different cultures that appeared in Shanghai due to foreign settlements and the influence of the New Culture Movement, Li had the chance to experiment with different kinds of music through his creative process. This expanded his musical horizons but, and also influenced his aesthetic view of women and appreciation of the beauty of women.



Figure 4.1: the photo of the performance from Li's Ming Yue troupe

¹⁶⁹ The source is collected from *Peng Pai*: http://wap.eastday.com/node2/node3/n461/u1ai586899_t71.html, accessed on 20th December 2016.

The feminine youth and the display of physicality

Li's musical creations, especially his children's dramas, placed emphasis on the beauty of young women. The content of most of Li's children's dramas were fairy tales. Based on Li's dramatic idiom, women were the best fit for performing these fantasy stories and could reflect the theme of the drama more precisely (Sun 2007; Jones 2001:90). Through the stage performances, the youthful feminine image was built by young school girls from his troupe (Figure 4.2).¹⁷⁰ Following the all-female performance style of Li Jinhui's children's dramas, Shanghainese Pops was also primarily performed by women, and many of the performers were the same song and dance girls from Li's troupe, for example, Li Minghui, Wang Renmei and Zhou Xuan.



Figure 4.2: stage photos of Li's musical works

¹⁷⁰ The upper photo is the performance of Li's children drama *Sparrow and Children*, from Sun 2007:104. The bottom one is the stage performance from Li's Mingyue song and dance troupe, from *Zhonghua yanchuwang* blog: <http://user.show160.com/4504803/blog/a193073>, accessed on 20th December, 2016.

Li Jinhui's song and dance girls and the all-female performance style broke traditional constraints, offering women an opportunity not only to be seen on but to also own the stage. Due to these commercial performances, Li's all-female performance style, in fact, dovetailed with the spirit of 'independent new women' that pursued by the New Culture Movement.¹⁷¹ However, even though the spirit of movement allowed women to rebuild their image, when it came to the manner of performance, this kind of change experienced harsh critiques from musicians, scholars and music critics. Both Jones (2001) and Sun (2007) point out that although Li Jinhui's use of female performers did not relate to 'corrupting public morality' issues,¹⁷² it is still difficult to defend the use of women in his works for two main reasons: the young age of the female performers, and the gap between fantasy and reality.

However, both of these two arguments need further explanation. Li's children's dramas were mostly fairy tales, which, according to Jones, did not meet the requirements of heightened realism. However, the content of Li's children's dramas, for example *Keliande qiuxiang* (The Poor Qiuxiang), *San hudie* (Three Butterflies), *Xiao huajia* (The Little Painter), were associated with the particular socio-political environment at that period.¹⁷³ The purpose of these stories was to reveal the outmoded conventions and customs of traditional Chinese society and promote the new thoughts of the New Cultural Movement. The secular thoughts from these fantasies reflected the impact of new thoughts of the New Culture Movement on Li's works, and also illustrated the connection of fantasies, social reality and the central spirit of the New Culture Movement.

Although referring to notions of 'new women' to emancipate young girls seemed to be the main basis of the criticism of song and dance girls' performances, this is linked with Li Jinhui's experimental thoughts on femininity, which focused around appreciation of the beauty of women and displays of feminine youth and physicality. Li Jinhui's feminine aesthetic strongly affected the presentation of his musical works, expressing women's beauty in physical movement and form. Through displaying these girls' bodies – their bare arms and legs, their clothing style – the short dresses and pants, the fashionable bob hairstyle, their gestures and

¹⁷¹ Women had the chance to earn money by themselves and develop their own careers without relying on men.

¹⁷² For example, when Li Jinhui's daughter Li Minghui was the first female lead actress on the stage in Hangzhou in 1923, the production was banned immediately by local police because 'the troupe's male and female artists perform together, thus corrupting public morality' (Jones 2001:88).

¹⁷³ For example, *The Poor Qiuxiang* shows the division between rich and poor and the associated realities of Chinese society in that era while *Three Butterflies* indicates one specific purpose: turning the dark society into a bright future (Sun 2007:96, 140-141).

dances – the young girls’ (school aged) performances showed a particular image of feminine youth. Their illustrations of bodies, and their singing and dancing on stage went against the traditional understanding of femininity. The ‘standard’ feminine image of women in traditional Chinese society was frequently categorised into two main types: *dajia guixiu* (Fair Lady) and *xiaojia biyu* (a pretty girl of humble birth), as observed in various staged performances and literatures. Both of these types of women ‘have been taught to despise activity outside of the domestic realm as unfeminine... and have also been valued for the obedience and support they offer to men’ (Oliveros 1984:47-49). In this context, when these song and dance girls performed in public to show the beauty of women’s bodies, their behaviour was considered as unfeminine and immoral.

In fact, this isn’t the first time that women were found onstage. As Chou Hui-ling (1997) suggests, female actresses’ activities onstage can be dated back to mid-Tang era (617-908 C.E), when women began to perform male roles on the stage. However, the song and dance girls’ stage performance did not only signify a re-emergence of women onstage after ‘traditional restrictions against the appearance of women on stage’ (Jones, 2001:88)¹⁷⁴ but, more importantly, saw those young girls (as female actresses/performers) take on female roles.¹⁷⁵ In his work of *Huju*, Stock examines various links between traditional Chinese opera and female performers and actresses and charts the rise of female performers and actresses in Chinese traditional opera in early twentieth century Shanghai.¹⁷⁶ We can see from Stock’s work that it was not unusual for audiences to watch female performers/actresses’ performances or even mixed-performances (including female and male performers) on stage during early decades of the 20th century (e.g. during the 1920s/1930s). However, the display of the physicality of women and women’s bodies in Li’s female-dominated performance style was difficult for the audience to accept, given that they were rooted in feudal ways of thinking. The expression of the beauty of women bodies, such as the overexposure of legs/arms and bared feet, and the explicit illustration of feminine sexuality e.g. the leg kicks, dancing and singing in public still greatly challenged Chinese audiences’ traditional ideology and emotion at that time.¹⁷⁷ When

¹⁷⁴ Emperor Qianlong (reigned between 1735 and 1796) of the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912) banned female actresses from the Beijing stage (Chou 1997: 132).

¹⁷⁵ Even though the history of female actresses’ activities onstage can be traced back to ancient China, women were largely used to perform male roles (i.e. cross-dressing) during that time.

¹⁷⁶ According to Stock, the rise of female actresses in Shanghai opera during the opening decades of the 20th century was ‘part of a broader trend of Chinese drama as a whole’ (2003: 62). Jones also points out that until 1923, May Fourth era dramatists were able to ‘overcame traditional restrictions against the appearance of women on stage and thus instituted a new representational regime predicated on realist aesthetics’ (2001: 87-88).

¹⁷⁷ The secular thoughts of Li’s children’s dramas could be understood by the audience because of the reality that was revealed by the thoughts evoked the emotions that every poor Chinese person had experienced at that time, and it also depicted the

conventional Chinese audiences saw female performers who ‘appeared on stage with dancing and singing like a bird’, they, of course, ‘deem[ed] it an immoral and corrupt act’ (originally from Xie 1985: 45, translated by Jones 2001:89).

III. The various feminine images of the songstresses of Shanghainese Pops

Since Shanghainese Pops was performed by female singers or performers in the similar performance manner and accompanied with their nasal and guttural tones, girly vocals and love themed lyrics, it was ‘naturally’ harshly criticized as *mimizhiyin* (decadent music) by traditional circles.¹⁷⁸ As Feng states, ‘recently some performances of popular music like “Drizzles” and “Sister, I Love You” influenced the trend of “baring arms/legs”,I can say that our music will be destroyed by those “worsening people” in less than ten years. We have to fight’ (1929:702).

The performances of Shanghainese Pops, based on the lyrics, also focused on presenting feminine images. Andrew D. Field claims that ‘Shanghai had been famous for its courtesans, or “sing-song girls” as they were known in contemporary Western literatures, since the late Qing’ (1999: 100).¹⁷⁹ In his research, Field discusses different terms, e.g. sing-song girls, singing or dancing hostesses, that were used to depict the ‘cabaret girls’ or female workers in Shanghai dance culture in the 1920s and 1930s. Although these terms were used differently in certain contexts, they share a variety of elements with the courtesan legacy (Field 1999:99). During the interview process, the term ‘*genü*’ (songstress) was widely mentioned by my interviewees to depict their impressions of Shanghainese Pops. Through their interpretations, this specific term, in fact, has multiple implications beyond the scope of ‘singing and dancing women’, as the interviewees Hang and Lin, (two 26-year-old female PhD students) and Lan (a female music teacher in her late 20s) state:

Hang: My first impression of Shanghainese Pops is those songstresses singing and dancing in the nightclub. Oh, I am sorry, I don’t really want to use the word “nightclub”.

‘bright life’ that poor people wished to have.

¹⁷⁸ See more from the news: http://news.sina.com.cn/c/sd/2009-08-19/120818467321_7.shtml

¹⁷⁹ In Field’s work, ‘sing-song girls’ was another ‘name’ used to refer to ‘courtesans’ in Shanghai in contemporary Western literatures in the late Qing dynasty (1632-1912). And ‘sing-song girls’/‘courtesans’ refers to women who ‘served as both social and sexual companions for the city’s elite’ (1999:100) during that period. However, the term ‘sing-song girls’, as it used in literature on Shanghai popular music during the 1930s/1940s, has a different meaning. For example, in Jone’s (2001) book, ‘sing-song girls’ is used to refer to singing and dancing female performers who were from Li Jinhui’s song and dance troupe and performed Li’s musical works, such as Zhou Xuan.

Na: why do you feel sorry to use the word “nightclub” to indicate the occupation of songstresses?

Hang: well, you know, traditionally it [nightclub] is not considered as a proper venue for women to be involved, they [women] will be regarded as ‘morally unhealthy’ women. However, I just want to say they [songstresses] are women working in the entertainment industry.

Lin: When you mentioned Shanghainese Pops, the first image that pops up in my mind is a woman singing with a stand microphone and dancing on the stage, you know, the classic image of songstress of Shanghainese Pops in many Republican era Chinese TV series.

Lan: Well, for me, Shanghainese Pops is associated with women, and especially these songstresses who were singing and dancing in the night clubs in that time. They have to entertain rich men because they are poor.

The indecent femininity of songstresses

Through audiences’ impressions and perceptions, the image of Shanghainese Pops was not only tightly associated with femininity and female performers, but also the female role of songstresses. In addition to pointing out the songstress’s identity from the Shanghai popular musical scene, Hang and Lan both showed their negative impressions of this specific female role (i.e. songstresses): those women who sing and dance in particular venues, e.g. night clubs, to entertain rich men. Hang feels sorry for using ‘nightclub’ to describe the occupation of songstresses because this place is ‘not a proper venue for women’. As Jones points out, ‘the entertainment industry was usually seen as tawdry and shameful business in which children of well-heeled families by no means could be allowed to participate...especially for daughters’ (2001:91). The interviewee Hang does not want to link songstresses with an indecent image, even though her impression of this specific female character is naturally negative due to the common portrayal of this female role through (historical) literatures or narratives (e.g. Han Bangqing’s works). The songstress figuring in the text or narrative of Shanghai popular-entertainment music and films were largely formed into an indecent feminine image as Zheng claims ‘(women) are presented simultaneously as men’s playthings and pleasure-seeking adventurers. They have no sentimentality, but are sexy, fleshly, and full of sensuality’ (1997: 109).

In addition, the interviewee’s perception of songstress is also widely influenced by the portrayal of (contemporary) visual materials, for example, Zhou Xuan’s movies. Zhou Xuan, as the

legendary female singing star of that era, was the most frequently mentioned songstress of Shanghainese Pops by my interviewees. Zhou started her career as one of the members of Li Jinhui's song and dance girls troupe and later became the lead actress of numerous popular films. Although the quantity of Zhou's works was vast, she played the character of songstress in most of her representative films and music, for instance, *Malu tianshi* (Street Angel, 1937), *Sanxing banyue* (Stars Moving around the Moon, 1937), *Changxiangsi* (An All-Consuming Love, 1947), and *Genü zhi ge* (The Song of Songstresses, 1948) (Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3: Zhou Xuan performed as a songstress in the movie *All-Consuming Love*

For a few of my interviewees, though they preferred to use the term 'songstress' to express their impressions of Shanghainese Pops, they could not distinguish a significant difference between songstresses and sing-song girls/courtesans. While for some other interviewees, the major difference between these two types of women was in their functions and the 'sexual deal' (Field 1999); songstresses mainly sell their talent and skills as social companions for men while sing-song girls or courtesans mainly sell their services as sexual companions. However, as Jones suggests, the line between 'selling songs' and 'selling sexual service' was very fine in the popular discourse of that time (2001:91), because songstresses may also 'sell their bodies' to consumers (men). These two types of women are still strongly inter-linked by the majority of the interviewees since they believe both of them 'sell their souls' to entertain wealthier men. What's more, even though the majority of my interviewees expressed their understanding of the 'indecent' femininity of songstresses, few truly referenced the original materials of

Shanghainese Pops (e.g. lyrics or stage performance) to support their decoding of the indecent imagery surrounding the female role. In other words, their impressions of the negative impression of this female role were not directly from the musical/lyrical elements or the song performances of this style,¹⁸⁰ but audiences' 'memory' of songstresses based on the portrayal of this role in contemporary visual materials or (historical) literatures (i.e. the 'gap' between the production and perception of gender identities). I will further discuss this point in the final section.

The vulnerable and pitiful feminine image of the songstress

In addition to referencing the indecent feminine image of the songstresses, many of the interviewees also mentioned the poor and lower class identity of this female role through the interview process. For those interviewees, the seductive femininity of songstresses was not a result of these women's own willingness but caused by their suffering background and the specific social environment, as Lan and Thomas (the male journalist in his early 40s) state:

Lan: I won't say the image of those songstresses is negative, they were just too poor to live. They had to entertain rich men because that's the way for them to live in that era, they actually were very pitiful.

Thomas: I actually don't think songstresses had a negative image though many of them did sell themselves to rich people. But they didn't have other choices, you know, in that era in Shanghai, these poor girls had to be played by men because men have money and the songstresses needed money to live.

Lan and Thomas both point out the sense of powerlessness of songstresses and the strength and power of their customers i.e. the rich men. Few of the interviewees can really recall the lyrics of Shanghai popular songs, and many of them actually use stories from films and TV series as examples to express their perceptions towards songstresses. However, in many Shanghai popular songs, this particular female role also presents a pitiful and powerless feminine image due to the expression of her voice, for example, 'The Song of Songstresses' or 'Night Life of Shanghai', in the following examples.

¹⁸⁰ Even though the construction of seductive femininity is not hidden in some of the lyrics of Shanghai popular songs, for example in 'Tao hua jiang' (The Peach Flower River) and 'Hua sheng mi' (The Peanuts)', as Zheng (1997:109) suggests, these songs were not directly mentioned by my interviewees when they expressed their negative impressions of these female roles.

Partial lyrics of ‘Night Life of Shanghai’ (by Fan Yanqiao)

夜上海 夜上海 你是个不夜城
华灯起 乐声响 歌舞升平
只见她 笑脸迎 谁知她内心苦闷
夜生活 都为了 衣食住行
Shanghai night, Shanghai night, you are a city that never sleeps
Bright lights, the sing sounds, singing and dancing to extol the good times
People saw her smiling face who knows her inner depression
The nightlife is needed just for the basic necessities of life

Partial lyrics of ‘The Song of Songstresses’ (by Chen Shi)

我引吭, 我歌唱, 唱出人世的沧桑,
委婉地, 诉说那, 往事的凄凉。
春光无限好, 往事总断肠,
人间有悲欢, 歌声也有低昂。
歌一曲, 夜未央, 忘去心头的创伤,
愉快地, 追求那, 美丽的幻想。
I sing, sing the vicissitudes of life,
Euphemistically tell the desolation of the past.
The light of Spring endlessly endearing, the past is heartbroken.
There are joys and sorrows in the world, singing also has high and low tones.
Sing a song, the night is not yet spent, forget the trauma of the heart,
Feel happy to pursue that beautiful fantasy.

Through the self-confessions-based lyrics, songstresses’ unfeminine behaviour and seductive feminine image were not fully considered in the negative sense, as the interviewees’ ambiguous interpretations illustrate. In contrast, due to the tough lifestyle and their powerless status, the songstresses were not women who were lustful, decadent and ‘aggressive’ (seducers of men) but more defenceless and vulnerable in the confines of a cruel social environment.

Therefore, the feminine image built through this female role is paradoxical. On the one hand, ‘she’ was designed to embody the ‘fallen woman’ image who liked to show off her physical form to attract male consumers and was hence disrespected by the public; on the other hand, ‘she’ was shaped to be a powerless woman who wished to be innocent but was forced to sell herself. This self-pitying resentment and suffering of oppression helped obtain the audiences’ sympathy and evokes feelings of loss.

However, no matter whether ‘she’ is indecent/negative or pitiful, the social image of the songstress did not change; their value was still dependent on their physical bodies, which were displayed, valued and consumed by men. The songstress only became a ‘respectable’ female model when she was presented as having political awareness by left-wing musicians¹⁸¹ during the same period (1930s/1940s).

The positive feminine image of the songstress

The fall of the Chinese army in the Battle of Shanghai, 1937, came at the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War (also widely known as the War of Resistance Against Japan in China (1937-1945)), and during a period when Shanghai became an isolated island (*gudao*).¹⁸² With the Japanese occupancy and Western settlements, Shanghai’s entertainment industry developed rapidly but also abnormally. Though the majority of my interviewees have mainly perceived the negative and powerless feminine outlook through the role of the songstress, this particular female character, as an important medium of illustrating the social life of Shanghai in that era, was not only used by musicians to show the glitzy entertainment industry and the nightlife of Shanghai but also to promote a sense of patriotism in reality: Shanghai in the wartime. An example of this is the theme music ‘Tietixiade genü’ (Songstress Under the Iron Heel)¹⁸³ from the movie *Fengyun ernü* (Children of Troubled Times, 1935).

¹⁸¹ ‘Left-wing musicians’ is a term used in Chinese historical discourse to refer to musicians affiliated with the left-wing music movement in the 1930s, aiming to promote anti-Imperialist and anti-feudal music in order to explore and construct the national identity during the Second Sino-Japanese War (Liu 2010:8).

¹⁸² The isolated Island period lasted between the Battle of Shanghai (August 13th 1937) and the outbreak of the Pacific War (December 8th 1941). During this period, Japanese forces encircled foreign settlements and concessions areas of Shanghai, created the isolated Shanghai island.

¹⁸³ This particular song though is not considered as a Shanghai popular song, it still focused on the specific female character (songstress) that is frequently used in the text of Shanghainese Pops. It was also performed by Wang Renmei, who was a song and dance girl originally from Li Jinhui’s troupe.

Lyrics of ‘Songstress Under the Iron Heel’ (by Xu Xingzhi)

我们到处卖唱， We sing everywhere,
我们到处献舞， We dance everywhere,
谁不知道国家将亡 Who doesn’t know the nation is going to die out
为什么被人当做商女？ Why are (we) treated as *shangnü* (courtesans)?
为了饥寒交迫，我们到处哀歌， We lament everywhere for cold and hunger,
尝尽了人生的滋味， (We) tasted the taste of life,
舞女是永远的漂流， Dancing girls are always drifting away,
谁甘心做人的奴隶， Who is willing to be (other people’s) slaves,
谁愿意让乡土沦丧？ Who wants to lose lands?
可怜是铁蹄下的歌女， The poor songstresses under the iron heel,
被鞭打的遍体鳞伤！ (They are) Whipped black and blue!

As the song’s composer Nie Er¹⁸⁴ (a representative of left-wing musicians) claims ‘music is like other arts such as poems, novels and dramas; it cries out for the public’ (Jin 2011:125). This specific song and the film also use the songstress as the main character to reflect the particular urban social life of Shanghai through the feminine form. However, instead of showing the seductive femininity of songstresses, which reflects the distinct features of old Shanghai’s social life as a Solitary Island, this song expanded the feminine image of songstresses by endowing this specific type of women with patriotic sentiment. The story of *Children of Troubled Times* (the film) especially indicates that the Chinese youth poet Xin Baihua’s (the lead male role) patriotic enthusiasm was inspired by Ah Feng (the lead female role) and her stage performance of ‘Songstress under the Iron Heel’. Through the sound of the songstresses, the text, on the one hand, illustrates another half of the reality in Shanghai – a flailing city, an anxious nation in war time. On the other hand, it re-shapes the image of the songstresses with contrasting characteristics.

Songstresses were no longer women who ‘have no sentimentality, but are full of sensuality’ (Zheng 1997:109). On the contrary, they were shaped as ‘heroic’ women who made efforts on the national salvation. Due to the political awareness, the songstress in Ah Feng’s performance,¹⁸⁵ in contrast to the negative image of female entertainers, was formed to have

¹⁸⁴ Nie Er (1912-1935), was a Chinese composer well known for the composition of the national anthem of the People’s Republic of China (i.e. ‘March of the Volunteers’).

¹⁸⁵ The character Ah Feng was not the songstress in the movie, she was a member of the song and dance group but she played the specific role and sung ‘Songstresses Under the Iron Heel’ on the stage during the performances.

the same function as ‘intellectuals’ when she was given the patriotic thoughts. This particular song focuses on the anti-Japanese theme based on the narrative, the sense of patriotism reveals the main background of the social life: the struggle for national liberation.

Although few of my interviewees noticed the positive feminine image in this particular female role, W, a retired female amateur musician, states her interpretation of the function of this positive image of songstresses:

Na: Earlier you said that you thought the role of songstress is constructed in this positive way in these songs for some particular reasons, what are these reasons?

W: Songstresses in traditional Chinese society were regarded as women who live in the bottom of the society; they were a particular group looked down upon by the public. However, when they were encouraging people to fight for the country, I felt the patriotic sensibility was delivered more powerfully and strongly, because others will be stimulated by these songstresses. Even the lowest and most powerless women also have a patriotic heart, and other people, especially men and intellectuals, should feel ashamed if they still enjoyed the nightlife.

W’s statement indicates why this specific female role was chosen to represent the public’s voice from the reception aspect. However, the sense of patriotism, although emphasized and perceived by the audience through the lyrics and the narrative of the film, was not fully illustrated in the performance. Wang Renmei, playing the role of Ah Feng in the movie *Children of Troubled Times*, presented multiple feminine images based on the narrative, for example, the young and traditional woman (Figure 4.4). When Wang was performing this particular patriotic song on stage, through her costume matching – the Western-look bowknot hat, the jacket, the shorts and the high boots – neither embodies a ‘Chinese’ songstress nor stereotypical ‘feminine’ imagery. In other words, Ah Feng’s presentation of a songstress was very different (Figure 4.5), especially in comparison with the typical image of female performers or dancers in the movie. The typical female performers or dancers in the movie wore miniskirts and high heels, with bare legs and arms (Figure 4.6), which was presented as sexy and seductive feminine imagery. Wang, in her performance was much less feminine; she neither presented herself in a stereotypical songstress manner – she was not involved in entertaining men, nor presented explicit feminine behaviour. However, the sense of patriotism was also not illustrated directly throughout the performance despite her singing a patriotic song.



Figure 4.4: the traditional feminine images of Ah Feng in the movie *Children of Troubled Times*



Figure 4.5: the different look of Wang/Ah Feng when she was performing the role of songstress on the stage



Figure 4.6: the typical female dances/performers' image in the movie *Children of Troubled Times*

Another example is the interlude song ‘Qiancheng wanli’ (Glorious Future) from the film *Fenghuang yufei* (*The Pair Fly Together*, 1944, Figure 4.7). If the song ‘Songstress under the Iron Heel’ illustrates patriotic thoughts through the painful text, showing the tragedy of the time, ‘Glorious Future’, on the contrary, uses a positive attitude to deliver the sense of patriotism.

Lyrics (selected sections) from ‘Glorious Future’ (by Chen Dieyi)

我们是年轻的一群 We are the youth

有的是热情和诚恳 Plenty of enthusiasm and sincerity

...

纵然是遍地的荆棘 Even through thistles and thorns are everywhere

也要勇迈地前进 (We) have the courage to move forward

...

我们要振作起精神 We need to rouse ourselves

奔向万里前程 Run toward a glorious future

我们要振作起精神 We need to rouse ourselves

奔向万里前程 Run toward a glorious future

The lyrics of this song still indicate the cruel reality of the nation, for example, the ‘thistles and thorns’ demonstrate the shattered home’, the occupation and fighting. However, instead of shouting out dissatisfied feelings to show the songstresses’ patriotic voices, ‘Glorious Future’ uses a positive slogan-based text to show songstresses’ concerns about the future of the nation. By encouraging people to ‘rouse ourselves to run toward a glorious future’, the songstresses were engaged in work which (only) well-educated people/intellectuals were considered to do, not only showing their love for the country but also showing their faith in the nation’s future.

Unlike the presentation of songstress in the performance of ‘Songstress under the Iron Heel’ in *Children of Troubled Times*, the female character (the songstress) played by Zhou Xuan in the film *The Pair Fly Together*, still kept ‘stereotypical’ feminine images e.g. the clothing style and hair style and the dancing poses as the posts illustrate (Figure 4.7).¹⁸⁶ If the performance of

¹⁸⁶ Images from: <https://moviecool.asia/person/qwkIjnQpwOSj>, accessed on 22nd December, 2016.

‘Songstress under the Iron Heel’ aimed to weaken the femininity of this female role in order to illustrate ‘her’ political awareness as an intellectual, the songstress image in the film *The Pair Fly Together*, on the contrary, explicitly retained the feminine image of this particular female role in order to reflect the desire of people for stability, normality and positivity during a period of war.



Figure 4.7: posters of *The Pair Fly Together* (1944)

IV. The songstress and the female performers

With the majority of my interviewees' impressions of Shanghainese Pops dominated by the image of songstresses, I assumed that audiences may have overlapped the image of the

songstress with the image of female performers in Shanghainese Pops.¹⁸⁷ This was especially true as most of the interviewees used the term ‘songstress’ to refer to the female singers during the interviews, suggesting that the image of songstresses and female performers might be interchangeable. However, when I asked them, ‘do you think the image of the female performer is the same as the role of songstresses?’ they seemed lost in thought, and after a few minutes answered, ‘no, they are not exactly the same’ (though a few such as Zining did mention that the female performers were songstresses). The interviewees Thomas (the male interviewee) and Jing (a 27-year-old female administrative staff) provide two representative statements of the perceptions towards female singers and the female role in Shanghainese Pops:

Thomas: Songstresses were the main characters in Shanghainese Pops, they were those women from the lower class. They were disrespected and disliked by people because they performed as seductive women; they “sold” their performances or even themselves to the rich men. That is the reason why I linked songstresses to geishas as we talked before. However, the female performers who were representative of Shanghainese Pops, like Zhou Xuan, Yao Li and Bai Hong, they were not these poor and seductive women, they were much more innocent. They earned their reputations as singers and actresses, and they were respected and loved by people and fans. So you can see these female performers’ pictures were frequently used by newspapers and pictorials as examples of beautiful women.

Jing: The images of songstresses and performers are different but linked in some way. For example, Zhou Xuan; she played the songstress role in many of her films, which is why she would be considered as “the wandering songstress” or “songstress of the generation”. We link Zhou Xuan with the female role because that’s the classic role built by her, but we don’t overlap the image of songstresses with Zhou Xuan’s image, the songstress is only a character in the text.

Both these opinions show the perception of the specific female role and female performers. Thomas clearly separates the image of female performers and the female role and catalogues their feminine images into two opposing types while Jing, though stating there is difference between these two feminine images, still points out the interlinkages between the songstress and female performers due to the nature of actress-role relationship and the influence of related films.

The construction of the image of the songstress through the text of Shanghainese Pops placed

¹⁸⁷ It was very popular for female singers to both perform and sing in the films of this era. Female singers like Zhou Xuan, Wang Renmei and Li Lili not only played roles as songstresses, they were also the real singers in these films (they sang as the songstresses). And they were also song and dance girls who originally came from Li Jinhui’s female troupe.

emphasis on showing her sexual thoughts and behaviours, which satisfied not only men but also the public's desire for women at that time. However, as the 'spokesperson' of the songstresses, female performers were not really criticised as indecent women but were liked by their audiences (from that era to present) mainly for two reasons. First, the description of songstress in some of the films shifted attention to their hard lifestyle, for instance, 'Night Life in Shanghai' or 'The Song of Songstresses', which partly matched the female singers' real life e.g. Zhou Xuan's tragic marriage and life (Hung 2008a). Therefore, the image of the female role overlapped with the image of the female performers in this context; not only has the pitiful feminine side of the songstress been stressed through the films and performances but also the innocence of the female performers, as Thomas indicates. Second, these female performers, who were originally from Li Jinhui's female sing and dance troupe, have a very different background to songstresses. When they later became singers and actresses, they also shaped their personas based on public expectations, e.g. to perform the patriotic feminine role in the music and films (Hung 2008a:147). Hence, even the lyrics of Shanghainese Pops have constructed a particular negative feminine image of the songstress, when it comes to the performance of these songs, the image of the female role was not built in the exact same way as the text. The indecent feminine image that was shaped through the text, has to negotiate the persona of the female performers. Either the songstress image can be overlapped with the image of female performers or a paradoxical feminine image can be presented between them.

V. The impact of the male musicians on representation of femininity in Shanghainese Pops

Not many interviewees noticed that the creators of Shanghainese Pops were predominantly male musicians. Most only have a strong impression of female performers and the sense of femininity through the text and performances of Shanghainese Pops and the narrative of related films. However, W, based on her own experiences, not only states her interpretations and impressions of the various versions of femininity presented by female performers and the specific female role but also explains her opinion of the focus on female performers or singers in the production of Shanghainese Pops and related films:

Na: You said you neither have a particular image of songstresses nor that of their female performers, because you believe they were performing. Can you further explain this opinion?

W: Well, I don't have a certain image of this female role [songstress] and their female performers, because they were changeable. They could be female entertainers or female fighters, it is dependent on the creators. The female

performers and the particular female character were frequently used in Shanghainese Pops and film creations because they were a tool to speak for the creators. Women, especially songstresses, based on the specific social conditions and the traditional Chinese cultural values, were regarded as a weak and invaluable group at that time. Using women as the main figure to express desires and hopes can arouse public sympathy more directly. I actually feel it is very normal to see these different feminine images presented by the female performers, because they were performing, and they were performing based on the creators' demands.

W's statement, on the one hand, illustrates her understanding of 'gender as performative' through a certain perspective – it is about how women were chosen to perform different feminine images. On the other hand, her interpretation indicates the huge impact of male musicians/creators on the production of gender identities of Shanghainese Pops.

In addition to Li Jinhui, the founder of both Shanghainese Pops and the female performance manner, the creators of this musical form were largely male musicians, for instance Chen Gexin and Chen Dieyi, and the directors of such films were also males (e.g. Fang Peilin, Yuan Muzhi). Therefore, from the youthful femininity of young girls, the juxtaposition of the (seductive, pitiful and positive) femininity of songstresses to the decent feminine image of female performers, the multiple feminine images revealed through Shanghainese Pops, were largely designed, navigated and portrayed based on male musicians' aesthetics of women and femininity. Women and their multiple gendered images in Shanghainese Pops were mainly created by men to work for themselves in different ways: first, to establish a new connection between women and feminine sexuality e.g. Li Jinhui's all-female performance manner; second, to please themselves and exhibit male privilege through the seductive feminine image (e.g. the seductive femininity of songstresses); and third, to speak for the masses and reflect the specific socio-cultural environment through the positive feminine image of the songstress role.

Furthermore, from the production to reception of the gendered image of Shanghainese Pops, this case also illustrates changes in the way that gender is constructed through the text and stage/song performances and then decoded (mainly) in acts of remembrance, viewing or listening to 'non-original' materials in this style. In other words, my interviewees' interpretations of the gendered image of this style are widely influenced by their 'memory' of female roles and female singers and performers in historical literature and institutional discourse, as well as contemporary visual elements (such as televised contemporary dramas and films), rather than the 'original materials' of this musical form.

Women, as the most important figures in Chinese modern history were used and shaped in different roles and images. In the case of Shanghainese Pops, they were mainly used to show the sense of softness and femininity. Whereas in Northwest Wind music, the multiple gendered images presented by female singers not merely broke the ‘cultural link’ between women and femininity with Chinese traditional cultural values but also caused interviewees’ subtle perceptions of female singers, femininity and the gendered image of this musical style.

Chapter 5: Masculinity without men? The multiple gendered images presented by female performers of Northwest Wind

Through its musical materials and the performance style, the root that Northwest Wind sought was not a specific place but a distinct image of China or Chinese popular music. As scholars claim (e.g. Baranovitch 2003:128-129; Jin 1998), Northwest Wind is a revival of the masculinity of China as well as Chinese popular music that had been lost for a very long period under the flood of feminine sounds.¹⁸⁸ However, even though the sound in this musical form are associated with hardness and masculinity, for example in the rough instrumental and vocal deliveries, this particular musical form still follows the female dominant performance model, in the same way as Shanghainese Pops. For instance, ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ was first sung by An Wen and later covered by many other female singers, including Fan Linlin and Li Na. Similarly, ‘Xin tian you’ was also covered by numerous female singers after Wang Si’s first performance. Even in the CCTV3 (China Central Television) show *Gesheng piaoguo sanshinian* (Singing Across Thirty Years) in 2008, three female musicians, Fan Linlin, Hu Yue and Chen Lin, were invited as representative singers of Northwest Wind music to perform ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’, ‘My Beloved Hometown’ and ‘Xin tian you’ respectively.¹⁸⁹ Through these public performances, Northwest Wind seems to be strongly associated with female singers. However, during the interview process, before I started to play any audio/video examples of Northwest Wind music to my interviewees, a few of them initially mentioned that the Northwest Wind songs (e.g. ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’) they have heard are sung by male singers (i.e. they listened to the male versions). Later, when I played female versions of these songs to them, their reactions of these songs and related singers reflect a particularly confused feeling towards this musical form, as the conversations between me and the interviewees Lin (the 25-year-old female PhD student) and Tian (the 27-year-old male PhD student) illustrate:

¹⁸⁸ The feminine sound in this context not only implies voices from female singers but also the soft style of the music. In addition to Shanghainese Pops, the *Gangtai* pops (music imported from Hong Kong and Taiwan), which constituted the Chinese popular music market for a long period of time, was also judged to be a type of ‘soft and feminine’ music (e.g. Jin 2002).

¹⁸⁹ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msYjjk50pY>, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9RUoXTeqbQ>, accessed on 27th June, 2016.

Na: Have you ever heard Northwest Wind pop songs?
 Lin/Tian: Yes, 'Xin tian you' or 'Hills of Yellow Earth'
 Na: Which versions have you listened to? Which singer?
 Lin/Tian: I don't remember the singer's name, but it's a male version.
 Na: Ok. Then I want to play you a female singer's version of these songs
 ...(playing music videos and recordings)
 Lin/Tian: It's the version that I have listened to! But it is sung by a female singer?
 Why would I remember it was a male singer? (after a few seconds) I am sorry I
 am confused, I don't know which version [male or female] is the one I have
 listened to. I thought it's a male version but it's not...and I don't know why I
 would remember wrongly. When you asked me this question I immediately
 thought it's a male version, I mean the image of Northwest Wind relates to
 masculinity, the music should be sung by men, right?

Lin and Tian's confusion of the male and female singers of Northwest Wind music, together with that of a few other interviewees, is mainly caused by the strong relationship between regional cultures and this musical form, as discussed in the second chapter. The wide and desolate landscape, the image of Northwestern men and the poor living environment in Northwest China not only presents a hard and rough image of this particular region to the audience, but also links their impression of this region with men and masculinity. Therefore, their sense of Northwest Wind music is dominated by the image of the region rather than the music itself. It was not until they watched or listened to the music again that they realised the songs were sung by women.

Since Northwest Wind music was neither the 'popular music' for the younger generation (i.e. people who were born in late 1980s or early 1990s, 85 *hou* / 90 *hou*), nor has it had the long-term impact on audiences that Shanghainese Pops had, it is possible that the young interviewees cannot fully recall their memories of this musical form. Therefore, I asked similar questions of the older interviewees, for example, W and Xin, a couple both aged around 60 – arguably the core audience of Northwest Wind music.

It is interesting that W and Xin both claimed that Northwest Wind music is 'men's music' without recalling any male singers and their representative songs. When they realized that their memories were in fact of female performers, such as Li Na, Fan Linlin and Hang Tianqi, they looked just as confused as Lin and Tian (the younger adults). They stated that:

Our impression of Northwest Wind music is that it is a powerful music, not something similar to the girly voice of female singers of Shanghainese Pops or

the soft singing style of *Gangtai* pop songs, they are different. Northwest Wind songs are hard...but they were still performed by female singers.

Although W and Xin noticed that Northwest Wind songs were widely sung by female singers, their impression of this musical style was the sense of ‘hardness’. The ‘power’ represented by this musical form does not match their understanding of female singers – the hard sound ‘is not supposed’ to be produced by female singers but by male singers. This created the sense of ambivalence, and also caused their confusion about the gendered image of this musical form.

For my interviewees, their confusion indicates the perception of the role of men and women in the Chinese society, showing the link between men and masculinity, women and femininity in Chinese cultural values. It also raises the question: why not male singers?¹⁹⁰ Although masculinity can be produced by both women and men, the perception of hard and masculine in the Chinese society is culturally related to men, which is revealed by the audience. If Northwest Wind was constructed as a form to show the strength of Chinese popular music and the power of the nation, and against the domination of ‘soft’ sounds in the Chinese popular music market, as musicians and scholars claim, should the masculine image not be (widely) presented more ‘directly’ and ‘logically’ by male singers?

Although the Chinese music industry was, since its birth, associated with and dominated by female singers and performers, in the late 1980s this situation changed with the emergence of Cui Jian and rock music.¹⁹¹ The resulting female domination of Northwest Wind music seems closely linked with the ideology of this form. Frith and McRobbie point out that ‘the most important ideological work done by rock is the construction of sexuality’ (2007: 43). In their work, ‘rock is a male form’, due to the presentation of masculine concerns and the image of masculine sexuality; Padel also voices this opinion (2000: 81). Northwest Wind is widely seen as Sino-rock because of the basic musical sources and the rough vocal delivery, which contribute to its masculine image. However, the ideology of this musical form – showing love for the nation and the construction of collective identity – goes against the concept of rebellions and the idea of ‘being yourself’ that constructs masculine sexuality in Chinese rock. In other

¹⁹⁰ I do not mean there were no male singers appearing in the Northwest Wind scene; in fact, there were several male singers (e.g. Sun Guoqing, Wang Di) who became stars during this period. However, the hard image was not presented by male musicians, even though their performances were much harder than the female singers. And the CCTV program (the official program) strongly showed that the cultural memories of Northwest Wind were linked with female performers.

¹⁹¹ In addition to the increasing amount of male rock musicians, audiences’ musical taste also shifted from soft to hard as Jin suggests (1998, 2002).

words, if Chinese rock as a whole is ‘men’s’ music because of its expression of anti-traditionalism (e.g. promoting self-expressions) and dissatisfaction with social reality, Northwest Wind music, which emphasises the idea of seeking roots, cannot be simply identified as masculine or associated with a specific gender, since the ideology of ‘educating’ people to love and build the future of the nation is not specifically masculine.

Baranovitch claims that though most Northwest Wind songs were sung by female singers, ‘they in a sense assumed once again the masculine image that their elder sisters, the Iron Girls of the Cultural Revolution, had assumed two decades earlier... and women and femininity were once again relegated to the margins of Chinese popular music’ (2003: 129). As mentioned previously, Baranovitch argues this point mainly based on the aural effects of this style. However, in Cheng Lin’s recording of ‘Xin tian you’ (discussed in Chapter 2), her thin and high-pitched voice and her soft and emotional vocal delivery show that the female singers of this style did not always produce a powerful or forceful vocal expression, but instead a sorrowful, sentimental, soft and feminine vocality. In addition, perceptions of the audible aesthetics towards these female singers’ works expressed earlier by the interviewees also indicate that the female singers of Northwest Wind cannot be simply assumed to have adopted a masculine image, as was the case with the Iron Girls (see the next section). The following analysis of the visual materials of this style, i.e. stage performances and music videos, can further illustrate how female singers have presented multiple gender identities (e.g. feminine or cool images) through their bodies, clothing styles, gestures and behaviours in the performances.

Furthermore, if masculinity in Northwest Wind is linked to a sense of power and strength, as Baranovitch and Jin (1998; 2002) suggest, the presentation of the old male peasant and images of a poor and backwards region or of tough rural lives as depicted in the music videos (as discussed in Chapter 2) point towards the production of a different version of masculinity.¹⁹² This is especially apparent when the sense of ‘desolation and sorrow’ was referred to by interviewees in relation to their perceptions of the visual elements of Northwest Wind music; it shows that the version of masculinity here is not the dominant style and does not suggest a tight link between maleness and masculinity, power and aggression. Moreover, there is a concern that even though this musical form was identified as masculine based on its audible aesthetics (despite some of the male interviewees disagreeing with this argument), were women

¹⁹² Though masculine power is implied in hard agricultural labour at some places of Hu Yue’s music video of ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’ as discussed in Chapter 2.

and femininity truly relegated to the margins? This concern is especially pertinent considering the three female singers' public stage performance on CCTV3.

I. The feminine image of Northwest Wind

Iron Girls

The term 'Iron Girls' is widely used as a specific metaphor to represent Chinese women who were 'physically strong, mentally determined, wearing a unisex workplace suit similar to her male peers' between the 1950s and 1970s, including the period of Cultural Revolution (1960s-1970s) (Wu:71, Figure 5.1).¹⁹³ In the Chinese context, 'iron' introduces a strong connotation of hard and strength, and is used to depict the quality of people's 'strong willpower'. By combining 'iron' with 'girls', what the image of 'iron girls' illustrates was 'a new gender stereotype which reversed traditional gender concepts in Chinese society' (Zhang and Liu 2015:87). Between the 1950s and 1970s, legitimising gender equality became an increasingly important topic in People's Republic of China (PRC). Wearing the same caps and same clothes erased gender differences and promoted gender equality that, it was hoped, would help to achieve the elimination of class-based and socioeconomic differences (Li 2008). Erasing sartorial gender differences was mainly associated with labour – arenas that had been traditionally considered 'men's work'.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, the term 'iron girls' was used as a synonym for gender equality by the Communist Party of China (Zhang and Liu 2015).



¹⁹³ Pictures from Li Hongmei, 'From Iron Girls to Oriental Beauties'. *The China Beat*. 12/09/2008. <http://thechinabeat.blogspot.co.uk/2008/12/from-iron-girls-to-oriental-beauties.html>, accessed on 28th June, 2016.

¹⁹⁴ As Zhang Meifang and Liu Bing (2015:87) suggest, 'Iron girls mainly included women active in the fields of agriculture, industry, and especially heavy industry'.



Figure 5.1: images of Iron Girls of the Cultural Revolution

However, Judith Stacey (1983:207-208) points out that ‘where the demand for labor allowed the mobilization of women to proceed, the regime exercised concern to avoid undue threats to patriarchal sensibilities...The collectivization of agriculture succeed in expanding the contribution of female labor and in modifying the specific contents if the traditional sexual division of labor, but it levelled no fundamental challenge to the traditional view that female labor was naturally different from and subordinate to that of men’. Margery Wolf, building upon Stacey’s viewpoint, further states that, due to the gap between the government’s promotion of heavy industry and economic development and ‘the limits of China’s backward technology’, women had to mobilise in order to get into male dominated careers and industries (1985: 22). According to Wolf, the employment of women did not challenge China’s long lasting patriarchal citadel given that, ‘if the entry of women into labor was the path to equality, it would appear that the government was unwilling to provide more than an ill-drawn map’ (Wolf 1985: 24).¹⁹⁵ Therefore, strictly speaking, only very partial erasure of gender distinctions happened during this particular era, even in the Cultural Revolution.

Female performers of Northwest Wind

This situation and the image of the ideal Chinese women dramatically shifted after the Cultural Revolution. As Li Hongmei (2008) points out, ‘in the 1980s, feminized women were said to represent progress and the Iron Girls were ridiculed’. When it came to the female singers and

¹⁹⁵ Wolf (1985: 24) points out that women’s achievement in their works did not bring them closer to equality to male works because of the low wages and lack of benefits and advancement.

performers of Northwest Wind, their image neither looked like the Iron Girls nor matched the ‘powerful’ sound that they produced, but instead illustrated a strong feeling of femininity. One example is Cheng Lin’s stage performance of ‘Xin tian you’ in the 1988 Chinese Spring Festival Gala Evening.¹⁹⁶ Although Cheng was not the first singer to sing this song, her performance in this particular venue made ‘Xin tian you’ and Northwest Wind more widely known to the public. The music in this performance is slightly different from the recording; the intro sounds more Chinese in flavour and the melody performed by *suona* is stressed, but still shares similar musical sources such as melody and instrumental accompaniment. Cheng’s big bowknot hairstyle, dedicated makeup and the mid-length golden dress she wore all helped to showcase her femininity, as Figure 5.2 illustrates. Additionally, Cheng’s lovely footsteps, her gestures and dance movements in the performance clearly depict the image of feminine sexuality and distinguish Cheng as a female singer, in comparison to her male dancers. If female singers of Northwest Wind had assumed the masculine image in the same way as the Iron Girls of the Cultural Revolution, then the masculine image was unlikely to be presented in this feminine way, especially within official discourse.¹⁹⁷



¹⁹⁶ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIBXektHS2I>, accessed on 28th June, 2016.

¹⁹⁷ The Chinese Spring Festival Gala is not only a mainstream entertainment program, more importantly, it is used as the medium to reflect the official directive of social, cultural and political spirit/value of each year. Many programs in each year’s Gala are involved with recent ‘mainstream voices’ (*shidai zhuxuanliu*).



Figure 5.2: images of Cheng Lin's performance of 'Xin Tian You' in Chinese Spring Festival Gala Evening in 1988

It is not just the stage performance that illustrates this phenomenon, but also the music videos. For example, in An Wen's music video for 'Hills of Yellow Earth', the female performer was dressed in different styles, as Figure 5.3 shows. However, no matter whether the female performer donned a rural or urban look, or if her figure was set to black and white or colourful scenes, her appearance and clothing style, for example, her ponytail hairstyle and long dresses and scarfs, and gestures all showcase her femininity. Throughout the music video there is a close-up screen of this female performer's legs and shoes (Figure 5.4). This specific display of (part of) her body and her feminine behaviours, for instance spinning around with the scarf, once again indicate the contrasts between the female performer and the male character, the latter of whom presents a masculine image (Figure 5.5).





Figure 5.3: different feminine images in An Wen's MV of 'Hills of Yellow Earth'



Figure 5.4: a close-up shot of legs of the female performer in the music video



Figure 5.5: the masculine image of the male character in the music video

II. *Nühanzi* and *xibei hanzi*: masculinity and embodiment

During the interview process, a few interviewees, both male and female, used the term *nühanzi* to describe the female singers of Northwest Wind. *Nühanzi* is a recent slang term used to refer ‘manly women’ or women who think and act like men – not feminine or soft. In Northwest Wind, the female singers are perceived as *nühanzi* mainly because of the vocal delivery style; it is not girly or nasal like Shanghainese Pops. For those interviewees, it is reasonable that female singers from Northwest Wind have used a tough vocal approach because the lifestyle and farm work of that particular region cannot be presented in a soft or feminine way. Therefore, even though female singers have a central role in both Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind, they perform different gender identities, which shows extremely different perceptions of these two musical forms.

In addition to the female performers and singers, the image of the male peasant is an important element of An Wen’s music video and other Northwest Wind songs, such as Hu Yue’s version of ‘Hills of Yellow Earth’. This image not only symbolises Northwest China but, more importantly, is used to link an idea of masculinity and Northwest Wind music by my younger and older generations of interviewees. For example, Hang (a female PhD student) provides a representative statement:

Hang: In addition to the local geographical features, what impressed me most is the image of the male peasants. Whenever I heard Northwest Wind songs, I had this certain image: men [peasants] working hard on the farm, sweating in fields, you know, they are strong and tough, and showing very manly behaviours. A typical feeling/image of North-western men.

Na: When you say peasants or North-western men are “strong and tough”, do you mean they look physically strong and tough?

Hang: Yes, they have a strong body or physical image.

Thomas J. Csordas points out that ‘embodiment as a paradigm requires that the body be understood as the existential ground of culture, i.e. body should be considered as the subject of culture’ (1993:135). Raewyn Connell and Rebecca Pearse (2014) further suggest that embodiment can be described because of the methods in which cultural beliefs of gender in a given society create expectancies for and have an effect on the shape of bodies. Audiences’ perceived bodily features of the male peasant or North-western men – his strong body and rough appearance – and his manly behaviours and actions, such as undertaking physical labour,

as well as the specific feeling of ‘manliness’, indicate how this Chinese characterised male character is used to embody the masculine forces culturally prevalent in this particular region.

However, the delivery of masculinity in this musical form through the performance and visual materials is inconspicuous and unlike the hard masculine image of male peasants in literature, for example the rough and energetic male porter in Mo Yan’s novel and movie *Red Sorghum*, especially when compared with the illustration of feminine images. When the scene shows the male peasant carrying out farm work in a backward region in An Wen and Hu Yue’s music videos, it is hard to say whether it shows masculine forces as the musical form aims to, or only presents a weak male image due to the sense of powerlessness of this male character¹⁹⁸ and the poor reality of the ‘backward’, suffering rural living environment. This is especially the case when the male character is performed by an old man who stands or works in a wide field, for example, the old male peasant in Hu Yue’s music video; what the audience then perceives is the sense of toil and struggle rather than strength, as the interviewee Xiaoyu (a male PhD student) states:

The old male peasant has dark skin and lots of wrinkles [on the face], and has to work hard in the field to live...that’s their life, which makes me feel desolate and sorrowful.

The performance and visual materials present a different version of masculinity compared with the sound, which instead point towards the sorrowful, vulnerable and soft sensibility of this musical form and exemplifies as polysemic view of gender in Northwest Wind.

III. The cool woman of Northwest Wind style

In addition to the explicit focus on the feminine image of female performers, Fan Linlin’s music video, ‘Xin tian you’, illustrates the complexity of the construction of female identity of Northwest Wind music. In her music video, Fan performed as the ‘modern Fan’ and ‘rural Fan’. Her urban and rural images stress the existence of women in Northwest Wind songs, and also portray different gendered images of women. Fan, in most scenes, projects a ‘standard’ feminine image, involving a soft and delicate body, long hair and mid-length or long dresses (Figure 5.6). However, some scenes present her in a more modern light, highlighting that her

¹⁹⁸ Although the male peasant in An Wen’s music video is younger and more energetic, the portrayal of this figure is very limited and proves difficult in providing a sense of the masculine forces. In the limited scenes, the male peasant is doing farm work with the (help of) female character and again it is hard to build a strong masculine image.

‘soft’ image has transformed into a ‘tougher’ one (see further explanations below). In this case, her long hair is replaced by a short cut hairstyle, she also wears long trousers and a close-fitting black vest instead of dresses (Figure 5.7).



Figure 5.6: the standard feminine image of Fan in her music video



Figure 5.7: the cool image of Fan in the music video

The different physical image, along with her lack of facial expressions not only contrasts with her feminine images in the video but also presents the female singer as a cool (unrestrained) woman. This image is bolstered by her deep, rough and loud vocal delivery. Groenewegen (2011a: 114) points out that in Chinese society ‘cool is closer to *yang*’, in other words, cool emphasises on the sense of hardness.¹⁹⁹ This cool image in the video is produced by Fan’s physical presentation, namely her appearance, facial expressions and clothing style, which also

¹⁹⁹ For my interviewees, although they used cool to describe both male and female singers/performers, the meaning of cool is slightly different. When cool is used to depict women by audiences, they mostly wanted to stress the sense of ‘natural unrestrained’ (Groenewegen also mentions the relationship between women and the sense of coolness in his work). While when cool is linked with men’s images, it is also related with a specific type of Chinese masculinity – the *wu* masculinity, which I will discuss further in Chapter 6.

define the strength of her behaviours and actions. When Fan is dressed in a feminine manner, she is either singing whilst walking with flowers or leaning against a tree; she expresses her feelings emotionally and softly. However, when she is in the cool woman look, she wears all-black clothes and strides across the road with a travelling bag, with the sense of indifference and without clear facial expressions. Although the shape of Fan's body still indicates the feminine figure, this particular cool look and her manly walking style weaken the femininity of Fan and also produce a particular sense of hardness that contrasts with her other soft, feminine behaviours.

Because of the above factors concerning the performance and the music videos, female singers of Northwest Wind music display different gender identities in this musical form. Though aural features produce the hardness of this musical form, women and femininity are not visually relegated to the margins of the Northwest Wind scene. In contrast, through Cheng Lin's vocal delivery and her stage performance, as well as An Wen and Hu Yue's music videos, the sense of femininity is clearly presented by female singers and performers. Even though the old male peasant or the cool woman from these music videos showcases a particular sense of hardness or masculinity, the visual materials, such as the setting of the videos, depict a tough and poor regional lifestyle. They define hardness or masculinity in terms of a weakness, powerlessness and backwardness, which may fail to illustrate the masculine forces that the style aims to show.

Furthermore, the lyrics, similar to the visual material, do not build up a masculine image in Northwest Wind music either. As the above lyrical analysis shows, the lyrics of Northwest Wind songs mainly reflect two kinds of sentiment: patriotism and criticism. However, neither of these two feelings can be considered as being masculine without a further explanation, especially when the song and the particular sensation were delivered by female singers, with their respective feminine images. The lyrics of a few representative songs of Northwest Wind music, for example, 'Hills of Yellow Earth', 'Xin tian you' or 'Shan gougou', which emphasised the theme of root-seeking, are not associated with a gender-specific group. The sense of patriotism or criticism does not construct an image of masculine or feminine sexuality. On the contrary, a few love-themed Northwest Wind songs, for instance, 'The Moon Walks, I Walk Too' (as analysed in Chapter 2), through the narrative between 'me' and 'my brother/lover' based on the female perspective (i.e. 'me' is identified as a woman), illustrates a feminine image of this musical form.

Many of my interviewees' interpretations of Northwest Wind music were very much influenced by their impressions of regional folk music, for example, mountain songs, and the specific geographic features of this region. The loud and strong vocal delivery, the image of wild fields and a hard-working lifestyle in that region, from their educations and memories, allowed them to link Northwest Wind and the northwestern folksy tunes with masculinity, especially when disassociated from the visual sources. However, audiences' ambivalent sensibility and CCTV3's programme both indicate that the cultural memory of Northwest Wind was linked with women. Even though femininity was not clearly recognised due to the strong impression of the hard sound of this musical form, women still stood at the centre of the Northwest Wind scene.

As the title of the chapter suggested, the female singers and performers of Northwest Wind music presented various gender identities and gendered images of this musical form; however, behind those images, again, were the male musicians. In addition to the female dominated performance style, the combination of male musicians and female performers is another feature presented by Northwest Wind. The composers and lyricists of most Northwest Wind songs are male musicians; for example, Xu Peidong and Meng Guangzheng ('My Beloved Hometown'), and Su Yue and Chen Zhe 'Xin tian you'. Both of these songs were primarily performed or covered by female singers, as was the case with Shanghainese Pops.

Although female performers in these two musical forms portrayed different images or versions of feminine sexuality, what did not change was the men's privilege of 'designing and satisfying' women's desires. In Shanghainese Pops, the male musicians established the specific seductive feminine image not only to achieve pleasure (largely for the male segment of the audience), from this particular female role but also with the intention of delivering a message to the public that satisfying and being satisfied by men were women's 'true desire'. Meanwhile, in the case of Northwest Wind music, male musicians created the 'hard' performance style to show the female performers' loss and longing sensibilities on the one hand and their masculine forces on the other hand. If the male creators of Shanghainese Pops shaped this musical form as femininity based on their understandings of women and feminine sexuality, the male musicians of Northwest Wind then intended to 'excavate' women's masculinity in order to present the hardness of Chinese popular music, though the masculinity has been perceived in various ways.

Female singers and performers in Chinese popular music, from the early Shanghainese Pops to

late 1980s Northwest Wind, illustrated various developments in Chinese popular music across different eras, and also presented these changes in terms of the musical thoughts and aesthetics of male musicians. The gender misidentification and gender ambiguity that were interpreted and decoded by the contemporaneous audiences in the 1980s, or by audiences today, illustrate polysemic nature of the gendered image of Northwest Wind music and the complexity of the understanding of gender identities and gender dynamics. The following China Wind music will more explicitly present the interconnectness between softness and hardness, and between femininity and masculinity – the close correlation between *yin* and *yang* in Chinese popular music and culture.

Chapter 6: The harmony and opposition between softness and hardness of China Wind

The preceding musical analysis has shown that Taiwan-based China Wind music is both mainly produced and performed by male musicians – the producer is also the performer. During the interview process, none of the interviewees proactively mentioned female singers of China Wind music. When they were asked ‘are there any particular female singers in your mind that can represent China Wind music?’ or ‘can you recall any female singers who impressed you with their China Wind hits?’, most respondents appeared to have difficulty finding an answer. After thinking for a while, the majority of them answered ‘no’, a few suggested a particular song ‘Zhongguohua’ (Chinese Language) by S.H.E which was the only one they could recall being sung by female singers, although they did not identify S.H.E as being representative singers of this style.

I. Soft, beautiful, *weimei* and China Wind

Although male singers dominate this musical form, many of the interviewees’ main impressions and their first impressions of China Wind music are characterised by their sense of it being ‘soft and beautiful’. For them, the sense of softness creates the particular artistic feeling of China Wind. As Yang (a 30-year-old male office worker), Tina (a female university student in her early 20s) and Mimosa (a 28-year-old female office worker) state:

Yang: When you mentioned China Wind, the first image that pops into my mind is soft and beautiful. Especially those ballad songs, like ‘East Wind Breaks’ and ‘Blue and White Porcelain’. They not only sound soft but also feel very elegant.

Tina: I like China Wind music because it sounds so *weimei*. I don’t know how to explain this kind of beauty; it is not physical but mental. I mean the text and the sound are so soft which sketches beautiful Chinese images in my mind.

Mimosa: The traditional clothing style, the Chinese style settings [music videos] and the sad and sorrowful love stories all made me feel China Wind is so *weimei*.

Based on the interviewees’ experiences, the sense of ‘softness’, ‘*weimei*’ and ‘beauty’ are produced by the combination of Chinese melody and vocal delivery, the symbolic lyrics and

the love themed story that constitutes the narrative of the music video. They received the sensation of softness through different means; Mimosa, for example, explains how the sense of *weimei* in China Wind music has been sensed through symbolized images and the tragic ending-based narrative, whereas Yang and Tina showed how soft sounds and multiple Chinese imageries from the poetic lyrics have conveyed the sense of softness to them. What is clear is that they all link softness with a sense of beauty – *weimei* – which elucidates the concept and *yijing* of China Wind.

Among those interpretations, the meaning of *weimei* seems more abstract and links with different sources and sensations. *Weimei* as a term is used in multiple ways in the Chinese context. It could be used to imply a beautiful image or scene, a feeling of melancholy or a particular sensation associated with the sense of softness and tenderness. Here, *weimei* is applied by interviewees to indicate a stream of artistic perceptions, such as softness, beauty and sorrow.²⁰⁰

Therefore, ‘why not female singers?’ has become a lingering question in this research. The artistic concept, the sense of beauty and *weimei*, or the softness of the music can certainly be delivered by male singers, but it is unusual that female singers are barely presented in this soft musical scene, especially when prevailing perceptions drawn from Chinese traditional cultural values stress that women are soft and men are hard. Even though in Taiwanese Mandopop songs, men perform their male identities in various ways i.e. alternative masculinities (Moskowitz 2010), the delivery of softness in the music is not dominated by male performers. For example, the gentle princes of love songs, e.g. Jeff Chang, and tender queens of sorrowful songs, e.g. Winnie Hsin, are both presented in the musical scene and are also perceived by the audiences.

In artistic representation, such as in costumes, paintings and photography or other forms of music, the concept of China Wind has been widely linked with the sensation of softness and beauty, normally delivered by women in differing ways. For instance, Sun Jun, who is considered to be a Chinese poetic male photographer, pays particular attention to women in most of his works in order to deliver a sense of beauty and elegance that references the specific

²⁰⁰ In the case of China Wind music, the sense of *weimei* is mainly used by interviewees to imply the softness and the beauty of Chinese cultures. However, the *wen* masculinity and the tender male identity presented by male singers and performers of this style may also influence audiences’ perception of *weimei* due to the sense of tenderness produced by the musical, lyrical and visual materials in this musical form.

artistic concept of China Wind (Figure 6.1).²⁰¹ Similarly, the female Chinese fashion designer Xiong Ying also uses women as the main figures to present the beauty of Chinese cultures when she employed an oriental theme *Dayuanzhijing.Yuanmingyuan* (the name of her show) during her debut runway show in Palais Garnier (Paris, 2016). Here, she reproduced the destroyed Summer Palace (*Yuanmingyuan*) and referenced ruined Chinese beauty and culture (Figure 6.2).²⁰² Therefore, no matter whether the designer is male or female, no matter whether the context is in traditional or contemporary China, **the focus is on portraying women's images to present oriental beauty (*dongfangmei*) in order to deliver the concept of China Wind** in their works. As ChinaNet (in Australia) says, '**what is the real China Wind? It is the beauty of the East.**'²⁰³



Figure 6.1: Sun Jun's China Wind style works

²⁰¹ Pictures from Sun Jun's personal work collections: <http://www.sunjunphoto.com/main.html>, accessed on 6th Oct, 2016.

²⁰² Pictures from: http://news.xinhuanet.com/fashion/2016-10/08/c_1119670597.htm, see more from: <http://fashion.qq.com/a/20161013/031211.htm>, accessed on 6th Oct, 2016.

²⁰³ <http://www.myactimes.com/actimes/plus/view.php?aid=1123183>, accessed on 15th Oct, 2016.



Figure 6.2: Xiong Ying's oriental-themed runway show *Dayuanzhijing.Yuanmingyuan* in Paris

In the Chinese Spring Festival Gala of 2016, the performance of 'Zhongguo shanshui mei' (The Beauty of Chinese Landscape),²⁰⁴ which matches the concept of China Wind,²⁰⁵ was performed by three leading female artists and a number of other female performers in order to show the beauty of Chinese trees, mountains and waters.

The natural landscapes – the trees, mountains or waters, can be identified or perceived as specific genders within a particular context. For instance, in the case of Northwest Wind, the northern landscape is identified as masculine by both musicians and audiences. When the three female artists in 'The Beauty of Chinese Landscape' sang 'because I am beautiful, I am the Chinese landscape', the first-person narrative connected the senses of softness and femininity, elegance and beauty, of the landscape with themselves as women. Through the presentation of this song, the feminine image was constructed by these female performers to emphasise a soft form of vocal delivery, their delicate appearances, makeup and hair style, their clothing styles, which included long dresses and traditional women's Chinese style dress (i.e. *cheong-sam*), their tender gestures and dances (Figure 6.3) and, more importantly, **the connection with natural landscapes**. In other words, the sense of China Wind, in particular, the feeling of

²⁰⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DORjVgmdSAY>, accessed on 9th July, 2016

²⁰⁵ This particular song may sound different from typical China Wind pop songs; however, through its musical and visual materials, especially the stage design, the clothing style and the traditional *pingtan* form, it exhibits features of China Wind, and is perceived by most of my interviewees as a China Wind styled performance.

elegance and *weimei*, were linked tightly and delivered together to the audience not only through the soft sounds, gestures/behaviors or female bodies, but also the connection with the land or other natural geographical features (this will be discussed below).



Figure 6.3: the female performers and the China Wind settings of ‘The Beauty of Chinese Landscape’

From this it could be assumed that the elegance and beauty illustrated by China Wind music should also be appropriate for delivery to the audience by female singers. Therefore, the question is then raised as to **why female singers seem to be marginalised in the China Wind scene?** Interviewee Patrick (a male overseas postgraduate student), a big fan of Jay Chou, provided an impression of China Wind music that may provide a clue with regards to the male singers’ domination of this musical form.

Na: Earlier you mentioned that China Wind delivers a specific feeling to you, which not only impresses you but also was the main reason why you like China Wind songs. What is the feeling?

Patrick: It is the felling of *xiagu rouqing* (chivalrous tenderness). Actually, I think it is also the main theme of China Wind music, especially Jay Chou’s China Wind works.

Na: How do you get the feeling/theme of chivalrous tenderness?

Patrick: I get the feeling through the narrative of music videos. Most of Jay Chou’s music videos are stories about *jianghu/wuxia* (swords), and there is a

man in the music videos who is the hero and saves his lovers/friends/country. The male hero shows the sense of chivalrous tenderness.

Na: Ok. If the narrative of music videos is the key factor, do you think the lyrics also contribute to producing this feeling? Do you think the lyrics match the theme when you watch the music videos?

Patrick: Well, I think in some songs, like 'Huo yuan jia' and 'Nunchaks', the lyrics directly show the theme of martial arts chivalry. But there are a few irrelevant ones, like 'Blue and White Porcelain'. The lyrics are not specifically linked with martial arts but love stories. If I only read the lyrics, I won't get the sense of chivalrous tenderness directly.

Although Patrick perceived chivalrous tenderness as the main feeling of Jay Chou's China Wind music, based on the previous lyrical analysis, the symbolic lyrics of Chou's works, which create the artistic concept of this style, do not really focus on the theme of martial arts/swords, although a few songs are hero-themed, as Patrick mentioned. Patrick, however, did not mention the sense of chivalrous tenderness when we were discussing the lyrics of China Wind songs. This particular impression was created and delivered to him mainly through the image and the narrative of the music videos, which strongly influenced his sense of judgment of China Wind because the lyrics and sounds are not closely related to the idea of chivalrous tenderness. In other words, the poetic lyrics and the sound from many China Wind songs neither construct a certain male sexuality nor a specific image of masculinity. They may not even create a specific gender, as the interviewee Xingyu (a female PhD candidate studying in the UK) indicates:

If we only pick up the melody and lyrics of China Wind songs, I think these songs can be sung by either female singers or male singers. They do not have a certain gender until the image or narrative of music videos tells us that.

The description of men and women (as subjects) in the lyrics of most China Wind songs, especially Chou's works, which Xingyu references, is vague. For example, 'me' or 'you' in the lyrics of 'East Wind Breaks', 'Blue and White Porcelain' or 'Fireworks Faded' do not refer to a specific gender identity. Instead, they are interchangeable and 'me' or 'you' could refer to both men and women. However, when the song was referencing the sword scenes and the heroic narrative, the text not only indicates the gender of the subjects – 'me' is the male hero and 'you' refers to the female beauty – it also implies gendered images for these subjects, for example, the male hero as being masculine.

In Chinese society, heroes, swords and martial arts are not only considered to be representations of masculinity but also imply a specific role and form that should be conducted by men based

on traditional Chinese cultural values.²⁰⁶ Traditional culture and values are fundamental elements of China Wind music and influence the musical characteristics of this musical style. They also construct a particular image and sexuality of male and female roles in the music video, such as hero/villain and hardness/masculinity, beauty and softness/femininity (Huang 2007: 8; this will be discussed later). For instance, the female journalist Zhou Yijun, in the program *Behind the Headlines with Wen Tao* on Phoenix Satellite Television, claims that: ‘who would like to watch women save men? What we call “*yingxiong jiu mei*” (hero rescues girl) certainly means men save women. That is something men should do.’ Zhou’s thoughts clearly indicate the perception of gender dynamics within Chinese cultural values that have been influenced by Chinese traditional culture (i.e. women-soft-femininity and men-hard-masculinity). This specific approach to producing China Wind music videos relates this musical form with the concept of Chinese style and also distinguishes it from other expressional modes of Chinese style popular music (e.g. Northwest Wind music). The heroic, martial arts theme suggests one reason for the male singers’ domination of this style. However, what China Wind music presents is a much more complicated gendered image than this can fully explain.

II. Bifurcated modes of masculinity (*Wu/Wen* duality) of China Wind music

J. Halberstam suggests that masculinity is constructed based on its tight link with maleness while at the same time various alternative versions of masculinities have emerged (1998: 2). Although the alternative versions of masculinities analyzed in Halberstam’s book are linked with queer or female masculinity, which is not exactly what China Wind music involves, the understandings of masculinity and especially the construction of different modes of masculinity are still useful in the case of China Wind, for example, the **Wu** and **Wen** male gender types presented by male characters and performers of this style. Kam Louie and Louise Edwards point out that *wen* and *wu* ‘specifically refer to Zhou Wen Wang and Zhou Wu Wang’ – two ancient kings of the Zhou period, whose ‘personality traits and governing techniques’

²⁰⁶ It should be noted that the perception of gender could be very different from what Chinese gender traditions illustrate. In traditional China, men can perform female roles and women can also perform male roles, especially in Chinese operas, on the basis of specific social conditions. However, the perception of the role may present a different understanding in the gender context as the Chinese gender tradition shows. For certain characters, such as *yingxiong*, *meiren* (hero and beauty) or *caizi jiarren* (gifted scholars and beautiful ladies) in traditional Chinese literatures or martial novels, their images are created based on gender differences in order to show the male-female love stories. The Chinese audience not only perceived them as feminine/masculine images, more importantly, they linked this femininity/masculinity directly with the gender specifics. In other words, the beauty and hero were naturally referred to as women and men respectively based on the perception of Chinese traditional culture. And that might be the reason why these characters are rarely performed by opposite sex performers, especially in screen-based works. For instance, the role of the hero in Chinese movies/television series/music videos are largely performed by men and those role emphasising beauty are dominated by women.

resulted in two models to rule people, whereby ‘Wen Wang used culture to rule and Wu Wang relied on military power’ (1994:140). Other scholars, for example, Gao Mingshi, claims that the emergence of *wen* and *wu* concept can be traced back to the Warring States Era (while some, e.g. Shuo Xuehan, claim that the emergence of this concept in China cannot be dated back) and was developed influentially in the Tang Dynasty, where these two terms had often been used for distinguished officials – *wen* (scholar-officials) and *wu* (military-officials) – based on their different talents (2007: 201-206).

Therefore, the *wen* and *wu* is a conceptual pair that applied to construct and shape Chinese masculinity. *Wen* is often used to imply ‘cultured behavior, refinement, mastery of scholarly works’, while *wu* indicates qualities of ‘martial prowess, strength, mastery of physical arts’ (Louie and Edwards 1994; Louie 2002; Brownell and Wasserstrom 2002:28). The *wu-wen* concept will be explored further in the following sections in relation to the theme of softness and hardness. In addition, the presentation of *wu* and *wen* masculinities also indicate how the production and perception of Chineseness and cultural characteristics have been linked with the voice of the nation in a gendered way through a broader context (this will be explained in the concluding chapter).

Wu, hardness and the male hero

The hardness in China Wind music was mainly delivered to the audience through the male hero of the martial arts world and his sword. In some songs like ‘Huo yuan jia’, and ‘Nunchaks’, the lyrics have already paid explicit attention to the description of the martial arts spirit and established a strong male image (as per the two examples illustrated below). Therefore, the visual materials also follow the theme, reflecting the heroic story. The male hero in these kinds of music videos was set to a hard masculine image: he is portrayed as very powerful and aggressive and the best person to save the people or country (Figure 6.4). The hero was primarily played by male performers, usually the male singers themselves (as previously analysed in Chou’s works) in order to strengthen the masculine image of the Taiwan-based male singers and to imbue their persona with a sense of Chineseness.

Partial lyrics of ‘Nunchaks’²⁰⁷

什么兵器最喜欢 双截棍柔中带刚
想要去河南嵩山 学少林跟武当
What weapon do I like the most?
The Nunchucks, gentle yet firm
I want to go to Henan Sung Mountain
To learn *Shao-lin* and *Wu Tang*
...
我打开任督二脉
东亚病夫的招牌
已被我一脚踢开
I open the doors to the marshal post
East Asia sick man's sign
Has already been kicked out of the way by me
...
习武之人切记 仁者无敌
A martial artist should keep in mind
The virtuous one has no enemies

Partial lyrics of ‘Huo yuan jia’

生死状 赢了什么 冷笑着
天下谁的 第一又如何
止干戈 我辈尚武德
The death consent
What have I won?
Smiling coldly
Who owns the world?
So what if you are number one
Stop the war
My generation still has martial virtues

我的 拳脚了得 却奈何
徒增虚名一个
江湖难测 谁是强者
谁争一统武林的资格
My punches and kicks are excellent
Yet how come
I receive an undeserved reputation
Jiang Hu is hard to predict
Who is the strongest?
Who fights for the right to rule over *Wu Lin*?

²⁰⁷ Lyrics of the songs ‘Nunchaks’ and ‘Huo yuan jia’ are from: <http://jaychoustudio.com/jay-chou-translations/nunchuks/19>, accessed on 10th July, 2016.



Figure 6.4: the hard image of the hero (still images from Chou's China Wind music videos)

It isn't only Chou. The idea of a hero and martial arts spirit is shared by other singers in order to illustrate the masculinity of Chinese popular music. For instance, Leehom Wang's 'Huo li quan kai' (Open Fire).²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-uUdbCR32I>, accessed on 10th July, 2016. Technically, the musical materials of this particular song cannot fully be considered as a typical China Wind song (though the use of Chinese traditional drums shows the Chinese flavour, which may match the sense of China Wind). However, based on the theme of the Chinese martial arts through the text and the visual materials, it somehow meets the concept of China Wind form and exhibits distinct Chineseness.

Partial lyrics from ‘Open Fire’

打倒帝国主义 Down with imperialism
不愿再做奴隶 Do not want to be slaves
我家大门被入侵 Our door has been compromised

你说 LADY 卡卡 You say Lady Gaga
我说何必怕她 I say don't be afraid of her
喔喔喔喔喔 oh oh oh oh oh
别向她们磕头 Do not kowtow to them

So many accusations
of an Asian invasion
Here they come a point'n fingers at me
preyin'on a mass emotion
Stirrin'up a big commotion
trying to assign responsibilities

Gonna stop this negativity
turn it into positivity with integrity
Giving all of me
for all to see
This fight for equality
but even if they blame us
Try to frame us but nobody can shame us
I'm a sing this next verse in Chinese

The lyrics of ‘Open Fire’ illustrate one central feature of Wang’s approach to showing the masculinity and hardness in his brand of Chinese style popular music: he constructs the hero as a collective, like the Chinese ethnic people; ‘*huaren*’. Chou’s related works usually present a certain hero, an individual image rather than a community to illustrate the sense of hardness in his music. However, Wang, based on his cultural background, prefers to portray the Chinese hero as a Chinese spirit instead of a specific person (e.g. ‘Hail to Huaren’). He does this to strengthen and link his own masculinity and Chineseness as an Asian-American singer.

Wang said that the music video of this particular song portrays a Chinese martial arts scene in order to match the theme of the text and espouse a positive Chinese spirit. He learnt some of the Chinese *gongfu* moves from Jackie Chan, the legendary male hero of Chinese *gongfu* movies. Wang, in the music video of this particular song, performs the role of a fighter who tries to save the Chinese national spirit. Through Wang’s physique, such as his manly body and powerful *gongfu* poses and moves, his all-black clothing style, fierce appearance and the action scenes (Figure 6.5), the sense of hardness is explicitly presented the visual dimensions of his performance. Meanwhile, the loud and powerful sound of the Chinese traditional drums, dancing and male aggressors, especially those female dancers dressed in an androgynous way as male dancers, all strengthen the display of hard masculinity (Figure 6.6), despite Wang’s vocal delivery in this song, his soft tone, falsetto voice and high-pitched sound, somehow

reduce the hardness of the masculinity presented in the text and the music video.

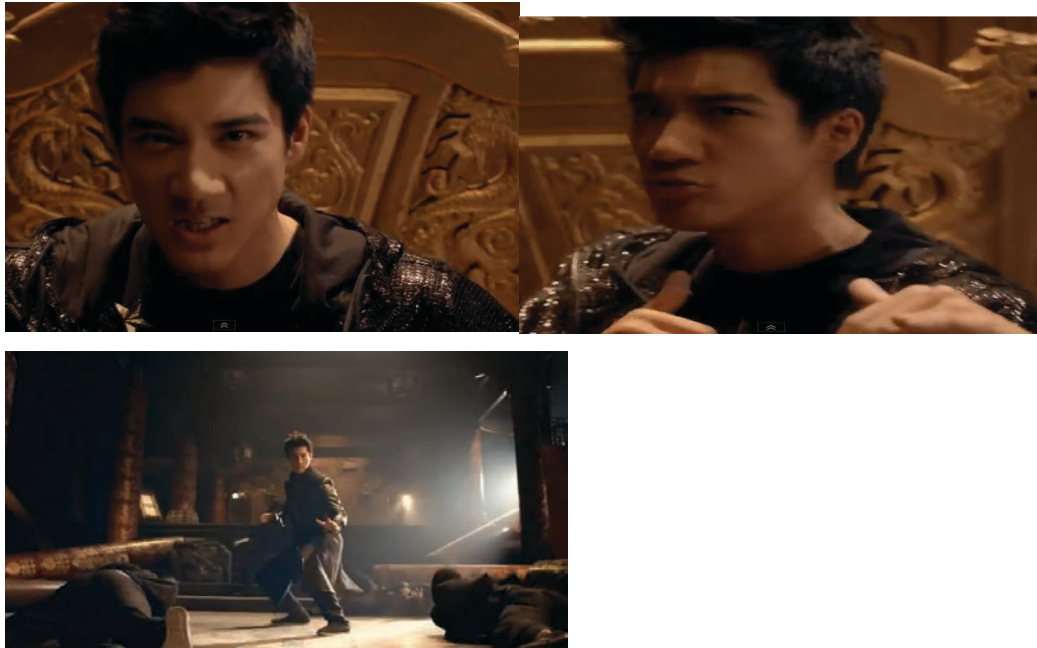


Figure 6.5: Wang's angry and tough appearances and the hard image as a male fighter

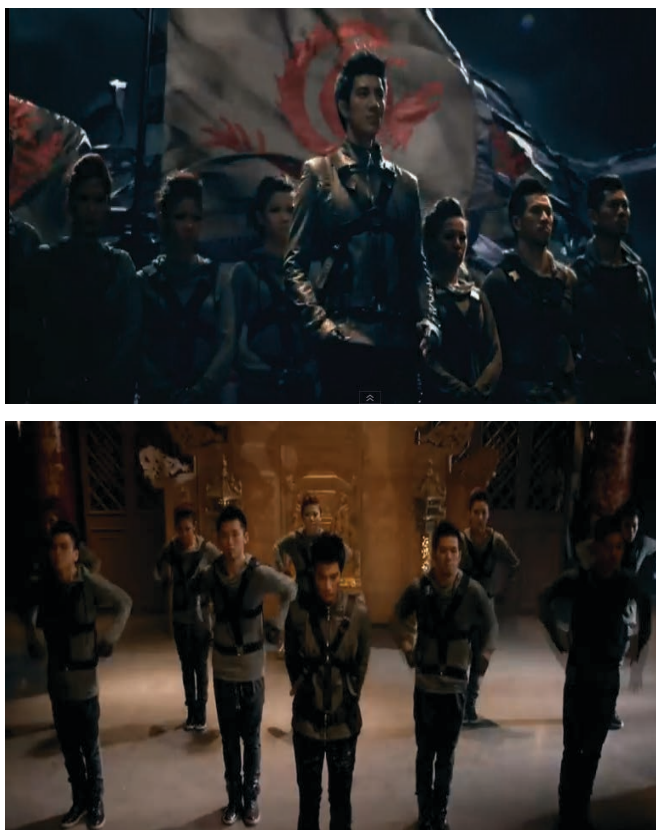


Figure 6.6: the male dancers and the manly female dancers

Not only do the music videos of this style present a specific masculine image, the live performances also illustrate a hard image of masculine sexuality. This can be seen for example in the performance of ‘Open Fire’ on Leehom Wang’s 2012 global tour in Chengdu²⁰⁹ and Jay Chou’s live performance of ‘Huo yuan jia’ in 2007.²¹⁰

Before Wang started his performances in the concert, the screen showed a short video as a prelude to the first song, ‘Open Fire’. The prelude depicted a story of hero rescuing a girl, which is exactly the same as the main topic in sword-based China Wind songs. Wang, performing as the hero, took the form of a superhero who had superpowers to repel gun attacks and save the weak girl (Figure 6.7). This particular prelude has been made a keynote of Wang’s performance, thus illustrating the hardness of masculinity. The live performance of ‘Open Fire’ started with a strong Chinese drum solo (i.e. an imagery of masculinity) performed by four male performers. Wang in the performance was dressed in an all-red clothing style, standing on a tank and posing like Superman (Figure 6.8), clearly showing the masculine image of a super hero. His female dancers though did not wear exactly the same clothes as the male dancers, they were dressed as soldiers and were energetic and powerful and dancing in the same powerful way as the male dancers (Figure 6.9).



Figure 6.7: Wang’s superhero image

²⁰⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOwUI3QZ-tw>, accessed on 24th July, 2016.

²¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KL8-5dbZ1Dc>, accessed on 24th July, 2016.



Figure 6.8: Wang's Superman look in the performance

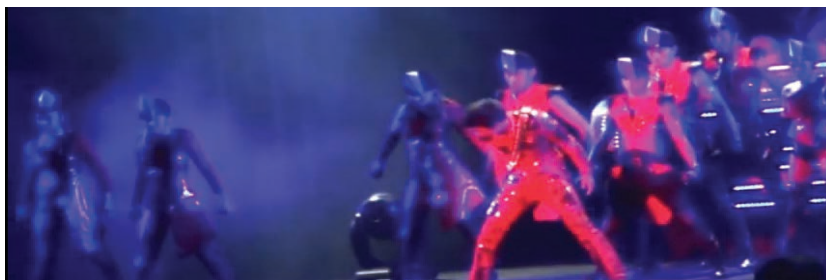


Figure 6.9: the powerful female soldiers

Similarly, Chou's performance of 'Huo yuan jia' in 2007 (during his global tour) also began with a powerful Chinese drum solo to imply the sense of masculinity. Based on the strong beats of the drums, the b-boys started to perform breakdances during the intro to the song (Figure 6.10). Chou, in this performance, kept a cool and chic image²¹¹ as the hero Huo Yuanjia (the

²¹¹ As mentioned in Chapter 5, when cool is linked with men, the meaning of cool is associated with *wu* masculinity and stresses the sense of hardness.

leading male role in the movie), wearing golden outfits and performing a Chinese fan (Figure 6.11). The whole performance looked similar to the music video. The male performers, who dominated in this performance, presented themselves through multiple masculine imageries. Only in the section of the song when Chou was singing in the Peking operatic style did the female performers appear on the stage. However, it is interesting to note that although Chou sang with a nasal and girly voice, which could create a particular sense of femininity based on the specific sound delivery and the Chinese operatic tradition (although audiences did not perceive this tradition in these songs as discussed in preceding chapters), his female dancers were dressed in an androgynous way as male dancers (Figure 6.12), i.e. in all black clothing style. Of particular note was the way that these female performers wrapped their hair and performed a fan dance that exuded hardness and masculinity. The combination of the soft sound and male singer, female performers and their masculine image in the operatic section indicates the idea of *yin* and *yang*: soft and hard on the one hand, feminine and masculine on the other hand. At the end of the song, Chou delivered a Chinese fan performance²¹² and led his male dancers to the center of the stage. Their dancing or walking style – Chou was the leader of the group and his male dancers were more like Chou’s attendants (Figure 6.13) – portrayed an image of gang activities, which are perceived as a form of hard masculinity that appeared in many of his sword-based China Wind music videos (e.g. ‘Nunchunks’).



Figure 6.10: b-boys and breakdance

²¹² Although fans might not be frequently used or played as an item for men in some regions in the West, in traditional and modern China it is not unusual for men to use fans, especially those which are sector shaped without handles (as those used in Chou’s performance) while the round shaped fans with handles are normally used by women.



Figure 6.11: Chou's cool image



Figure 6.12: the masculine image of female dancers with their fan dance



Figure 6.13: Chou and his male dancers (the feeling of gang activities)

The presentation of Wang and Chou's sword or heroic-based China Wind music videos and live performances mainly constructed the macho man image and the strong link between male gender, power and masculinity, which catalogued the hard male hero as *wu* (emphasizing martial/physical abilities) in line with the Chinese male gender stereotype. As Connell and Pearse (2014) suggest, there is bidirectional relationship between culture and biology because we embody socially constructed gender roles, which in turn influence our cultural beliefs and, whether temporarily or permanently, mean that our bodies and cultural ideals are perpetuated. The general portrayal of the macho hero – tough, strong and manly – also illustrates how the male hero's body (or men's bodies in a broader sense) is dictated by cultural ideals of gender

(e.g. Buysse and Embser-Herbert 2004), i.e. *wu* masculinity, with the traditional Chinese cultural impact in the China Wind case. However, in addition to the *wu* masculinity, the lyrics and the narrative of the music videos and male singers' multiple expressions of vocals (such as soft delivery and Peking operatic voices), as well as the display of their physicality in the production of China Wind music, also point towards the construction of softness and tenderness amongst the male singers. These musical, lyrical and visual elements indicate another Chinese male gender type, *wen* (sophisticated). *Wen* is distinct from *wu* masculinity in so much as it emphasizes a greater sense of gentleness and tenderness (Groenewegen 2011: 108).

Wen, softness and the male hero

Although the hard image of masculine sexuality is commonly illustrated with reference to the male hero's physical ability (swords) and his expression of the national spirit through text and images, for many other China Wind ballads, for example 'Blue and White Porcelain', the sword and action scenes and the heroic stories are also used to portray the softness and tenderness of the male hero. As Stock (2016: 20) suggests 'action scenes work somewhat like music, dance and formation of gender itself – e.g. performative and expressive.' In fact, Patrick's feeling of 'chivalrous tenderness' has already highlighted the two contrasting modes of masculinity of the male role in the heroic narratives of China Wind music: the hard (chivalrous) and the soft (tender) versions, for example, Chou's recent representative China Wind hit 'Worldly Tavern'.

Partial lyrics from 'Worldly Tavern'

快马在江湖里厮杀
无非是名跟利放不下
心中有江山的人岂能快意潇洒
我只求与你共华发
Post-horse, they are slaughtering each other in the Jiang Hu (martial world)
It's all because they can't let go of the fame and fortune
How can people who have the kingdom in their hearts be pleased and unaffected
All I seek is to be with you until we have grey hair

剑出鞘恩怨了 谁笑
我只求今朝拥你入怀抱
红尘客栈风似刀 骤雨落宿命敲
任武林谁领风骚
我却只为你折腰
The sword is unsheathed, the gratuities and grudges are resolved, who smiles
All I seek at present is to hold you in my arms
No matter who leads the Wulin with excellence, I will only bow for you

The lyrics describe a love story that is framed by a sword in the background. As mentioned

above, the description of ‘me’ and ‘you’ in many China Wind ballad songs ambiguously indicates gender identity and sexuality. However, in this particular song, though ‘me’ and ‘you’ do not explicitly show either male and female identity, the description of their behaviors, for instance ‘All I seek at present is to hold you in my arms’, or ‘I will only bow for you’, allows Chinese audiences to link ‘me’ and ‘you’ with men and women respectively, as Lin states:

When I read the lyrics of this song, I can very naturally put myself in the position of “you”, because I think “you” implies women. Unlike other songs e.g. ‘Blue and White Porcelain’, this particular song indicates the gender identities in a more sensible way; the descriptions of “me” and “you” are linked with certain masculine and feminine behaviors, like “you cried like a flower”.

If the lyrics of this song have set up the specific genders for these two figures, i.e. ‘me’ and ‘you’, as Lin states, the discussion of martial arts then positions ‘me’ as the male hero due to the male perspective. In addition, the sword narrative of the music video further shapes the degree of masculinity of the hero based on his tender behaviors.

The music video of ‘Worldly Tavern’ is set in the traditional Chinese sword world. The presentation of this music video looks similar to Chou’s other hit song ‘Blue and White Porcelain’, which focuses on the love between a hero and a beauty (including the essential character, the villain). The ending of these two songs are also almost set in a similar way; the woeful hero is trying to save the beauty but gets killed by the villain.²¹³ Although the hero in this type of China Wind music video still presents masculine sexuality, it is different from the powerful and aggressive masculine image portrayed hero in songs like ‘Huo yuan jia’, ‘Nunchaks’ or ‘Open Fire’. Instead, the woeful hero here is more gentle and soft; he is more tender and caring towards women (Figure 6.14), especially when he finally dies for love (Figure 6.15). His hardness and power are directly weakened and audiences then perceive the sorrowful and vulnerable expressions of the male role to be as distinctive as his swords. In other words, through the transformation of the male hero’s physical image – initially focused around strength, but latterly focused upon his ‘personality’ i.e. his sentimental and emotional behaviours and strong expression of gentleness and tenderness – the male hero here shows features of *wen* masculinity.

²¹³ Although the lyrics of the song ‘Blue and White Porcelain’ are not tightly linked with the concept of martial arts chivalry, Chou used this specific theme to build the masculine sexuality of this song.



Figure 6.14: the soft hero in 'Worldly Tavern'



Figure 6.15: the powerless male hero

The contradictory male role of the villain

In addition to the hero and the beauty, the villain also plays an important role to enhance the tension of the narrative of China Wind songs. This specific role is also used to highlight the gender qualities of the other two characters: the powerfulness or tenderness of the male hero and the powerlessness and vulnerability of the female beauty.

Compared to the male hero who single-handedly saves the beauty or kills enemies, the male

villain is not alone. He is the leader of the gang. The status (gang boss) and the gang activities and behaviors performed by this male role(s) heighten the image of hard masculine sexuality (Figure 6.16) in China Wind songs. However, the image of the villain is not fixed; this particular role is shaped by a strong-weak contradictory masculine image in China Wind music videos.

In some sword/martial arts-based music videos, ‘Nunchaks’ for example, though the villain has a fierce-look (Figure 6.17) and shows his physical abilities, he is still subdued by the male hero. When he is defeated by the male hero, he adopts the image of a hopeless loser. Not only is his hardness weakened but there is also a stress on the hard masculinity of the male hero – the powerful winner.



Figure 6.16: the scenes of gang activities



Figure 6.17: the fierce look of the villain

In contrast, in the love-themed sword narratives, the image of the villain is no longer useless,

but instead is formed in a stronger way. In comparison with the soft male hero, who is handsome, fit and well proportioned i.e. the image of *wen* males, the villain looks more wild and rough (Figure 6.18) and is more like *wu* males. In addition to his appearance, the villain's hardness and strong masculinity is also produced by showing his powerful status. On the one hand, the villain can use the beauty as a 'bargaining chip' to force the male hero to serve him (like the story of 'Blue and White Porcelain'), on the other hand he has the power to dominate the fate of the male hero or the beauty. His ability to control presents a hard image of this male role and also shapes the particular images of the helpless beauty and the tender hero.



Figure 6.18: the wild and rough look of the villain

III. The presentation of femininity in China Wind

The feminine image of the beauty

If China Wind music shows the construction of the hardness of this style because of the way that masculinity is presented by male characters, in sword scenes and in the heroic text, the varying modes of masculinity then indicate that the hardness and masculinity of China Wind is associated with the beauty, which activates the male hero's toughness or tenderness and the villain's hardness. The beauty, performed by female performers, is used as the main figure to depict the soft and feminine image of this style.

The image of female beauties in China Wind music is frequently presented in a traditional Chinese appearance (Figure 19).²¹⁴ The elegant hair and clothing style, delicate appearance

²¹⁴ Visuals from Jay Chou's ('Blue and White Porcelain', 'Worldly Tavern', 'Hair Like Snow' and 'Firework Faded Away')

and their tender behaviors,²¹⁵ and especially the display of the beauty's fragile and weak body (i.e. their sense of helplessness and powerlessness, Figure 6.20) present a dominant feminine image of this female role in the narrative with Chinese traditional cultural values.



Figure 6.19: the soft images of female beauties in China Wind songs



Figure 6.20: the presentation of powerless beauty (the construction of softness and femininity)

and David Tao's ('Susan Says') China Wind music videos.

²¹⁵ Such as wiping away the sweat of the hero in the video of 'Worldly Tavern'.

Through these symbolized characters, the images that are presented by China Wind music tighten the relationship between this particular style and traditional Chinese cultures, showing the concept's (i.e. Chinese style) return to the traditional cultural system compared with the 'rebelliousness' of traditional culture in Shanghainese Pops.

Weimei, softness and femininity

Compared to the sense of hardness and masculinity, which is delivered to the audience in a direct aural or visual way, the sense of softness and femininity, and especially the feeling of *weimei*, that were frequently mentioned by interviewees (as we saw in the beginning of this chapter) seems to be delivered through a more psychological route. The slow tempo, assuasive bass line, tender melody and the soft vocal delivery of male singers produce the soft sound of China Wind music, whereas the poetic lyrics allow audiences to imagine a feminine and *weimei* image of this musical form due to the sense of softness and elegance. As Lin states:

I know China Wind songs are primarily sung by male musicians as we talked about earlier, however, I don't think China Wind represents a typical masculine image. When I heard China Wind ballad songs, what I saw in my mind was not a hard image but the image of softness and elegance. The lyrics, the Chinese tunes and the love stories let me see variety of *weimei* images in my mind, which is more like a picture of femininity because they are so soft.

Although it conjured up imagination of Chinese images or imageries, the soft tones and the love story may not refer to femininity directly, since Lin did not mention a specific feminine figure that she 'saw' (indeed, maybe it was not one fixed image). However, her words, once again, link the sense of softness, *weimei* and femininity with the China Wind style. Furthermore, when the perception related to softness or *weimei*, the sense of femininity is created even if the male performers kept a tough or manly image in the performance.

An example of this is Chou's live performance of 'Blue and White Porcelain' in Song Zuying's Taipei Concert 2011.²¹⁶ In order to match the flavour of this particular song, the stage was set

²¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJ7MxeXrFko>, accessed on 24th July 2016.

to a China Wind style and was full of porcelain images (Figure 6.21). Although Chou presented his masculine image using the black and white suit, black billycock and his rough appearance (e.g. the moustache) (Figure 6.22), the overall performance can hardly be identified with as a presentation of masculinity, because of the sound, stage settings and the screen images.



Figure 6.21: the China Wind style stage of this live performance



Figure 6.22: Chou's cool look

The soft sound delivery, especially when it came to the instrumental sound and poetic lyrics, were cited by the interviewees as the source of the sense of softness of this performance. Meanwhile, the photos on the screen showed how women, beauty and femininity have been associated with this China Wind song more directly. In order to reveal the multiple imageries that are hidden in the symbolic lyrics, the central screen hosted a variety of traditional Chinese images, including Chinese traditional paintings that depict natural landscapes (these were similar to *Shanshui* paintings) and typically traditional paintings of beautiful women (Figure 6.23). In this live performance, the delivery of the sense of China Wind, and especially the way that femininity, softness and beauty were portrayed, was not just through the presentation of

female bodies or images, but the connection with natural landscapes. Hence, **the linkage between Chinese natural landscapes and the gender dynamics is once again highlighted**, as the stage performance of ‘The Beauty of Chinese Landscapes’ (discussed earlier in this chapter) indicated. In the case of Northwest Wind, audiences’ perceptions of masculinity, or some of their interpretations of the gendered image of this musical form, are substantially influenced by the geographical features of the land (Northwest China). While in the case of China Wind, even though audiences’ perceptions are not linked with natural landscapes directly, the particular sensations received by them (e.g. soft or *weimei*) are connected with some natural elements.

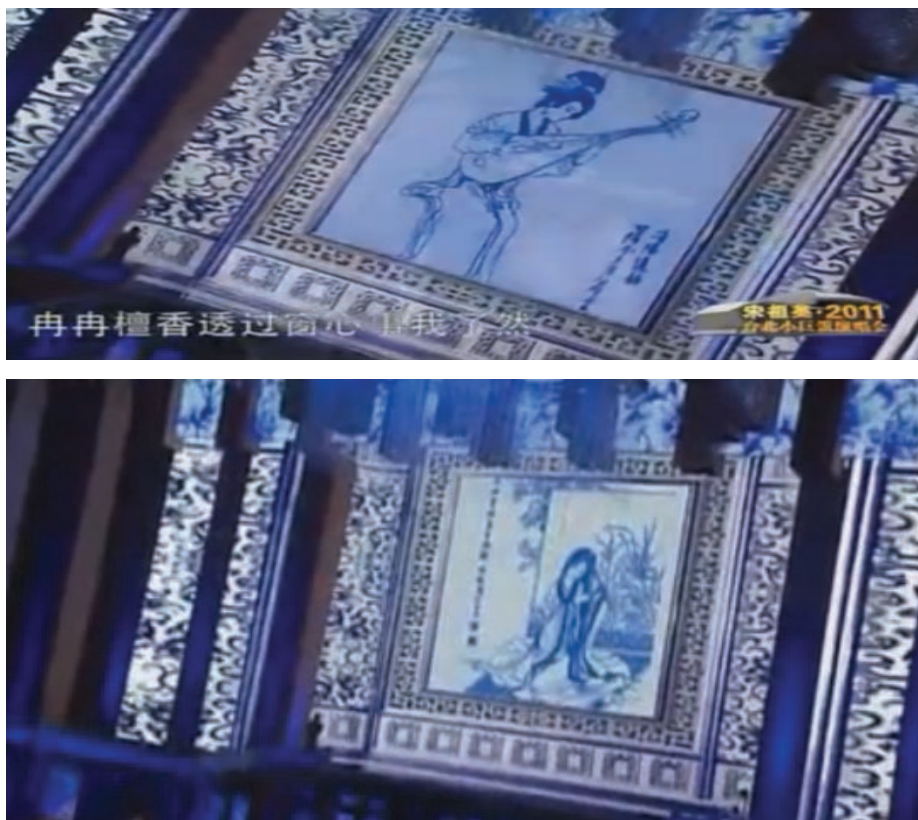


Figure 6.23: paintings of beauty

IV. Tenderness and the tender male identity

In contrast to the certainty (for Xiaoyu) in identifying Shanghainese Pops as being feminine and Northwest Wind as being masculine, the interviewee Xiaoyu (a male PhD student in the UK) expressed his discomfort in labelling images in China Wind music as either feminine or masculine.

Xiaoyu: I don't think we can use feminine or masculine to describe China Wind music. The sound is soft, the text is *weimei*, but I don't think these elements can refer to a feminine or masculine image. I don't feel femininity or masculinity in China Wind songs, and I don't think these musical and textual materials can be identified to a feminine image even if they are soft and tender.

Na: If the sense of softness, *weimei* or tenderness in China Wind music cannot be used to imply femininity, then why do you identify Shanghainese Pops as a feminine style since you got the same feeling; "softness and tenderness"?

Xiaoyu: ... Well... Shanghainese Pops are mainly sung by female singers and the melodies of these songs are very soft, these female singers also performed in a soft way [vocal and performance], so I get the sense of femininity. Similarly, when you mentioned Northwest Wind, I immediately thought of the rough image of the region and the hardness of *xibei hanzi* (north-western men). And the music, for example, the loud and energetic sound delivery of the song 'Hills of Yellow Earth' (especially the male version) matches the hard image of the place, people and the local lifestyle, so I get the sense of masculinity of Northwest Wind. But China Wind is different; I don't have a certain image in my mind when I hear these songs. Even though many of them sound very tender and soft, it's inappropriate to use femininity to define this style, it's just *shiqing huayi* (a poetic illusion).

The ambiguity in terms of how Xiaoyu relates his perceptions of softness and tenderness with femininity is on the one hand caused by his cultural understanding of men-masculinity and women-femininity that was revealed during the interview, but on the other hand is due to the feeling of tenderness and of tender men. For him, the fact that the softness of Shanghainese Pops or the hardness of Northwest Wind can be used to imply femininity and masculinity respectively is because of the unity of the performers' gender and the performance style (in Shanghainese Pops), or the connection between vocal quality/instrumental style and natural and cultural features of the land (in Northwest Wind). When China Wind music is dominated by male singers, the softness presented by this particular musical form cannot be used to refer to femininity because it is 'uncomfortable' to link male singers and femininity (though softness does not exactly mean femininity), even though the soft sensation is not fully presented by the male singers.²¹⁷ This is especially true for Jay Chou, who has established a cool masculine public image through his Chou style popular music, though his voice and image in China Wind ballads show a sense of tenderness. However, for most of my interviewees, this tenderness did not imply femininity. As Xiaoyu states: 'I feel comfortable to hear China Wind ballads performed by male singers in a soft way, they can deliver the emotions of songs smoothly. But

²¹⁷ However, what Xiaoyu (and other interviewees) does not realize is that the specific senses he has perceived from these songs, either soft, tender or poetic, are still produced by male musicians.

they [male singers] are not feminine, just tender.’

Moskowitz points out that ‘the term tender is another example of the complex gender alignments in Mandopop songs’...though it does not match Western standards of masculinity because the ‘male stands for antitraditionalism in portraying vulnerable, non-patriarchal men’... ‘in Mandopop these men cannot be considered as less masculine’ (2010:73). When it comes to China Wind music, my mainland audiences’ perceptions further demonstrate the complexity between tenderness, femininity and masculinity, as Moskowitz argues, and also illustrate the ambivalent and subtle feelings of tenderness, softness and effeminate sensibilities of male singers. As the interviewee Lin states:

Though I get the sense of femininity and softness from China Wind music, I don’t think the male singers presented as feminine or androgynous images, they are still masculine. When they deliver songs sorrowfully and softly, they are tender men, you know, they are more like those traditional *caizi* (gifted scholars).

In stressing the masculinity of China Wind male singers Lin references the different masculine qualities of *caizi*/gifted scholars, drawing on Chinese historical narratives, fictions and dramas (Song 2004; Louie 2002:58-77; Altenburger 2009: 36).²¹⁸ The term *caizi* in China, and especially in traditional China, is used to imply gifted men based on their literary or artistic talents, which I would associate with *wen* masculinity due to their shared characteristics of gentleness and tenderness (Groenewegen 2011: 108).²¹⁹ The interviewee Lin does not really consider China Wind male singers as gifted scholars, especially those male singers that are not portraying a ‘scholarly image’; however, the ancient Chinese vibe presented by this musical form, the traditional Chinese cultural settings (image), the traditional Chinese tunes (sound) and especially the poetic lyrics in traditional Chinese literary form (text) delivered by male singers, allow Lin to overlap the concept of *caizi*/male gifted scholar with the China Wind male musicians.

²¹⁸ As Song mentions ‘physically he [the *caizi*] is frail, delicate and handsome with feminine beauty. Although he is dedicated to love emotionally, he can also be vulnerable and easily be frustrated’ (2004: viii). My interviewees’ perceptions or impressions of *caizi* are deeply influenced by the depict of his physical characteristics and tender sensibilities through various visual elements (e.g. dramas, films or television series), while the power of *caizi* – the influential status of this figure and his impact on Chinese traditional culture (e.g. Confucius), is ‘ignored’ or ‘forgotten’ by most of the audiences in this context.

²¹⁸ In his research, Groenewegen distinguishes scholar and talent as two male types due to their different age range; talents are typically immature and youthful.

²¹⁹ In his research, Groenewegen distinguishes scholar and talent as two male types due to their different age range; talents are typically immature and youthful.

However, the softness and tenderness presented by China Wind male singers and performers are not perceived as effeminate. The majority of the interviewees in some manner referenced the softness of masculine men, due to the accompaniment of hardness and masculinity in the visual elements. If we reexamine the music video of 'Worldly Tavern', Chou does not show any powerful behaviors or aggressive activities as he does in his normal sword-based music videos, instead, he keeps expressing his sorrowful sensations through emotional and sentimental gestures (Figure 6.24). The softness from his gestures and his tender-soft vocal delivery create a sense of tenderness, which seems to be in opposition to the macho images of the hero or the villain character in the video. However, Chou's appearance and clothing style, the black leather gloves, the sleeveless top, and especially the explicit display of his body or physicality, with the screen highlighting his muscles (Figure 6.24), embody strength and masculinity. Therefore, in encapsulating hardness and softness in a stylized form through the visual effort of the performance, these elements create new forms of feeling and sensibility. In other words, Chou in this performance is perceived as a tender man by the audience, and his tenderness is not linked with femininity.





Figure 6.24: the softness and hardness of Chou's images in 'Worldly Tavern'

V. The image of China Wind: the harmony and balance between femininity and masculinity and between softness and hardness

Another important reason for Xiaoyu's uncertainty regarding the gendered image of this musical form is because of the imagined Chinese nation presented by China Wind music as discussed in Chapter 3. If Shanghainese Pops or Northwest Wind can be cataloged into a specific gendered image or gendered sensation by the audience due to the tight link between the musical form and the social life, for example the description of the songstress in Shanghainese Pops and the description of the rough landscape and local lifestyle in Northwest Wind, the symbolic lyrics and the Chinese imageries without defined local identification presented by China Wind songs not only separate the music and the generation (i.e. the real/social life), but also blur the image of China Wind, since it does not focus on a particular subject. For Xiaoyu, it is inappropriate to identify lyrics, Chinese imageries or the sense of poetry as feminine or masculine because they are not physical; they are not a person or a place and therefore he cannot link particular characters with certain images in his mind in the same way as he does with Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind music. Even though the male musicians portrayed different masculine images in love or sword-themed music videos and performances, the audience does not perceive a single gendered image but a complex sensation, like tenderness, *weimei* or poetry (illusion), which harmonizes soft and hard and feminine and masculine, in keeping with the symbol of *yin* and *yang*.

In Chou's live performance of 'Blue and White Porcelain' as mentioned above, even though

the soft instrumental sound and the paintings of beauties largely underpinned the audience's perception of China Wind as being feminine in this performance, when Chou's cool masculine image was presented (i.e. when he stood in front of these feminine beauties) and when his tender-cool vocal²²⁰ was accompanied by the soft instrumental sound, the image of this China Wind performance became mixed and harmonized. Similarly, with Wang's 'Open Fire', his high pitched voice, the soft tone and his use of falsettos all contribute to the softness of this particular song, even though presenting multiple masculine images and imageries as discussed above. Whether in Wang's music, Chou's live performance or musical works from other representative China Wind musicians, such as David Tao's 'Susan Says' and Kenji Wu's 'A General Order', the production and presentation of masculinity and femininity as well as softness and hardness were not isolated; indeed, they were associated with each other.

In conclusion, through the sword- and love-themed narratives of China Wind music videos and performances, various mode of masculinity have been illustrated with reference to male characters and performers. Although female singers are not central to the China Wind scene, the sense of femininity is not relegated to the margins due to the distinct female role (the beauty) and the softness and tender sensibility constructed by the musical, lyrical and visual materials. In addition, the 'double role' of male musicians and performers of China Wind music should be highlighted. Although audiences perceived Jay Chou, Leehom Wang or other male singers to be representative musicians of this musical form, the producer role of these China Wind male musicians failed to draw their attention. And while it was the symbolic lyrics that largely triggered audiences' sensations of *weimei* and softness, they 'forgot' the male identity of the lyricist, Vincent Fong, who wrote these 'beautiful poetic lyrics'.

Furthermore, whether Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind or China Wind, **all three case studies reflect a certain situation: men constructing or producing the music – lyrics, melodies, videos and staging.** What is particularly important, then, is that men working in these roles are producing: i) hyper-feminine images of the role of songstresses, ii) a hard sound or masculine form but that is ambiguously portrayed and perceived since women dominate this musical style (i.e. women are the representative singers), iii) *wu-wen* or tender masculinity with feminised women in 'supporting' roles. Some of this cultural production that derived from the idea of Chinese style is explicitly progressive, suggesting a new more westernized future (e.g.

²²⁰ According to my interviewees, Chou's vocal delivery in this performance is between tender and hard, it is *xiaosa* (chic/smart).

Shanghainese pops), some of it asserts elements about the reality of urbanising modernity (e.g. Northwest Wind), and some of it deals with the imaginary and psychological aspects of Chinese mythology and cultural history (e.g. China Wind). It is thus either regressive, populist or conservative in outlook. Therefore, musicians, lyricists and producers working within these production contexts are leveraging a large amount of varied material in order to either reiterate 'classical,' 'local' and 'conservative' gendered ideals (e.g. in China Wind), or to argue for progressive conceptualisations of gendered identities (e.g. Northwest Wind and Shanghainese Pops).

Conclusion: Between globalization and localization – historiography of Chinese style and the Chinese nation

According to Roger Dickinson, Ramaswami Harindranath and Olga Linne (1998), popular music becomes accepted by the masses because it corresponds to prevailing representations of sociocultural psychology. The different decoding positions and perceptions of the interviewees with regards to the concept of Chinese style reflect the sociocultural psychology that underpin their interpretations and ideologies. Rather than coming about as a result of the careful thought and logical thinking of theorists, sociocultural psychology is the main sentiment and the ideological status of a certain social stage of a particular community (Georgi Plekhanov, volume II original version 1956, Chinese translation version 1961: 272). It can be thus said that popular music provides a window into the public's social psychology. Consequently, the interviewees' decoding of Chinese style and, in particular, their interpretations of Chineseness, ethnicity, national and individual identity in this study, are also a reflection of social reality.

Modern popular music was not originally rooted in China. The three musical forms in this research all show the influence of different musical cultures which culminated in the production of the concept of Chinese style. Hence, the concept of 'transculturation' (Fernández 1995) should be emphasised. As Fernando Ortiz states, the word 'transculturation better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture (acculturation), but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture (deculturation). In addition, it carries the idea of the consequent creation of a new phenomenon: neoculturation' (1995:102-103). Therefore, transculturation involves a three-stage process, acquiring something from the 'new culture', losing part of the 'old culture' and then 'decomposing' these elements and re-constructing them (Li 2009:15). The outcome of transculturation in this research – fusions of Chinese-Western musical and cultural elements – has been illustrated in different ways as the main feature of Chinese style popular music.

In addition, throughout this research, the meaning of Chinese style is associated with different factors, based on different social, cultural and political contexts, along with audiences' changing and unchanging views on Chineseness or Chinese characteristics. The audiences' reception highlights that the decoding of Chinese style is strongly tied with: i) the presentation of 'authentic' Chinese musical and cultural elements along with the way they are imbued with Western popular elements; ii) the gender dynamics of popular Chinese musical forms – the beauty and strength of the nation, or the reflection of Chinese history (e.g. the interpretations of female singers of Shanghainese Pops); iii) the demonstration of the impact of Chinese culture (a historiography of Chinese popular music and Chinese nation); and iv) the presentation of nationalism and the 'Chinese identity' in the context of globalization and localization. The following sections will further discuss and conclude on how these different factors have influenced audiences' views of Chinese style popular music.

I. Negotiating Chinese style: authenticity and concerns with Western perceptions

From Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind to China Wind, the concept of Chinese style and the presentation of Chineseness and Chinese characteristics continue to play a strong role in the production of Chinese popular music. Indeed, as Ma Jiuyue,²²¹ the leader of the *Sounds of China* project stated when I interviewed him:

For me, if music uses Chinese musical or Chinese [traditional] cultural elements, it belongs to a concept, like Northwest Wind or China Wind. I don't think the title is important, there are many different titles in the development of our musical history, but it's a style, **it is Chinese style**. However, it's a historic process, Chinese style is built and shaped during the process. If you compared old and new Chinese [popular] music, even though they use the same concept, the same instruments, especially electronic instruments, they sound totally different. This is because we are improving during the process.

Much like the audiences who perceived Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind as three different ways of expressing the idea of Chinese style, the composer Ma also catalogued them as three branches of Chinese style based on the application of Chinese musical and cultural sources in the compositional mode. However, in addition to the Chinese musical materials that hugely dominated the sense of 'Chineseness', for both musicians and audiences,

²²¹ A Chinese composer and musician whose works dedicate to show the idea of new Chinese folk music.

an additional contribution to the concept of Chinese style is another (musical) culture that existed in musical production: Western popular elements. From the jazz features of Shanghainese Pops, rock elements of Northwest Wind or the hip-hop style of China Wind (and other popular styles), these Western popular musical materials accompanied the concept of Chinese style, and also helped shape and develop the link between the local and global elements of Chinese style popular music.

Authenticity and the ‘inward-looking’ nature of the Chinese style

Balancing Chinese cultural influences and Western popular elements is not unusual for Chinese musicians starting out in their musical careers, for instance, my interviewee Ma Jiuyue, who insists on producing new Chinese folk music.²²² The concept of Chinese style popular music, due to its emphasis on Chinese characteristics and Chineseness, uses a similar approach to present itself, based on the shared Chinese cultural and musical traditions of folk music. In this context, Chinese style has also struggled with the same issue – authenticity – when serving local and global markets, and received the same criticism from audiences and musicians as ‘world music’ has received (e.g. Feld 1994, 2000; Whitmore 2016).

In 2005, Leehom Wang invited Li Yan, the legendary Beijing opera performer, to collaborate on his album *Gaishi yingxiong* (Heroes of Earth). Wang states that:

I feel our Mandopop could be more international... I want to use popular music as the platform to introduce Chinese musical cultures.

Li: So you want to show the cultures of Beijing opera through your music?

Wang: Yes!²²³

Wang differs from Jay Chou or other Chinese cultural based musicians, who are ‘qualified’ by Chinese musical circles and audiences as the person suitable to present ‘authentic Chinese musical cultures’ on the basis of their identity or musical background. Wang’s multiple cultural backgrounds, by contrast, not only challenge his ability to present ‘real Chinese cultures’ but also lead to the audience questioning the ‘authenticity’ of his Chinese-Western popular songs. The interviewees, Jingwen and Peng (two university students who study in the UK) provide

²²² Many of his musical works are based on Chinese folk or traditional musical elements, but involved with Western popular musical materials.

²²³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxDFa8HsV9I>, between 26:00 to 27:50, accessed on 5th November, 2016

representative statements, backed up by others, to explain the reasons for their dislike of Wang's music. It was surprising to receive so many negative comments concerning Wang's music in my interviews, since Wang has an extremely large fan base and the comments on his social media accounts are mostly positive. However, my interviewees' reactions show the hidden attitudes of 'authentic Chineseness' behind Wang's popularity in the Greater Chinese community:

Peng: I don't like Wang's music, either his brand of China Wind songs or other western-Chinese pop songs. (Jingwen: Neither do I.)

Na: Why?

Peng: His songs are not touching, not mindful (*bu zouxin*). Especially those Chinese-Western pop songs, I don't think he really shows Chinese characteristics or cultures in the music, it's more like a musical pattern for him.

Jingwen: I agree, Wang's music is too westernized when he employs the Chinese style concept to establish his Chinese-Western brand, e.g. Chinked-out.

Na: But Chou's music also applies hip-hop style, like he rapped from the beginning to the end of the song 'Nunchaks', right? And you said Chou's rap style made you feel his music is not "common" Chinese pop music.

Peng: It's totally different between Wang and Chou's works. What Chou did is localize pop music within the Chinese style; his music reflects Chinese cultures and our lives. And he has frequently said that "Chinese [language] is the coolest!", so I not only understand it but am also moved by these songs. However, Wang's music, I don't get it, Chinese style is just used as a meaningless concept in his music, like his version of 'Descendants of Dragon'. I didn't even know it is the song of 'Descendants of Dragon' when I heard it. English verses, full of Western pop [style] presentations [music video], it doesn't look like a Chinese pop song! I don't understand where [this song] shows the feature of "descendants of dragon", neither musically nor culturally... similarly, I don't know where is the "home" he wants to get back to [the song 'Getting Home'], I don't feel the home means mainland China or even Taiwan though most people prefer to interpret it in that way...

Jinwen: I have the same feeling. His songs have lost the meaning of Chinese or Chineseness. It was a major problem when he claimed his music is involved with the concept of Chinese style or introducing Chinese musical cultures (e.g. Chinked-out). What we don't like is the way he has produced Chinese style [popular music] without showing the real Chinese characteristics.

The critiques from Jingwen and Peng indicate that much of what interviewees were concerned with is not the music itself (as both of them agree that Wang's music 'sounds good and he is a gifted musician for sure'), but rather **historiography** – how do we today inscribe the history of Chinese popular music? What makes them feel uncomfortable is the mismatched concept and the content in Wang's music; the fusion of Wang's Chinese-Western music fails in linking the music with audiences' expectations of the 'function' of Chinese style and also weakens the

presence of Chinese cultural influences – **the fusion is less ‘inward’ looking than expected** – which finally lead to their sense of a lack of authenticity of the concept of Chinese style.

According to Negus, ‘authenticity mediates social relations that have been “disembedded” out of their immediate experiential contexts . . . and provides a glimpse of how actual experience does connect (in whatever naive way) the invented tradition or codified real’ (1999:130). The interviewees (including Jingwen, Peng and also Patrick) repeated opinions about Wang’s music not merely by showing how two specific feelings – the music being too westernized and lacking a sense of being ‘with us’ (*peiban’gan*) – went against their interpretations of the meaning of Chinese style (even though Wang’s Chinked-out has been perceived as a branch of China Wind music),²²⁴ but also indicating a certain historiographical issue in light of the problems affecting the understanding of authenticity – i.e. **how Chinese audiences today perceive the authenticity of music from earlier years or periods.**

As mentioned previously, Shanghainese Pops is also perceived as a ‘foreign flavored’ musical style. However, the majority of my interviewees stated that ‘it is still a Chinese styled musical form’. The strong presence of jazz (swing) in Shanghainese Pops was not interpreted as ‘too westernized’ like Wang’s music, because it was linked with the specific war-time social conditions of Shanghai and people’s real social life and emotions in that era. The fusion of Chinese-Western musical sources evoked audiences’ emotions since ‘every Chinese person has experienced that painful time’ (for audiences in that era) and ‘it was our histories, our cultural memories’ (for the younger generation). As Louise Meintjes states, ‘memories, like history, create a sense of continuity for an individual. Usually this continuity unifies the individual self with her or his personal past. By collapsing these domains a step further, that is by making two additional steps of inference, the national and personal histories are rendered iconic with each other’ (1990:52).

Therefore, even the perception of Shanghainese Pops links with various Western cultural influences, such as jazz ensemble or Big Band, the connection between the specific social environment and the music, successfully negotiated audiences’ ‘uncomfortable sensations’ (e.g. lacking a sense of being ‘with us’) with regard to the meaning of Chinese style. In other words, audiences’ interpretations of ‘authenticity’ in some cases is not tightly connected with direct

²²⁴ Though this sensation might be against by Wang’s fans who ‘definitely’ feel the sense of accompanying.

Chinese musical characteristics, such as Chinese traditional or folk tunes and instruments, but with the presentation of sociocultural values, sentiments and the audiences' emotions that are evoked by the 'shared memories' in the music and which are based upon their unique experiences.

In addition, interviewees often identified with performers whose identities corresponded to their age ranges and living conditions. For example, many younger interviewees mentioned Fish Leoung, Rene Liu, Jay Chou, whereas older audiences preferred Tasi Chin or Liu Huan. Although they identified different emblematic singers whom they 'had grown up with', these singer-listener relationships were similar in that they were based on the listeners' sense of having shared the same life experiences, memories, or emotions as the singers. Even though some of these singers are not seen as Chinese style singers and the presentation of their musical works is not tightly linked with Chinese culture or a sense of Chineseness, their music evoked an emotional response that 'we [the audience] all had experienced'. This experience serves to reveal part of the essence of being 'with us', as Feld's 'interpretive moves' suggests (1984:7) – 'the listener links formal stylistic components of music to his or her unique accumulated musical and social experiences' (also voiced and quoted by Meintjes 1990:49). More importantly, this experience also negotiated audiences' interpretations and understandings of authenticity. In this context, the combined musical sources in these musicians' works are not considered as 'inauthentic', like the interviewees' reactions to Jay Chou's China Wind (hip-hop) songs, Northwest Wind (rock influence) or the earlier Shanghainese Pops (jazz flavor). As Whitmore states 'the ways these consumers define authenticity and codify the real depend on individuals' subject positions and expectations, which are shaped by each person's culture, society, and politics, and the larger music and ethnicity industries... hybridity can add something new without discrediting the music's authenticity for audiences when it is not driven by the music industry' (2016:335-336).

Hence, the musicians of Chinese style popular music paid more attention to presenting changing sociocultural environments and values, for example Li Jinhui's all-female style performance; the patriotic sensibilities in for example, the critiques of reality from Northwest Wind musicians; and the Chinese aesthetic and cultural heritage, for example in the multiple sources of China Wind music. These all strengthen the relationship between the music and the Chinese community. This finally allows audiences to connect their lives, experiences and memories with the singers and their music, as the interviewees said: 's/he witnessed my youth'.

Wang's Chinked-out brand, on the contrary, served to alienate the interviewees' due to the strong influence of hip-hop culture (even if it was a localized form of hip-hop). Furthermore, the sense of westernization that the majority of interviewees perceived through his songs indicate that the way of producing and presenting Chineseness, Chinese cultures and values matters in the delivery of Chinese style. Wang's approach of illustrating *huaren*/ethnic Chinese identity, allows him to appeal to a broad audience. However, his production of international Mandopop weakens the presentation of Chineseness and the Chinese cultural impact of his music, and he also 'loses' his credibility when portraying the 'authenticity' of Chinese (musical) cultures, especially as an Asian-American singer.

Concerns with Western perceptions

In addition to the musicians who were involved in the production of Chinese style popular music, a similar issue – concerning the balance between western influence and Chinese style – also affect Chinese artists who want to 'reach the West', for example, my interviewee Ma Jiuyue (the musician).

During the interview process, Ma claimed several times that 'it is not all about "us," but how we let "others" (Western audiences) listen to "our music" as well.'²²⁵ Ma's viewpoint indicates the negotiation between the authenticity of the Chinese musical cultures and the Chinese cultural product when Chinese style/music is directed towards the West. As Aleysia Whitmore states, 'audiences must be able to relate music to what they already know... "You have to put the music on something which they understand and they can associate with"' (2016:333). Ma's statement also expresses a similar idea; there are some specific messages he has to deliver to audiences, especially for Western audiences, so that their expectations can be matched and so that the popularity of Chinese style of music can increase on a global level. It isn't only musicians though. Audiences who want to 'show the value of Chinese cultural products' on the global stage also adopt similar strategies to make Chinese music more international, for instance, Xiaoyu (the Chinese overseas PhD student who is a Chinese pop music amateur) said the following (this opinion is backed up by a few Chinese overseas students I interviewed):

²²⁵ Ma states that: 'The Chinese style music you mentioned, is a good way to present Chinese musical cultures to foreign audiences, it is the opportunity to "push" the Chinese music to the global market. However, you cannot "throw" Chinese melodies straight to those audiences who know nothing or a very limited amount about Chinese music, you have to show something they are familiar with. Then they will probably become interested in your work.'

Don't we feel happy when we know that Western people are interested in Chinese music? If they are learning the Chinese language, Chinese instruments or Chinese traditional cultures, we should feel proud, right? Because we have transported our culture to the world successfully. If only we [the Chinese people] do Chinese things, Chinese cultures will never have the chance to be "global". I think the most important thing is to show what we have first, rather than explaining what it really is.

For those who expect to show the impact of Chinese cultures or inscribe the history of Chinese popular music from a more global perspective, the most important aspect is to 'get into the Western circle', then 'we might have the chance to open the international market and gain our reputation'. In other words, (for them) Chinese style cannot find a position in the world if it only maintains with 'Chinese characteristics'. In other words, for them, Chinese style cannot find a position in the world if it only maintains 'Chinese characteristics'. While the majority of the interviewees believe that Chinese music and cultures should be transported or introduced in an authentic package through the 'right people' and 'right way' (as I will discuss in the following section), Xiaoyu and Ma's statements illustrate the multiple ways in which Chinese cultures or cultural products can be transported. They also indicate the inevitable repackaging of the Chinese style within global contexts, for example, through the localization of Chineseness in the Western context, when Chinese style is expected to 'export' to the global stage. What's more, through the interviews, especially with those who have overseas study experiences, it becomes clear that **Chinese youth in this generation are especially concerned with Western perceptions of Chinese cultural production**. This might be a very new phenomenon; it was not apparently a concern for the majority of the artists involved in the production of these three Chinese-style musical forms. In other words, when musicians (in these three cases) tried to make fusions more 'inward' looking, their contemporary audiences became more concerned with Western reactions and perceptions toward to these fusions.

Huashijie and shijiehua

Along with the understanding of authenticity, interviewees' decoding of Chinese style is also influenced by their interpretations of two different approaches to making Chinese popular music: *huashijie* and *shijiehua*, which refer to making popular music with Chinese characteristics/Chineseness (*huashijie*) and making international popular music comes from China (*shijiehua*), respectively (Jin 1999; 2002:313, De Kloet 2014:103). De Kloet in his research of Chinese rock music claims that 'in both cases, "Chineseness" remains the key

signifier to articulating sonic difference with the West' (2014:103). However, we should note that the idea of Chineseness might be perceived very differently by Western and Chinese audiences due to their differing sociocultural contexts. For my interviewees, the way that indigenous sound or the way that Chineseness is presented is the core way of distinguishing between 'our music' and 'others' (Western) music' and showing the value of Chinese musical cultures. Moreover, it is used by interviewees to measure and examine musicians' self-identification – another layer implicit in the meaning of Chinese style, just as Peng and Jingwen discussed above. In other words, what may have been considered to be in the Chinese style by producers (or Western audiences) may not be perceived in the same way for Chinese audiences if the method of presenting Chineseness and Chinese cultures was 'unexpected' (the following debates on Lao Luo's music will further elaborate upon this issue).

II. Identification and being identified: historiography of Chinese style and the feeling of inferiority

1. From cultural products to the voice of the nation

Throughout the research, it is clear that interviewees have not only consumed songs but also multiple signs that are used to reflect the national identity from the cultural products. The consumption of the national symbolism based on the concept of Chinese style is represented mainly through four perspectives. Firstly, sound is represented in the use of Chinese folk and traditional instruments, such as zither, *erhu* or Chinese flute. Secondly, the text (lyrics) consists of traditional and classical Chinese poems and literal quotes. Thirdly, the vocals often incorporate folk vocal skills, such as the vocal style from mountain songs, and also traditional Chinese operatic vocal delivery, for example, Beijing opera and *kunqu*. Finally, geographic features are used in the visuals, for instance, the landscape of Northwest China, or images conveying the beauty of the Chinese culture, such as Chinese traditional settings, architecture and clothing styles. Hence, Chinese style, as a whole, is perceived by audiences as a series of symbols, icons and indices of national or cultural identity. Consequently, the production and dissemination of Chinese style, in the eyes of audiences, are not merely the consumption of 'products' but the enhancement of the voice of the nation or, in other words, **a way to write and reveal the lengthy history and the strength of the nation, as well as the meaning of 'Chinese style'**. This was illustrated in the interviewees' statements (e.g. Zining and Xiaoyu)

in the three cases, especially in discussions on Northwest Wind and China Wind.

Furthermore, interviewees' understandings of the value of Chinese characteristics or Chineseness shows that they believe that cultural signs constitute one of the specific ways in which national identity is revealed. The majority of the interviewees exhibit a very consistent ideological pattern between national identity and cultural symbols in their statements, highlighting that presenting cultural symbols of the 'product', which in this research means Chinese style popular music, equates to the strengthening of self-national consciousness.

2. National pride and inferiority

In addition to the sense of authenticity, illustrating Chinese cultural heritage is also the best way for Chinese musicians to express their 'ownership' of the music. To prove that they have their own voices, musicians from the three cases all illustrated their willingness to show 'our music'. Due to the 'authentic' Chinese musical sources in their popular songs, they were able to claim that Chinese popular music and they themselves as musicians are 'not an imitation of Western pop' (e.g. Whitmore 2016:62).

For example, in the musical television show *The Ultimate Entertainer* (*Quanneng xingzhan*) in 2013, eight singers (e.g. Sun Nan and David Tao) and their producers were asked to rearrange and re-perform songs to match specific genres or styles (e.g. rock, jazz). When the topic came to the theme of Chinese operas (in episode 4) and the fusion of traditional operatic music and popular music, the Chinese producer Lao Zai told Robert Zollitsch (Chinese stage name: Lao Luo), the German composer and producer of new Chinese music, that 'Chinese operas are not something *laowai* (foreigners, especially used to refer to Western people) can easily understand.'²²⁶ Another Chinese producer, Jin Wulin, also agreed with Lao Zai's opinion. This particular viewpoint was further strengthened by Ma during my interview; 'they [Western musicians] know little about our cultural heritage, what they have used in their music is only the surface of Chinese culture'.

Lao Zai was quickly criticized by audiences because of his rude and disrespectful attitude to Lao Luo, who has gained a reputation due to his experimental Chinese musical works, for

²²⁶ http://ent.ifeng.com/tv/news/tvtop/detail_2013_12/30/32580050_0.shtml, accessed on 6th December 2016.

instance, ‘Tan te’ and ‘Jin gu bang’. However, even though audiences identified Lao Luo as a musician who knows how to produce ‘Chinese styled’ music (e.g. my interviewee Xiaoyu strongly shows his love of Lao Luo’s musical works and his belief that Lao Luo’s works are of a Chinese flavor), the majority of the interviewees still stress Chinese people’s ‘privilege’ in understanding Chinese (musical) cultures,²²⁷ as Geyi (the postgraduate student who has studied in the Mainland, America, UK and Hong Kong) states:

I think the inside meaning of Chinese style cannot be delivered to everyone, especially Western people. They cannot get the point because they don’t have the same social/cultural/educational background, which leads to very different music aesthetics. Consequently, not every musician can create Chinese style music. For Western musicians, even those who are experts in producing Chinese music, like Lao Luo, their music reflects maybe the image of China and Chinese cultures through Western eyes, not ours. I won’t say his music is in Chinese style, it just includes Chinese musical sources, not the real Chinese culture or flavor.

From the statements of musicians and audiences, in addition to the thoughts of ‘inborn advantages’, the hidden sense of national pride is also indicated. During my interviews, with both professional and non-professional interviewees, interviewees frequently linked the sense of national pride and the concept of Chinese style, claiming that: ‘*minzude jiushi shijiede*’ (the nation is the world). For these interviewees, national cultural symbols from the music constitute the ‘root’ of the nation and equate the value of the cultural symbols with the nation itself. What Chinese style satisfies in them is not only the presentation of national identity but their ‘national pride’. As such, they noticed the impact of Chinese cultures in a non-Chinese rooted culture, i.e. popular music.

Through my research, what Chinese style applies is still in the Western popular music-based form, but with ‘implanted’ elements that are designed to present Chinese cultures. Therefore, even though Chinese style popular music contains Chinese musical or cultural contents, it cannot always reflect the ‘real’ Chinese musical cultures that audiences expect. The Chinese style in this context is more like a ‘localized product’ of the dissemination of Western popular music rather than the means to show the impact of the nation or national cultures.

²²⁷ The interviewees’ perceptions go against a number of Chinese scholars’ viewpoints, e.g. Du Yaxiong, who believes the form and meaning of Chinese style music or western style music depends on the musical work rather than musician’s identity. According to Du (2016), if the music is created based on the Chinese tradition, then it is a ‘Chinese musical work’, it does not matter who creates this musical work. My interviewees emphasise that Chinese music could show very different images through Western eyes, because Chinese culture/music is perceived in a different way based on different (i.e. Chinese and Western) cultural and educational backgrounds.

Furthermore, behind the feeling of ‘pride’, another issue of the production and reception of Chinese style is also reflected: the sense of being identified (*bei rentong*), as the interviewee Zining (a PhD student in the UK) mentions:

Don’t you think our nation is the one which especially needs the feeling of being identified [by others]? It’s not enough to identify the impact of Chinese cultures/powers by ourselves, we need to “feel” this identification [the pride] from others, e.g. from the West. We need to be recognized.

Zining’s opinion illustrates the ‘fragility’ of national pride to a certain extent. From the interviewees’ responses and interpretations of Chinese style, we can see that behind pride lies an inferiority complex; pride is built upon a sense of being accepted or recognized by ‘others’ – their recognized dominant or hegemonic culture i.e. Western culture – which also places Chinese style, Chinese cultures or the nation itself in a relatively weak position. Therefore, this inferiority complex also challenges audiences’ interpretations or even musicians’ intentions in the codification of Chinese style with regards to the arguments and different understandings of the authenticity and hybridity of Chinese popular music. By expressing ‘our own voice’ and ‘gaining popularity’, do they hope that the value of Chinese style can be recognized or identified by the ‘dominant culture’? This question not only comes to light in the discussion of cultural and national identification but is also reflected in the gender dynamics of Chinese style popular music.

III. Historiography of the nation: representing masculinity through Chinese style

For most of the interviewees, especially those who are fans and popular music amateurs, their passion and support of Chinese style is normally linked with their understandings of national power, as previously discussed. For them, the reason that they like and need Chinese style is because the sources symbolized in the music match their identification of national identity, and also satisfy their patriotic sentiments. In other words, the culture that is symbolized is perceived as a representation of the power of the nation. Therefore, for most of my interviewees, their decoding of Chinese style is tightly related with a sense of masculinity rather than femininity. However, the understanding of masculinity and power in this context is not always linked to the sense of hardness or strength, but also by the *wu* and *wen* concepts or, in other words, **the hard and soft masculinities of the nation** (Louie 2002, 2014).

1. The hardness of the nation and the *wu* masculinity

As illustrated in Part II (Gender and Performance), although the three cases have portrayed different degrees and modes of softness and femininity, the shared production of patriotism and nationalism in these three musical forms, especially Northwest Wind and China Wind, show the importance of the presentation of the hard strength of the nation – the *wu* masculinity – through the concept of Chinese style. In other words, the patriotic songstress image established by the left-wing musicians (e.g. Nie Er) from Shanghai popular songs, the hard vocal and instrumental delivery based on the root-seeking movement from Northwest Wind musicians and the hero persona and Chinese gongfu/martial art scenes that were designed and presented by China Wind male musicians and performers all show the hard masculinity of both Chinese style popular music and the nation itself.

Although the way that hardness or hard masculinity was presented was not always situated in the ‘dominant’ frame i.e. men-hard-masculinity, the female performers were often assumed or perceived as ‘hard’ in this context. For example, in the perception of the *nühanzi* identity presented by Northwest Wind female singers and in the tough and powerful female dancers in sword-themed China Wind music. **The straightforward way of representing the physical strength or martial art abilities of the nation illustrates features of *wu* masculinity.** In other words, the sense of hardness in Chinese style popular music is linked with the concept of *wu* masculinity.

2. Soft power and the *wen* masculinity

In addition to the presentation of hardness and the *wu* masculinity, many Chinese overseas students, for example Zining, Sui and Xiaoyu, liked to interpret the concept of Chinese style as a representation of the soft power (*ruanshili*) of the nation. For them, the Chinese musical and cultural characteristics reflected in Chinese style are used to show the attraction of national cultures in order to enhance the global status of China. Zining provides the representative statement of this opinion:

I think the production of Chinese style and Chinese characteristics [in music] is intended to show our soft power to the world. We have shown our military and especially economic strength in the global stage in recent years. However, the stronger hard power we have illustrated, the weaker the soft power has been

indicated. And without the strong presentation of the soft power, our nation's comprehensive strength (*zonghe shili*) cannot be enhanced. Therefore, it is hard to get a higher status [for China] through international relationships.

In contrast to the concept of hard power, soft power, according to Joseph Nye (2003), is 'the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals'. Soft power is then frequently used to refer to non-coercion elements or approaches: the 'cultures, political values and foreign policies' (Nye 2011:84). In 2014, Xi Jinping, the current paramount leader of China, announced that 'we should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's messages to the world' (Shambaugh 2015). Therefore, **revealing the strength of the nation through a sophisticated approach**, and showing the value of China's long-lasting histories and cultural heritage, are considered a useful means to demonstrate the soft power of the nation. For example, the establishment of Confucius Institutes around the world and the recent Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road cultural-economic projects.²²⁸

Throughout this research, interviewees have perceived regional cultures, traditional or classic literatures and Chinese folk and traditional musical characteristics as signs of 'soft power'. For them, building Chinese style through music, such as illustrating the folk or traditional musical and cultural values through music, is a useful means to show the 'soft power' of the nation. In other words, the shared sophisticated approach, the delivery of sociocultural values and the sense of 'softness' show the inner-relationship between **soft power and soft masculinity; the *wen* masculinity**.

Thus, the *wen* and *wu* masculinities are not only perceived through a micro perspective, such as the different modes of male gender types, but are also linked with the national government. For interviewees, the presentation of the Chinese cultural influence or Chinese characteristics in popular music reflects Chinese national power. Therefore, national power and cultures are directly related. **However, the 'soft power' that is interpreted by audiences is not identical to the context, as Nye argues, or promoted by authority – i.e. not all cultural production leads to soft power.** Neither these artists nor the three musical forms are officially promoted on the international stage by the state or affiliated institutions as representations of the 'soft

²²⁸ The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road are also widely known as One Belt, One Road in mainland China. This is an economic development concept/strategy proposed by Xi Jinping in 2013, showing China's pursuit of a higher or bigger role in international relationships.

power' of China.

Hence, the concept of 'soft power' is mainly used as a tool by Chinese audiences to measure the national capabilities with the imagined Western perceptions, which causes the sense of patriotism and nationalism and which thus affects national pride. For audiences, the cultural influences and values from Chinese style popular music represent the national voice. While the *wen-wu* concept is used both by the authorities and masses as a tool to display the national power and its global status (Louie and Edwards 1994: 144), the meaning of soft power is interpreted in different ways and used differently in different contexts by audiences and the state. In addition, through interviewees' understandings of gender dynamics and national power, it indicates that searching identity and connotation of the concept of Chinese style is not just a question of music historiography, but rather of **the historiography of the nation**. This will be echoed further in the final section.

3. Ongoing changes between the production and perception of gender identities in Chinese style popular music

In addition, from Shanghainese Pop and Northwest Wind to China Wind music, the three musical forms also highlight various links and 'gaps' between the production and perception of gender identities. In the case of Shanghainese Pops, feminine sexuality is constructed through the description of women's thoughts and desires (in textual form), as well as various feminine imagery presented by female singers through stage performances and related films. Although it was also decoded as a feminine style by contemporary audiences, they interpreted Shanghainese Pops in this way mainly based on their 'memories' of the role of the songstress (which is influenced by contemporary televised dramas and films), or the female dominated performance style and the portrayal of Shanghai popular music. In other words, audiences' perceptions of the gendered image of Shanghainese Pops do not directly result from the material outputs in this style (as discussed in Chapter 4); in the case of Northwest Wind, even though the instrumental and vocal delivery of this style emphasises the influence of masculinity on Chinese popular music, the perceptions of audio-visual elements of this style not only indicate a different version of masculinity compared to that portrayed solely through sound, but also point towards a femininity based on (some of the) female performers' vocal expressions and audiences' cultural appreciation of hard-men/soft-women. Meanwhile, the gender misidentification and gender ambiguity that were interpreted by audiences through their

impressions of Northwest China (the region) or acts of remembrance, listening and watching Northwest Wind songs, further highlight the polysemic nature of the gendered image of Northwest Wind music. The last case, China Wind music, though is a male dominated musical form, it was seen as tender and *weimei* by many of my interviewees. The poetic text and the sound, as well as the construction of *wu-wen* masculinity and the role of beauty in the narrative of music videos are not merely used as sources by audiences to suggest tenderness, but also indicate audiences' changing understanding of softness and hardness, where softness is linked with male singers.

Therefore, these three cases exemplify ongoing changes in the way that gender is constructed through texts or song performance and then decoded in acts of listening, viewing and remembrance. They also show that the meaning of Chinese style is not based on a specific gender, but instead is based on particular gendered images.

IV. Local and global: inscribing the history of Chinese popular music and the 'Chinese nation'

The song 'Chinese Language', as Example C.1 shows below,²²⁹ was one of the most frequently mentioned songs during the interview process. For most of the interviewees, this specific song represents the meaning of Chinese style directly and also illustrates the impact of Chinese cultures and the 'status' of the nation within their expectations. The lyrics from this song: 'The whole world is learning Chinese [language], Confucius' words are becoming world culture. The whole world is saying Chinese [language], our language makes the people of the world listen up', show a particular 'scene'. The 'scene' in this case represents the 'Chinese dream' that is frequently used by the PRC and CPC to describe national ideals or 'collective efforts' within socialist thoughts (*The Economics* 2013; *Qiushi* 2013) and the revival of the nation and the goal of increasing international influence (Tatlow 2011). However, the 'Chinese dream' within the text of this song is challenged by Western audiences due to the perception that they reflect 'unreliable' and 'brainwashing-style' slogan based texts.²³⁰ Meanwhile, the 'dream' is also questioned by audiences from different regions of Chinese communities, in particular, Taiwan and mainland China, since this song was originally sung by a Taiwanese group. Their

²²⁹ Lyrical translation for this song get references from: <https://randomwire.com/sinister-she/>, accessed on 5th November, 2016.

²³⁰ For arguments made by international audiences after listening to this song see: <https://randomwire.com/sinister-she/>, accessed on 15th December, 2016.

different understandings of Chinese, Chineseness and the Chinese nation result in different interpretations of the ‘scene’ or the ‘dream’, which once again shows the various historiographical debates that emerge from the audience’s reception.

Example C.1: ‘Zhongguohua’ (Chinese Language) by S.H.E (2007)

伦敦玛丽莲 买了件旗袍送妈妈
莫斯科的夫斯基 爱上牛肉面疙瘩
各种颜色的皮肤 各种颜色的头发
嘴里念的说的开始流行中国话
多少年我们苦练英文发音和文法
这几年换他们卷着舌头学平上去入的变化
平平仄仄平平仄
好聪明的中国人 好优美的中国话
Marilyn from London bought a qipao as a gift for mother
Fuski from Moscow fell in love with Chinese beef noodles
People of every skin colour, People with hair of every colour
What they’re reading, what they’re saying
Chinese (language) is becoming the new trend
How many years did we painstakingly practice English pronunciation and learn their grammar?
For a change, now it’s their turn to get their tongues all in a knot
How smart the Chinese are, how beautiful our language is

全世界都在学中国话
孔夫子的话 越来越国际化
全世界都在讲中国话
我们说的话 让世界都认真听话
The whole world is learning Chinese (language)
Confucius’ words are becoming world culture
The whole world is saying Chinese (language)
Our language makes the people of the world listen up

纽约苏珊娜 开了间禅风 lounge bar
柏林来的沃夫冈 拿胡琴配着电吉他
各种颜色的皮肤 各种颜色的头发
嘴里念的说的开始流行中国话
多少年我们苦练英文发音和文法
这几年换他们卷着舌头学平上去入的变化
仄仄平平仄仄平
好聪明的中国人 好优美的中国话
Susanna from New York opened up a lounge bar with Chinese Zen style
Wolfgang from Berlin combined Huqin with electric guitar
People of every skin colour, People with hair of every colour
What they’re reading, what they’re saying,

Chinese (language) is becoming the new trend
How many years did we painstakingly practice English pronunciation and learn their grammar?
For a change, now it's their turn to get their tongues all in a knot
How smart the Chinese are, how beautiful our language is

全世界都在学中国话
孔夫子的话 越来越国际化
全世界都在讲中国话
我们说的话 让世界都认真听话
The whole world is learning Chinese (language)
Confucius' words are becoming world culture
The whole world is saying Chinese (language)
Our language makes the people of the world listen up

This particular song became a hit in the Mainland after its debut in 2007 and was performed by S.H.E, a Taiwanese girl-group and the original performers of this song, at the Chinese New Year gala, which was broadcast on CCTV in 2008. Although this song gained in popularity in mainland China because of the direct expression of patriotism and nationalism embodied in the text, it was harshly criticized by scholars, critics and netizens from Taiwan due to its illustration of 'Chinese' national strength and pride. For them, 'this song and S.H.E just wanted to please China', i.e. the Mainland government.²³¹ The lack of local consciousness and identity, especially the ambiguous expressions of the cultural influence of the Chinese language and *huayu*/Mandarin (Li and Yang 2007) seemed to be the key factors that triggered these criticisms.

Ironically, before this song was released, Mainland audiences were highly suspicious of S.H.E's support for Taiwanese independence because of the rumor that they had said that, 'we are not Chinese but Taiwanese' in an interview (*SOHU* 2005). S.H.E and their record label and agency HIM International Music Inc. soon claimed that the rumor was not true and asked the masses not to tie politics with music. However, the explicit illustration of being proud of being Chinese and the implication of the 'Chinese dream' in this particular song, which stresses national and cultural rejuvenation and China's increasing global status, has already offered an irreversible result; it does not allow the song to be decoded as a simple pop song. Many Taiwanese audiences believe this song was used by S.H.E and their label as a means to get access from the Chinese authorities to the mainland market.²³² For mainland audiences, the patriotic messages were mainly interpreted in terms of a denial of their specific political status, rather than a product of the 'Taiwanese independence separatist forces' that were 'imagined'

²³¹ See comments made on online sources and social media: footnote 189.

²³² Which can be revealed through the comments from Taiwan online news, e.g. Liberty Times Net 2007 <http://ent.ltn.com.tw/news/paper/128271>, accessed on 20th November 2016.

on the basis of the rumors that were spread. In this context, S.H.E and this particular song share the same strategy as China Wind musicians, despite the fact that the ‘patriotic heart’ in their song was not interpreted in the same way by Chinese audiences as in Chou’s China Wind songs. This is evident in comments made by Chinese netizens in Weibo posts.²³³ In addition, although a few of my interviewees (e.g. Xiaoyu) interpreted the use of Western popular elements in Chinese cultural products as a means for musicians to access the ‘international market’, this specific song demonstrates that none of these artists had any inherent interest in reaching an international audience. The irony from S.H.E.’s song – Mandarin chauvinism and imagined international reception of this very song – shows musicians’ intentions to break into the mainland market. In fact, the artists involved in these Chinese style musical forms perform nearly entirely for Mandarin-speaking audiences and primarily within Mainland China/Hong Kong/Taiwan. In other words, there was no specific desire for the fusions that were created by musicians in these three cases to be spread beyond the Chinese (and Mandarin) community (Eliot Bates’s work on Turkey 2016 discusses the ‘inward’ looking nature of fusions and the reasons that fusions seek to remain ‘inside’).

The debate over the text of the ‘Chinese Language’ was later criticized by both Taiwanese and mainland musicians, artists, critics, and especially by the lyricist of the song, Derek Shih. Shih (2007) published an article through his personal blog, asking:

Is this the start of the Cultural Revolution in Taiwan? They are just lyrics of a song, how dare you (journalists, media) judge whether my work shows “negative ideology” or not... destroy the cultural relics in the Imperial Palace if you dare, they all come from the Mainland...you politicians get away from me, let me write my songs.

Shih’s statement and the debate from the masses, in addition to people’s multiple interpretations of the meaning and function of this song, highlight audiences’ ambivalent and subtle sensations of national identity as well as their self-identification. As Hall points out, ‘nation-states are in trouble... Peoples and groups and tribes who were previously harnessed together in the entities called the nation-states begin to rediscover identities they had forgotten’ (1989:13).

Many audiences from different regions of the Greater Chinese community (e.g. Taiwan and

²³³ Sources come from the users of Sina Weibo (the major Chinese social media): http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4c50a6d00100090d.html, accessed on 20th November, 2016.

Hong Kong) eagerly expect to express their local identifications, especially their demands for local, democratic government and for political rights and freedoms that can serve to highlight the difference between ‘Chinese’ and ‘ethnic Chinese’. Examples include the Hong Kong-Mainland (netizen) debates of ‘China-Hong Kong/Chinese-Hongkongnese or the long lasting Taiwan-Mainland authorities’ debates on the One China policy and the related Sunflower Student Movement (in Taiwan).²³⁴ However, the shared Chinese cultures and cultural memories illustrated in their singers’ musical works, especially those of Taiwan-based singers, neither match their self-identifications nor really show different understandings of ‘national identity’ or ‘Chinese nation’ compared with the mainland audiences. Similarly, audiences from the Mainland perceive the ‘Chineseness’ in the music as a reflection of Chinese national identity. However, the ambiguous presentation of Chinese cultural influences, such as the symbolic lyrics of China Wind music, and especially the very fine line between the expression of Chinese and ethnic Chinese, cause major difficulties for them when defending the relationship between Chinese and Chineseness and between China and national identity.

As Ian Biddle and Vanessa Knights state, ‘[the] nation remains a crucial but ambivalent category for understanding how cultural texts and practices function in the construction of personal and collective identities’ (2016:1). The increasing influence of globalization brings a growing international trend to China through different areas (e.g. economics), and also highlights the value of presenting Chinese characteristics and Chineseness, due to the interaction between national and international. It provides space for people from different Chinese communities and regions to re-examine their understandings of national identity and reconsider their self-identification, for example, the overseas Chinese students’ statements in their interviews. More importantly, it indicates audiences’ expectations and willingness of write the history of the ‘nation’ – in other words it showcases **historiography as a non-academic practice**. Reebee Garofalo draws upon Appadurai’s idea of new ethnic identities to argue that: ‘identities conceived not as essential, stable, static representations tied to a fixed place, but as a moveable, developing, relational process of identification that links the traditions of the past with all the dislocations of the world system’ (1993:25). This research shows that audiences’

²³⁴ The Sunflower Student Movement or *taiyanghua xueshengyundong*, was a protest driven by Taiwanese students in the Legislative Yuan and Executive Yuan in 2014. The protest movement was caused by the debates of a trade deal – the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement – between two parties: Kuomintang and Beijing authority. Due to the unusual procedures of the announcement of this deal; ‘without clause-by-clause review’, the students and civic protesters claimed that ‘the agreement with China would hurt Taiwan’s economy and leave it vulnerable to pressure from Beijing’ (BBC 2014; Ramzy 2014). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-26641525>
https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/03/22/as-numbers-swell-students-pledge-to-continue-occupying-taiwans-legislature/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0, accessed on 18th March 2017.

interpretations of Chineseness and identity and the meanings of these ideas are not always based on the same ‘standard’, but instead upon (imagined) national and international receptions of the Chinese nation or Chinese identity.

No matter whether it is Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind, China Wind or the most recent CDM (Chinese dance music) that appeared in the musical TV show *Heroes of Remix*,²³⁵ the exploration of the concept of Chinese style, the ideal of Chinese characteristics and national identity continue to be a dominant consideration in Chinese musical discourses and practices, as well in as popular music production. The development of the concept of Chinese style will likely never reach an end, whether in terms of production or consumption. As Solo (an office worker in the Mainland) states:

China Wind [songs] may not be popular after several years, but Chinese style popular music will never really end in Chinese society. It may have different “names”, but we all know that it comes from the concept; Chinese style. Even if Chinese style popular music is not the most popular in the future, it will have its own place for sure. Because we always need to have something to show who we are, Chinese style can say that for us.

China’s rich historical and cultural heritage, evidenced in Chinese style popular music, provides Chinese audiences with the main source of the sense of ‘nationalism’ or ‘us’ with different interpretations. In other words, audiences’ various decoding of the ‘Chinese nation’ or ‘national identity’ reflects pertinent and widespread historiographical debates happening outside of academia. The audiences from different Chinese communities may have their own dialogues with the music based on their shared cultural memories or unique social experiences as Wang Yu-wei (2011) suggests. The idea of Chinese style popular music allows musicians to produce and promote their music without the restrictions of place, space or political systems, and also provides the text for Chinese audiences in different regions and periods to re-think and re-explore their identities within different sociocultural contexts.

²³⁵ *Heroes of Remix* is the very first Chinese sing and dance (competition) reality show on Jiangsu Television (in 2016) that features the specific music genre EDM (Electronic Dance Music). The performers and their mentors (Leehom Wang, Psy, Harlem Yu and Phoenix Legend) hoped to show their talents in producing EDM music in the context of Chinese music. And the term CDM was finally coined by the musician Da Zhangwei (the former lead vocal of the Chinese punk/rock band The Flowers) since increasing numbers of performers used Chinese traditional/folk musical elements and cultures in the remixes of their songs.

Ending: critical reflections on audience reception of Chinese style popular music

At the beginning of this thesis I noted that this research is a reception study of the period between 2014 and 2018 that focuses on Chinese youth (primarily) and how they perceive aspects of different periods of Chinese music, both questions of style and of gendered identities. The interviewees in this dissertation are highly articulate about the topics they discuss, which draws upon ethnomethodology and grounded theory. Audiences' interpretations of Chinese style popular music demonstrate how the reception of musical style is strongly tied to perceptions of, for example, identity, place and space. On the other hand, they also illustrate how audiences make meanings out of contemporary Chinese popular music (as well as Chinese style) through their own musical and life experiences and memories. In this context, audience reception provides a new view on our understanding of Chinese popular music. However, it also leads to a question. Much like Stock (1995) points out, how far can the scope of these perceptions (e.g. identity) go?

In my research, audiences' perceptions not only illustrate ongoing changes in construction and perception of musical forms but also question the strength of influence of their perceptions over time. For instance, in the case of Shanghainese Pops, in some places the interviewees' decoding of identity, such as their view on Chineseness or foreignness, was separated from the historical background of the style. Without adequate knowledge of the related history of Shanghai in that era, audiences' interpretations of this musical form were limited to a certain perspective that mainly included their familiar elements (though that might be an 'expected' result that was a product of the way that participants were selected, as we discussed in the Introduction). However, a number of important elements of the development of Shanghai and Shanghai popular music became less 'meaningful', such as the radio or other means of disseminating this musical form. In a similar manner, in the case of Northwest Wind music, the impact of root-seeking cultural movement – i.e. the historical background of the emergence of Northwest Wind, was ignored or 'forgotten' by most of the interviewees.

In addition, some features of gender identities were not explored further or in detail in this research because they were 'isolated' with audiences' perceptions, for example, the female-female versions or performances of female-male duets of Shanghai popular music (i.e. the queering of Shanghainese Pops). In addition to the production of multiple feminine images under the frame of heterosexuality, another issue that was not touched upon by my interviewees

is the presentation of homosexuality and androgyny that derived from the female dominated performance style in Shanghainese Pops. Since the Shanghainese Pops performers were mainly women, when they were performing male-female love songs, i.e. duets, women sometimes performed the male roles, for example, Li Lili and Wang Renmei's (two women) recording of Li Jinhui's popular song 'Taohua jiang' (Hung 2008b). However, none of my contemporary interviewees mentioned that they sensed gender non-conformity in Shanghainese Pops. Even though some noticed the different vocal deliveries or visual imagery of the female performers, they either decoded these presentations as alternative versions of femininity or felt that it was a performance style that was demanded by the producer, rather than a reflection of homosexuality or androgynous sensibilities. Their interpretations, of course, point to changing and different understandings of gender between 1930s and today. However, the perceptions still limit the complexity of the gendered image of Shanghainese Pops and led to a conventional notion that this style was solely about feminine sexualized singing and dancing girls. What's more, in some cases, audiences' decoding of gender identities, for example the 'indecent feminine image' of songstresses, were not based on their perceptions of related musical and cultural materials, but memories of contemporary visual materials (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Therefore, audience reception of these three musical forms illustrates the variations of the meaning of 'Chinese style' based on varying perceptions of a number of concepts, such as identity, space, movement and embodiment. However, the 'historical distance' between audiences and the music (especially in the case of Shanghainese Pops), as well as their changing understanding of certain ideas (e.g. intellectual, elite or gender) both suggest that the strength and influence of such perceptions should be reconsidered or understood with specific sociocultural contexts.

Appendix: Semi-structured Interviews²³⁶

Two main targeted groups

Group 1: 1980s-1990s (age 18-37)

Group 2: late 1950s-1970s (age 45-60)

Semi structure of general interviews

For all interviewees

Sample1:

1. 您是否喜欢听流行音乐？一般偏爱哪种风格？

Do you like listening to popular music? Do you have a preferred style?

2. 您有听到过中国风格这个概念 / 表述过吗？第一次是从那一种渠道那里听到的呢 (例如哪一个音乐人)？

Have you ever heard of the concept of Chinese style? (If yes) when and how did you receive this concept? From the media, friends or particular musicians?

3. 当听到中国风格 / 中国风格流行音乐这种表述时,您会想到什么？

What do you relate 'Chinese style'/Chinese style popular music to, or what crosses your mind when you hear this term?

4. 对您来说什么是中国风格（流行音乐）呢？或者说什么样的元素 / 品质是中国风格（流行音乐）应该具备的？

What is Chinese style or Chinese style popular music in your opinion? And what kind of qualities should be included in Chinese style/Chinese style popular music

5. 您认为中国风格的流行音乐特点是什么？您是否喜欢这类音乐？为什么？

What are the characteristics of Chinese style popular music? Do you like Chinese style popular music? Why?

6. 在您看来有没有哪一种音乐形式或者哪一位歌手可以代表中国风格流行音乐？

Are there any particular musical forms or singers that can represent Chinese style popular music?

7. 对您来说上海时代曲，西北风和中国风流行音乐是否都是中国风格流行音乐的代表？或者哪一种不是 / 不属于中国风格这个概念？

Do you perceive these three musical forms, i.e., Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind, as representative of Chinese style popular music? or which of these do not present (or do not belong to) this concept of Chinese style?

8. 您是怎样感受到中国风格这个概念的？（每个个案分别讨论）

How have you received the sense of Chinese style from this musical form? (case by case)

9. 对您来说哪一种（音乐）元素意味着中国风格这个概念？声音，文字 / 歌词还是图像（每个个案分别讨论）

For you, which element or musical source signifies the concept of Chinese style? Sound, text or image? (case by case)

²³⁶ All interviews were primarily conducted in Mandarin and all transcribed and translated by myself.

10. 对您来说地域（音乐）特色和中国风格这个概念是紧密相关的吗？例如上海时代曲和西北风歌曲？

Do you think the regional/place (musical) characteristics are strongly linked with the concept of Chinese style? Such as Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind?

11. 您怎么看待这些音乐中的西方文化元素的运用，例如爵士，摇滚和嘻哈音乐元素的表演运用？您觉得这会减弱中国风格的表达吗？或是与中国风格这个概念对立着？

What do you think about the western musical/cultural elements (e.g. jazz, rock and hip-hop influence) in Chinese style popular music? Do you think the western-based musical elements will deduce the expression of the concept of Chinese style? Or are they against the concept?

12. 您会觉得男歌手 / 女歌手主导了时代曲 / 西北风 / 中国风吗？（每个个案分别讨论）
Do you feel this musical form is dominated by male/female singers? (case by case)

13. 通过这三种音乐形式，您觉得男歌手和女歌手在表达中国风格这个概念上有什么不同吗？他们用了相同 / 不同的手法吗？

Do you think there is any difference in the presentation of the concept of Chinese style between male and female singers through these three musical forms? Do they use similar/different approaches?

14. 您觉得不同形式的中国风格流行音乐有给您留下不同的感官吗？例如温和柔美或者比较阳刚硬朗这样的感觉？

Have you received different feelings or sensations through various expressions of Chinese style popular music? for example: soft or hard?

15.（对于西北风和中国风）您是否有特别去看过西北风中国风音乐的音乐录影带？您觉得音乐录影带有包含 / 传达中国文化或者文化价值吗？您认为音乐录影带有推动中国风格这个概念吗？

(For Northwest Wind and China Wind) Have you ever watched a specific Northwest Wind/China Wind MV? Do you think the MV contains/expresses the Chinese culture or Chinese cultural values? Do you think those MVs help to promote the concept of Chinese style?

16.（对于西北风和中国风）您为什么喜欢 / 不喜欢看音乐录影带？您认为这类风格的音乐录影带的主要特点是什么？

Why do you like/dislike to watch Northwest Wind/China Wind MVs? What are the main features of Northwest Wind/China Wind MVs?

17. 由于中国风原本是台湾音乐人所创立的一个音乐风格，您觉得中国风音乐中所呈现的中国风格概念和上海时代曲，西北风音乐一样吗？

Since China Wind was originally created by Taiwan-based musicians, do you feel the concept of Chinese style from China Wind is presented in the same or different way to the other two musical forms?

18. 您觉得中国风格这个概念在近几年流行吗？如果是的话，有些什么原因促成这种流行？

Do you think the concept of Chinese style is popular in recent years? (if yes) What do you think about the popularity of Chinese style phenomenon? And in your eyes, what are the reasons for the popularity of the concept.

19. 您觉得中国风格音乐中是否包含了中国（传统）文化元素？主要表现在何处？

Do you think Chinese style popular music contains Chinese (traditional) cultural elements? If yes, how have the cultural elements been presented?

20. 您认为中国风格音乐，和其他流行音乐风格相比较，对大众本身和（传统）文化有没有特别的意义？

Compared with other popular styles, does China Wind popular songs have special meanings or effects on (traditional) Chinese culture or the audience?

21. 在您看来“中国风格”是国家形象或者国家力量的一种体现吗？

In your eyes, does the concept of Chinese style represent the image of the nation or the power of the nation itself?

22. 您觉得中国风格这个概念显示出了民族性吗？例如汉族或少数民族，您觉得中国风格是不是等同于民族风格？

Does the concept of Chinese style show the ethnicity? Such as *Han* or ethnic-minorities? Do you think Chinese style means ethnic style?

Sample 2: Semi structure of group interviews

1. Group based on age (80s/90s)

那么你们看到关于中国风格流行音乐这样的报道时会是什么反应

How did you think/react when you read some reports/news about ‘Chinese style’?

在你们看来像上海老歌或者西北风这样的中国风格流行音乐是不是很过时？中国风还算比较流行吗？

In your eyes, is Shanghainese Pops or Northwest Wind music out of date? And what about China Wind music? Is it still popular?

你们是否觉得偶像或者歌手对一种音乐风格的流行来说是最重要的元素,例如说周杰伦和中国风。

Do you think the singer/idol is the most important factor to the popularity of a music style? Such as Jay Chou and China Wind.

你们是否觉得舆论（类似媒体和音乐节目）在引导这种中国特色和中国风格这样的概念？

Do you think the public (e.g. media or musical programs) is trying to promote the concept of Chinese characteristics or Chinese style?

和其他歌曲类型相比，你们是否会觉得中国风格的歌曲是比较容易受欢迎的？

Do you think Chinese styled songs will gain popularity more easily compared with songs formed in other musical styles?

2. Group based on gender

你们对上海时代曲，西北风和中国风的主要印象是什么呢？

What is your main impression of Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind?

你们觉得上海时代曲，西北风和中国风这三种音乐形式的形象是建立在一个特定的性别之上的吗？或者说这三种音乐形式的听觉，视觉和文本内容体现出了某一特定的性别形象或是性别行为？

Is the construction of the image of Shanghainese Pops/Northwest Wind/China Wind based on a specific gender? In other words, do sound, text and image of these musical forms present a specific gendered image or sexuality?

在这三种音乐当中，通过其相关的男女歌手的表演，你们分别接收到了怎样的音乐性别形象？

What kind of gendered images (feminine, masculine or others) have you perceived from female/male singers and performers through these three musical forms?

你们觉得上海时代曲的女歌手和西北风的女歌手都同样的展现出了女性形象吗感觉吗？

Do you think female singers or performers from Shanghainese Pops and Northwest Wind both present the sense of femininity?

你们觉得中国风的男歌手 / 男音乐人给你们带来了一种什么样的（感官上的）感受呢？

他们符合你们所理解的男性化的感觉吗？或者符合你们对男歌手的形象认知吗？
What kind of sensations did you get from the male singers/musicians of China Wind music?
Do they match your understandings of masculinity or your 'expectations' of male singers?

3. Group based on music preference

你们听到中国风格这个词会想到什么

When you hear the term 'Chinese style', what will you relate to it?

对于不同形式的中国风格音乐,大家有什么看法?三个个案为例

What do you think about different types of Chinese style popular music? Three musical forms as examples

对于中国风格音乐的文化和社会价值大家怎么看?

What do you think about the cultural and social values of Chinese style popular music?

你们会把中国风音乐和中国传统文化相联系吗?

Do you link Chinese style popular music with Chinese traditional cultures?

你们认为在中国风格流行音乐中,西方流行文化元素会影响中国(传统)文化的价值表达吗?

Do you think those western pop musical elements in Chinese style popular music will affect the expression of the value of Chinese (tradition) culture?

4. Group based on their attitudes

为什么喜欢 / 不喜欢中国风格音乐?

Why would you like or dislike Chinese style popular music?

是哪一音乐元素让你们喜欢 / 不喜欢?

Which elements of Chinese style popular music do you like or dislike (lyrics, tunes, MVs)?

你们喜欢 / 不喜欢中国风格流行音乐是因为它体现了真实的 / 不真实的中国文化元素吗?

Do You like /dislike Chinese style popular music because it presents authentic/inauthentic Chinese cultural elements?

对你们觉得上海时代曲, 西北风和中国风所表达的是同一种 '中国风格'吗?

Do you think Shanghainese Pops, Northwest Wind and China Wind have presented the same 'Chinese style'?

在同一种音乐形式下, 不同歌手 / 音乐人表达的中国风格概念对你们来说有差别吗? 例如周杰伦和王力宏在表达中国风格时有差别吗?

In one specific musical form, do you think the different singers/musicians illustrated their different understandings of the concept of Chinese style? For example, is there any difference between Jay Chou and Leehom Wang's presentations of Chinese style in their music?

Glossary of Names and Key Terms

85 hou / 90 hou 80 后/90 后

Ai Diren 爱地人

Ai zhi hua 爱之花

An Wen 安雯

Ah Cheng 阿城

Ah Feng 阿凤

Bai Guang 白光

Bai Hong 白虹

bailemen 百乐门

baiyangdujin 白羊肚巾

bai xing 百姓

bei rentong 被认同

Bo ya jue xuan 伯牙绝弦

biangong 变宫

bianzhi 变徵

bushoufudao 不守妇道

buzouxin 不走心

Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培

caizi 才子

caizi jiaren 才子佳人

Changxiangsi 长相思

Chaoji nüsheng 超级女生

Chen Gexin 陈歌辛

Chen Dieyi 陈蝶衣

Chen Duxiu 陈独秀

Chen Zhe 陈哲

Cheng Lin 程琳

Chenglin xinge 程琳新歌

Ci 词

cifu 词赋

dajiaguixiu 大家闺秀

dakou 打口

da lü bao 大陆报

Da Tong 大同

dawangjiuguan 大王酒馆

Dayuanzhijing.Yuanmingyuan 大圆智境.

圆明园

Da Zhangwei 大张伟

dianshengyuedui 电声乐队

Ding ge long dong qiang 叮咯咙咚呛

dongfangmei 东方美

dongfangshikong 东方时空

<i>Dong feng po</i> 东风破	<i>gongzhonghao</i> 公众号
Du Yuesheng 杜月笙	<i>gucheng</i> 孤城
<i>erhu</i> 二胡	<i>gudao</i> 孤岛
<i>Fa ru xue</i> 发如雪	Gu Long 古龙
Fan Linlin 范琳琳	<i>guzheng</i> 古筝
Fang Peilin 方沛霖	<i>haipai wenhua</i> 海派文化
Fan Yanqiao 范烟桥	Han 汉[族]
<i>feifei shi dawang</i> 飞飞是大王	Han Bangqing 韩邦庆
<i>feng</i> 风	Han Shaogong 韩少功
<i>fengge</i> 风格	<i>Hanggai yuedui</i> 杭盖乐队
<i>Fenghuang yufei</i> 凤凰于飞	Hang Tianqi 杭天琪
<i>Fenghuang chuanqi</i> 凤凰传奇	<i>Hetou huanwei</i> 合头换尾
<i>Feng Yu Qin Ge</i> 风雨琴歌	<i>Hongchen kezhan</i> 红尘客栈
<i>Fengyun ernü</i> 风云儿女	<i>hongge</i> 红歌
<i>Gaishi yingxiong</i> 盖世英雄	<i>hongyan</i> 红颜
<i>Gangtai</i> 港台	Hou Dejian 侯德健
<i>genü</i> 歌女	Hu Yue 胡月
<i>geshi</i> 格式	<i>huaren</i> 华人
<i>Gesheng piaoguo sanshinian</i> 歌声飘过三十 年	<i>hua shijie</i> 化世界
<i>Genü zhige</i> 歌女之歌	<i>Hua Tian Cuo</i> 花田错
<i>Gong</i> 宫	<i>huayinlaoqiang</i> 华阴老腔
	<i>Huangtu</i> 黄土

huan yin 欢音

Hui 回[族]

hulusi 葫芦丝

huqin 胡琴

Hu Yue 胡月

Huangtu gaopo 黄土高坡

Huaren wansui 华人万岁

Huo li quan kai 火力全开

Huo yuan jia 霍元甲

jianghu/wuxia 江湖/武侠

Jiangjun ling 将军令

Jin gu bang 金箍棒

Jin Wulin 金武林

Jin Yong 金庸

jingdian liuxinggequ 经典流行歌曲

Juhua tai 菊花台

juyou zhongguo tesede shehuizhuiyi daolu

具有中国特色的社会主义道路

Jue 角

kongmen 空门

kunqu 昆曲

Li Dazhao 李大钊

Li Lili 黎莉莉

Li Jinhui 黎锦晖

Li Jinguang 黎锦光

Li Jinxi 黎锦熙

Li Minghui 黎明晖

Li Na 李娜

Li Yan 李岩

lian huan kou 连环扣

Liangyou huabao 良友画报

liuxing yinyue 流行音乐

Liu Zhiwen 刘志文

Long de chuan ren 龙的传人

Long quan 龙拳

Luo ye gui gen 落叶归根

Ma Jiuyue 马久越

Malu tianshi 马路天使

Mai hua ci 卖花词

Mao mao yu 毛毛雨

Maque yu xiaohai 麻雀与小孩

meiren 美人

Meigui meigui woaini 玫瑰玫瑰我爱你

Meixue baikequanshu 美学百科全书

Meng Guangzheng 孟广征

Meng jiang nü 孟姜女

mimizhiyin 靡靡之音

minzu feng 民族风

minzude jiushi shijiede 民族的就是世界的

Mo Yan 莫言

nianlun 年轮

Nie Er 聂耳

nonggong qunzhong 农工群众

nühanzi 女汉子

nüzi shie ryuefang 女子十二乐坊

Putao xianzi 葡萄仙子

qi cheng zhuan he 起承转合

Qiancheng wanli 前程万里

qing feng wu 清风舞

qinqiang 秦腔

Qing hua ci 青花瓷

qingjue 清角

qingjueweigong 清角为宫

qingyue 清乐

quanneng xingzhan 全能星战

pashandiao 爬山调

Pan Jinlian 潘金莲

peiban'gan 陪伴感

pian 偏音

pingmin baixing 平民百姓

pingtan 评弹

Qian Xuotong 钱玄同

Qu Zong 瞿琮

rende shidai 人的时代

resoubang 热搜榜

ruanshili 软实力

San hudie 三蝴蝶

Si ren ding zhi 撕人订制

Sanxing banyue 三星伴月

shan'ge 山歌

Shan gougou 山沟沟

Shanmen 山门

Shang 商

Shangnü 商女

shidaiqu 时代曲

shidai zhuxuanlü 时代主旋律

shili yangchang 十里洋场

shijiehua 世界化

shiqing huayi 诗情画意

shumin 庶民

Shuangjiegun 双截棍

shuangsidu yincheng 双四度音程

shugao qianzhang, luoye guigen 树高千丈,

落叶归根

Song Zuying 宋祖英

Susan qijie 苏三起解

Susan shuo 苏三说

Su Yue 苏越

Sun Guoqing 孙国庆

Sun Jun 孙郡

suona 唢呐

taixia 台下

Taiwan de shaoshuminzu 台湾的少数民族

taiyanghua xuesheng yundong 太阳花学

生运动

Tan te 忐忑

Tan Weiwei 谭维维

Taohua jiang 桃花江

Tebie kuaiche 特别快车

Tietixiade ge nü 铁蹄下的歌女

Tianya genü 天涯歌女

tongsu yinyue 通俗音乐

Wang Renmei 王人美

Wang Xiaoling 王小岭

weime 唯美

Wen 文

wenrou weimei 温柔唯美

Wode dipan 我的地盘

Wo reliande guxiang 我热恋的故乡

Wu 武

Xi Jinping 习近平

Xi Xiulan 奚秀兰

xiagu rouqing 侠骨柔情

Xiao huajia 小画家

xiaojia biyu 小家碧玉

xiaosa 潇洒

xiaoshimin 小市民

xibei hanzi 西北汉子

Xie Chengqiang 解承强

Xin Baihua 辛白华

Xin tian you 信天游

Xinzhongde riyue 心中的日月

Xiong Ying 熊英

Xu Peidong 徐沛东

Xu xingzhi 许幸之

xuanfa 旋法

xungen wenhua 寻根文化

Yan Hua 严华

yang 阳

yangqi 洋气

yang zi jiang 扬子江

Yao Li 姚莉

Yao Min 姚敏

yecun 野村

Ye lai xiang 夜来香

Ye Shanghai 夜上海

yijing 意境

yiren 伊人

yixiang 意象

yin 阴

yingxiong 英雄

yingxiongjiumei 英雄救美

yongyuande diyitian 永远的第一天

youzhi oüxiang 优质偶像

Yu 羽

Yuanmingyuan 圆明园

Yuan Muzhi 袁牧之

Yueliang zou, wo ye zou 月亮走，我也走

yuyaowei 鱼咬尾

Zai mei bian 在梅边

Zang Hongfei 臧鸿飞

Zhang Mingmin 张明敏

Zhang Yimou 张艺谋

Zheng Deren 郑德仁

Zhi 徵

Zhongguofeng 中国风

Zhongguohua 中国话

Zhongguo shanshuimei 中国山水美

Zhou Wen Wang 周文王

Zhou Wu Wang 周武王

Zhou Xuan 周璇

Zhou Yijun 周轶君

zonghe shili 综合实力

Zuguo zanmeishi 祖国赞美诗

Zuixuan minzufeng 最炫民族风

zuoqude fengge 作曲的风格

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