The Musicality of C-Pop

A Study of Chinese Popular Music from 1985-2010

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By

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Abstract

This study examines C-pop (Chinese pop). It contains three parts, Part One describes the changes in C-pop from the 1985 to the present, Part Two deals with how C-pop changed in terms of its musical texts and Part Three elucidates why it changed culturally. As a whole, it also provides a case study that allows us to approach the 'popular'/'pop' dichotomy from perspective of a change in musicality (way of being musical) from a music-maker-centric (MMC) system to a music-receiver-centric (MRC) system. I have drawn on the dual experience base of being a native Chinese and an overseas-based researcher, generating a critical-ethnomusicological perspective throughout.

Part One of the thesis considers a selection of soundscapes that delineate changing trends in Chinese popular music from 1985 on. In the first chapter, the emergence of C-pop in the 1980s and early 1990s is identified and assessed. Chapter 2 looks at the reshaping of the industry from 1996 on, analysing also the rise of new media for popular music during this period, most obviously television and the internet.

Part Two looks in more depth at the linguistic (Chapter 3) and vocal (Chapter 4) codes embedded in the music. The writing here focuses on the relationship between producers and receivers of C-pop and between the music itself and receivers. Chapter 5 underlines this latter emphasis by critically reflecting on the ways in which songs are structured and produced.

Finally, Part Three employs a tripartite model of music, music-maker and music-receiver to attend in turn to fan culture (Chapter 6), the roles of musicians (Chapter 7) and the operation of producers and managers in the music industry (Chapter 8). These analyses show why C-pop has developed in the ways in which it has, the ongoing power struggle between the audience and musician—between those holding a mass concept and those holding an elite concept—determining the musicality of C-pop in present-day mainland China.

Contents

Preface

When I began my work as an ethnomusicology student in 2003, my initial interest was a hybridized musical form performed as a crossover of Chinese traditional and popular music. While studying for my Masters degree, I was intrigued by the socio-cultural aspect of music; and I observed that although pop music was commonly accepted by listeners as a site of cultural significance, it received little academic attention from scholars in mainland China. Therefore after graduation my interest moved more firmly towards popular music. My interest in popular music as a research subject rests not only on a long-term interest in pop music since my teenage years, but also from the experience of performing in music bars and clubs as a pop singer when I was a music student at a performing arts high school. Not much has been written by academics about Chinese popular music. There are some works focused on the politically tense era at the end of the 1980s, by which time Chinese pop music had diversified into a range of contrasting genres. We can also find a few studies of the music that became popular in the 1990s, and very recently a further wave of studies concerned with the musical expressions of the new century, but these contributions too are relatively rare compared with the size of the subject. This present work takes as its primary focus the mainland Chinese pop music of recent years; however, the music from earlier decades will also be taken into consideration since all these musical phenomena are inextricably linked with each other.

My interest is to illuminate Chinese pop from a native Chinese perspective for Western readers, since there are almost no academic writings that focus on contemporary Chinese pop viewed in this way, and so here is also an opportunity for me to make an original contribution to the understanding of mainland Chinese pop.[1] This work focuses primarily on the changes that have taken place in Chinese popular music, their causes and cultural connotations. It provides both a chronological overview of pop music phenomena from 1985 to the present day, and a set of detailed

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[1] For details of the existing literature, see the Literature Review (p. 5-13) and Methodologies (p. 22-28) section in the Introduction.

and specific case studies charting specific phenomena, from 'Chinese rock' and 'north-west wind' (*xibeifeng*), through 'new folk music' (*xin minyue*) and 'ballad' (*minyao*), to 'internet music' (*wangluo yinyue*) and 'idol phenomena' (*xuanxiu jiemu*).[2]

All these phenomena can be grouped under the term *liuxing yinyue*, a term which means both popular music and pop music in English; *liuxing* literally means popular, and *yinyue* is music. In the first half of 1980s, *liuxing yinyue* was also known as *tongsu yinyue* (which means 'music of the common people') in mainland China. Although a few scholars have used the two terms in distinct ways, I do not do so here; in fact, in interviews during my fieldwork with those who worked in Chinese pop music from the 1980s up till now, I found that Chinese musicians never tried to define their music either as *liuxing* or *tongsu*, and sometimes they even avoided the use of both terms. *Tongsu yinyue* is still occasionally utilized in magazines, academic papers and music conservatories in mainland China to describe native pop music,[3] however, *liuxing yinyue* is the most common term used by both Chinese musicians and audiences to indicate both pop and popular music.

Since this study focuses on the popular music of the Chinese mainland (see figure 1), I will sometimes employ the shortened form 'C-pop'. Some internet resources use the term 'C-pop' to indicate pop music sung in Mandarin, Cantonese and Taiwanese dialects only, but, in fact, C-pop can also indicate all popular music in other Chinese dialects as well. Those who use the term differ about whether it can be employed for music in Chinese from outside the Chinese mainland; in this study the term 'C-pop' is confined to popular mainland music.

There have been ongoing discussions in English-language academic contexts on the difference between 'popular music' and 'pop music'.[4] This is less the case in

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[2] 1985 is taken as a starting point in accordance with several other studies of the history of Chinese pop music, because the first significant commercial upsurge took place during that year; see Wang 2009: 15-18, You 2007: 27-39, Yu 2002.

[3] For instance, the magazine *Popular Music* is still entitled *Tongsu Yinyue* (published by Hebei Province Arts Research Centre) and Sichuan University also call their Popular Music Conservatory *Tongsu Yinyue Xueyuan*.

[4] 'Rock', 'pop', 'popular', the significance of such terms seem to haunt many scholars in the Western context. Although scholars such as Shuker discussed the distinction between 'rock' and 'pop' since the former is the more authentic or artistic sector of popular music and the latter forms the more commercial entertainment sector (1998: 20-21), other scholars, Christgau, for example, states there is no real difference between the two terms. According to Christgau, 'pop' and 'rock' are interchangeable (Christgau 2000: 321). In relation to the terms 'popular' and 'pop', Western scholars normally agree that they are not interchangeable, typically using popular music as a generic term for music of all ages that appeals to popular tastes (Allen 2004) and, on the other hand, pop music to indicate a

China, where the same term (*liuxing yinyue*) covers both, although in fact my study does point to a distinction that can be made on the basis of the attention given to musicality in the creation of new songs. This insight underpins the main thrust of this work, which lies in its mapping of the pattern of changes in the musicality of Chinese mainland pop music over the past two decades.[5]
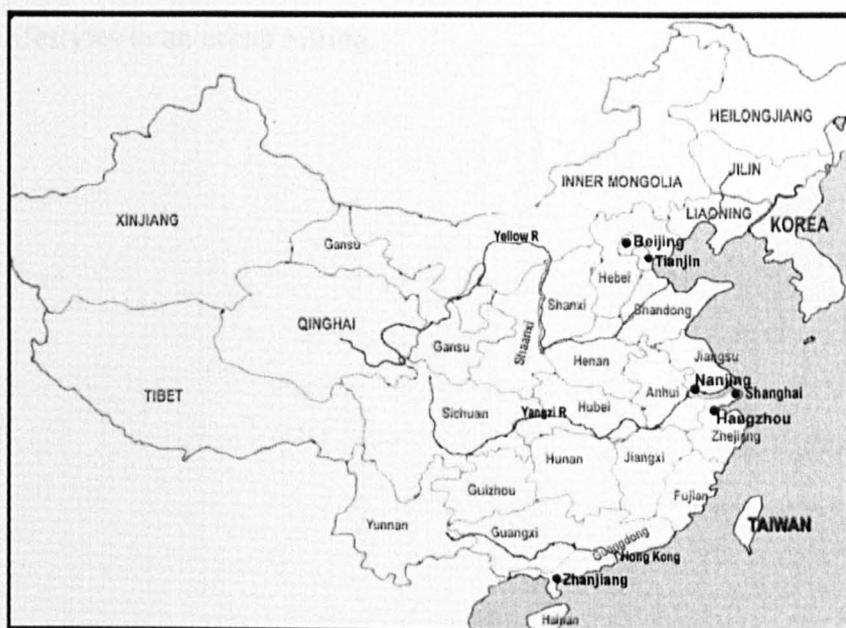
Figure 1: Map of modern China

The size of the Chinese population (1.3 billion)[6] means there is consequently a huge potential music market; that is why every notable international recording company has significantly invested and is represented in the Chinese sector now. Meanwhile, there are also a number of Chinese-owned music businesses, as well as interests from state-owned enterprises such as the numerous television stations. These interests will be examined in detail in the chapters that follow.

Chinese music scholars have looked at numerous genres, styles and traditions, both indigenous and imported from overseas. They have adopted historical, musicological, ethnomusicological and socio-cultural approaches, creating academic

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specific musical genre (Middleton 1990: 14-5).

[5] For a definition of the term 'musicality' as used in this thesis, please see the Introduction (p. 1-31).

[6] This number is taken from the 2000 census by the China Population and Development Research Centre. Please refer to http://www.stats.gov.cn/zgrkpc/dlc/, access date: 03-12-2008.

analyses based on the relatively abundant textural and iconographical documentation to allow us to understand much about how Chinese musical culture came to be as it is. However, there are very few studies of contemporary popular culture in this body of work, and this is a significant gap in that this recent music also tells us of the contemporary life of the nation. From this perspective, studying pop music is certainly a good entry point for obtaining an understanding of people's lives, especially changing lifestyles in an urban setting.

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Introduction

Just as in the Western world, there are nowadays many genres of Chinese pop music. In a western context, rock, jazz or other such strands might not be considered as belonging to the genre of 'pop' because of their individual histories, motifs and musical patterns; however, in a Chinese context, most of the audience and even many music-makers include them in *liuxing yinyue* as opposed to art music or folk music. Although my thesis will place some of these genres within the overall category of C-pop, it does not aim to suggest that they are all identical in values or content. In fact, my writing will start by focusing on different styles of music (which also emerged as different musical phenomena), and treat them as a cluster of soundscapes in order to decipher how and why the musicality of C-pop has changed through its changing musical expressions.

'Musicality' in this writing is used as shorthand for 'way of being musical'. In the well-known study *How Musical is Man*, John Blacking insists that the question of man's musicality cannot be answered without first understanding the processes of cause and effect, with respect to such issues as who performs, sings and listens to music, and why. He also aptly suggests the social setting may at times change concurrently with certain music happenings or music phenomena, and that it is essential to listen with the appropriate cultural ears (Blacking 1973). In other words, there are many different ways of being musical, or 'musicalities' in my terms. Somewhat similarly, Timothy Rice proposed five different metaphors that help describe the way people approach music: music as conversation, music as text, music as history, music as art, and music as commodity (Rice 2001: 19-38). These 'metaphors' can also be recognized as corresponding to 'ways of being musical': music for commercial purpose can be a way of being musical; music for pleasure or enjoyment can be another way of being musical, and so on. Additionally, a 'way of being musical' includes all the elements involved such as music project planning, production, performance and reception, which all impact on the nature of music. Thus, everyone involved in a given musical genre in whatever capacity helps define the 'musicality' of that genre: its particular way of being musical.

Therefore, in this thesis, the 'musicality' of C-pop indicates C-pop's way of being musical, which is analysed through the musical behaviour of those involved in

C-pop. I seek to examine how C-pop's musicality has changed in parallel with the changing positions of music maker and music receiver during the period between 1985 and 2010. 'Musicality' also concerns how music comes into being, and many factors can be influential: including culture, technology, ideology and politics. However this thesis is focused on the relationship between music makers and music receivers,[1] which is a key determinant of C-pop's musicality. This writing will also give both textual and cultural explications in order to fully exemplify and illustrate how C-pop's features and characteristics have varied, and thus fully describe the musicality of C-pop over the past 25 years.

This thesis takes C-pop as a case study and will demonstrate that the people who are involved in C-pop (both music maker and music receiver) are those who primarily provide musicality to C-pop; they determine C-pop's way of being musical. The change in C-pop musicality has resulted from a shift in the interrelationship between music maker and music receiver, which has undergone a transformation from being music-maker-centric (MMC) to music-receiver-centric (MRC). Through textual and cultural explication, this thesis finally argues that the change in C-pop musicality from MMC to MRC is due to three kinds of cultural transformations:

Firstly, amongst music fans, the relationship between music maker and music receiver has changed. It was initially a trading relationship (centred on the musical work, through the exchange of money and commodity between music maker and receiver) and has become one that is based on engagement (within which pop stars become the product, and receivers not only participate, but can also to a certain extent determine the music-maker's strategy for producing music). Grounded in acts of 'musical consumption', the fans' attention has shifted from music to 'person'—the performers and stars. C-pop fans reposition themselves in relation to music and music-maker, and also form a driving force which is directing C-pop music. The position of C-pop fans has moved from stance of 'behind the stars' as invisible buyer to a stance of 'beside the stars' as visible participator.

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[1] Music, people and culture are the three principle ingredients in ethnomusicological studies, and the role and function of 'people' within a musical culture has always been a key issue. Taking Alan Merriam's model as his origin (Merriam 1964), Timothy Rice constructed a three-dimensional space of musical experience as the model for exploring human musical life (Rice 1987: 269-288). Furthermore, both music-making experiences and music-receiving experiences activate the changing nature of musician-audience relations or mediation, a point also testified by Charles Keil in his study of karaoke phenomenon (Keil 1994: 247-56). The extant literature on C-pop is mostly framed in terms of oppositions such as official/unofficial, elite/non-elite or hegemony/resistance, although they are written from numerous perspectives. I take the dichotomy of music-maker/music-receiver because these are the two groups of people who create and sustain C-pop. Other influential cultural factors and the music industry will also be included and examined. Further details will be discussed in the Literature Review (p. 5-13).

Secondly, in carrier culture, the mode of music experience has been emancipated. Between 1985 and 2010, C-pop's music carriers have been transformed twice, from a primarily aural age (which relied on transmission media such as radio and cassette), to a visual age (based on the medium of television and live concerts), and then finally to an individualized personal age (founded on media such as mobile phones, the Internet and mass music contests). After these transformations, music is no longer only an aural or even visual material, instead the new media provide the opportunity and means for music-receivers to make music themselves. The music receiver is no longer passive, since the prevalence of the latest music carriers provides a more interactive, enhanced facility for receiving, or even making music individually. The emancipation of musical values, of musicianship, of the means of music making and of content, all offer an unrestrained musical experience in contemporary China. Grassroots music making has started to flourish, and the music receiver has become central in C-pop.

Finally, in the contemporary music industry, the music makers' identity as 'musicians' has been diluted by their plural social identities. The C-pop industry has altered from being a music industry centred on music production, to an idol industry which is centred on singers. Consequently, the C-pop industry chain has changed as well, from a product-centred industry chain to a star-centred 'star industry' chain. Power struggles between musicianship and technology, music distribution and personal image distribution, musical value and market value and so forth will all occur in the development of a C-pop music-maker seeking wealth and fame. As a consequence, the music-receiver is further enabled to drive the direction of C-pop music. Therefore, the transformation within C-pop industrial culture further encourages the shift in C-pop musicality, becoming a music-receiver-centric state.

Research Questions

This writing poses three closely related questions: first, what is the musicality of C-pop between 1985 and 2010; second, how do the features and characteristics of C-pop change during this period; and third, what are the factors that result in the change of C-pop musicality. In elucidating the principal features of C-pop's musicality after 1985, this thesis not only proposes a perspective for popular and pop music study by explicating its musicality, but also develops this main theme further and answers the

question of which elements influence this musicality. In other words, this thesis addresses the issue of what the key changes in C-pop since 1985 have been, and the reasons for them. Furthermore, it has also to some degree sought to further the debate in western circles about the differences between 'popular music' and 'pop music' by considering the changing musicality found in the C-pop scene. The following account as a whole will demonstrate how the musicality of C-pop since this date can be described as a move from 'popular' towards 'pop'.

In developing the questions above, my initial concern was more simply to understand why some music is more widely popular, and for longer, in certain cultural backgrounds, when others are not so successful. In addressing this, I began to view C-pop as a cluster of soundscapes,[2] the expression and presentational sound of which varied, giving an overall diversity of styles. This allowed me to see how various musical phenomena involved in different music expressions contribute not only to their individual soundscapes but also to the broader cultural background, and so better grasp why some of the sound expressions were widely accepted by different groups of people and others preferred only by small groups. This has raised subsidiary questions, for example do some sound expressions possess attributes of 'shared-recognition', that is to say the ability to be appreciated by audiences of differing backgrounds in multiple cultural settings; and do some acquire instead a more limited capability to receive the approval of smaller groups or in a narrower set of circumstances? As I argue below, recognizing the particular type of musicality is an essential step in explaining how contrasting examples of C-pop work in relation to their respective audiences.

Answers to these questions cannot be found in any of the main three approaches to popular music in the Western literature (in brief, linking popularity to numbers of sales or listeners, to the primarily mass-media driven means of dissemination, or to social groupings such as mass culture or the working class). These approaches are already problematic even in the West, as Richard Middleton notes, pointing out that they are both partial and static (Middleton 1990: 34-63). Instead, in forming my own approach to these issues, I have chosen to explore the musicality of C-pop, its quality, state and nature, and how this in turn plays out in the relationship

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[2] According to Kay Shelemay, mapping soundscapes is a means for explaining sounds by looking into the environment that they form and from which they arise (Shelemay 2001), it is about analysing the relationship between music and its surroundings. This relationship has been approached by many ethnomusicologists, among them John Blacking, who emphasized the study of music as an expression in sound of peoples' cognition of their social and human experiences (Blacking 1973).

formed between music-receiver and music.

Acknowledging the importance of sound remains an important step within popular music studies, where holistic elucidations of 'sound' still remain infrequent. Although some musical analysis has developed within popular music studies[3] and sheds light on technical aspects of composition, performance and recording, we still lack comprehensive illuminations of the 'presentational sound' of much popular music. I use this term presentational sound to emphasize that popular music is inherently an incorporation of language, voice and music together into a single entity. This helps avoid the misunderstanding that lyrics, voice tone or other performative aspects are somehow less essential than say melody, instrumentation or rhythm. Therefore, in this study, I am not only interested in the history and musical expression of C-pop but also taking this genre as a case study through which I raise wider questions about the musicality of popular music worldwide.

Literature Review

Popular culture has been a subject of a large amount discussion and dispute; scholars face numerous definitions which differ from one another, and are sometimes even contradictory. To get a rounded understanding of Chinese popular culture a good reference is *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (1999) by Geremie Barmé. Barmé inspects what happens when global culture and Chinese capitalist-socialism meet in the marketplace. Although this book does not take much account of popular music (a key form in the wider popular culture), by elucidating the intricate affiliation between official and non-official (and counter-official) cultures within many arts, the media and social events, Barmé offers a unique perspective on Chinese contemporary lifestyle, cultures and people's ideologies. In doing so, he builds on the work of several earlier writers who have drawn attention to the interplay of official and non-official spheres in Chinese contemporary society, a point already mentioned above.

In terms of popular culture in China, two compilations of essays from the 1980s cannot be ignored, since they supply a good illustration of the wide range of understandings of 'popular' in the Chinese context. Dealing primarily with official revolutionary cultural products, such as revolutionary mass songs and the model

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[3] See Brackett 2000: 122-40; Middleton 1990, 2006; Moore 2001; Tagg 2000: 71-103; Winkler 2000: 27-58.

operas produced and disseminated by the CCP during the revolutionary period, *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts in the People's Republic of China 1949-1979* (edited by Bonnie McDougall, 1984) shows an understanding of 'popular as the most widespread'. The essays in this volume uncover the roots of Chinese popular cultural forms and their meanings to broadly based Chinese audiences. On the contrary, the collection of essays on popular culture in China, *Unofficial China: Popular Culture and Thought in the People's Republic* (Link 1989) identifies the popular with the unofficial. These two perspectives reveal two opposing models within the area of the study of popular culture world-wide. One is Adorno's representational view with regard to music (1990: 301-14), which views popular culture as forced down from above in order to maintain hegemony, and the other is the view held by John Fiske (1989), who stresses how people resist and subvert the above forces by using popular culture.[4] An integrative view is claimed by Stuart Hall (1981: 228), further elucidated by others such as Richard Middleton (1985: 26), to explain that popular culture or music cannot be essentialized as it may change from time to time and from place to place.

Contrasting dualisms are found elsewhere in studies of popular culture in China; David Johnson (1985) treats 'popular' as non-elite culture, within a frame of elite versus non-elite, and Andrew Jones (1992) looks at the relationship between hegemony and resistance or subversion. Nimrod Baranovitch notes that: 'Even forces or sub-cultures that appear to be oppositional in every aspect may nevertheless share certain ideologies and practices' (2003: 6). In each case, exploring a dichotomy of official/unofficial, elite/non-elite or hegemony/resistance can lead to a focus on popular music and culture more from the perspective of how popular music functions in society, rather than on the musical and textual characteristics by which scholars can subsequently further scrutinize its musicality. This thesis tries to redress that balance by paying closer attention to how C-pop is produced by musicians, and through examining audience reactions to their efforts. In my own studies of musician-audience relations, I have utilised perspectives from both native and Western scholars such as Brace (1991: 43-66), Buxton (2000: 427-440), Ceng and Liu (1997: 145-148), Stokes (2004: 32-48) and Zhou (1998: 105-134). Furthermore, there is work offering useful approaches to the roles of listeners, copyright and the market within broader music

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[4] Fiske argues that popular culture is 'the culture of the subordinated and disempowered... [and] is made by the people, not imposed upon them' (1989: 4, 25).

production contexts (Efird 2001: 67-86; Farrer, 2002; Gold 1993: 907-925; Lee 1995: 95-110; Gerth 2003; Keane 2002: 120-137).

Gender-related preferences in music are significant in C-pop, and here I can follow research from both Western and native scholars (Andrew and Kuiyi 2002: 137-162; Chow 1991; Curtin and Fung 2002: 263-290; Evans 1997; Zheng 1999; Zheng 1997). There are also important accounts centred on performance interpretation or textual analysis (Witzleben 1999: 241-258; Zheng, Zhou and Wu 2004). In my thesis, I also support social observations with musical analysis. In doing so, I have drawn on perspectives from outside the immediate field of C-pop, such as those of Allan Moore, who argues for the importance of the analysis of musical syntax in his *Rock, the Primary Text: Developing a Musicology of Rock* (2001). Moore addresses the idea that the study of musical meaning and communication is problematic without a technical analysis of the musical sounds.

Andrew Jones' *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music* (1992) broke new ground in the study of Chinese popular music, as it was the first Western monograph that made a rounded study of Chinese mainland popular music in the 1980s, when China re-opened itself to the Western world after the Cultural Revolution. Together with textual data (primarily song lyrics), the relevant contextual milieu is also addressed in his book. Within the contexts of production, dissemination, use, and the relevant political and cultural forces, Jones explores the differences between *tongsu* music (officially sanctioned popular music) and rock. In Jones' view, *tongsu* tends to be more oriented towards pleasure than ideology (but is nevertheless intended and perceived as hegemonic), while rock, on the other hand, is normally labelled as an underground genre, existing in a sub-cultural milieu and is typically viewed as subversive by cultural officials—a view supported by Cynthia Wong in her unpublished PhD thesis *Lost Lambs: Rock, Gender, Authenticity, and a Generational Response to Modernity in the People's Republic of China* (2007). However, in my thesis, I develop Jones' idea and discuss much up-to-date Chinese popular music within the musician-audience relationship, and then examine its musicality to further expound whether 'popular' and 'pop' in a western context are parallel to *tongsu* and *liuxing* in a Chinese context. Jones points out that the lyrics of rock are remarkably uniform in thematic topics, using notions of oppression and isolation as a site for emotional release. By applying a variety of theoretical models to the textual and contextual data, his book covers numerous important issues, such as the

history of Chinese popular music; pop music and nationalism; rock ideology; and the rise of a popular music industry in China. According to Jones, in Chinese popular music, 'genre is a function of ideology, not musical style' (p. 20), a viewpoint which relates closely to Jones' interpretation of the musical texts.

In his later book, *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (2001), Jones provides new perspectives on modern Chinese musical history. As in his first book, Jones carries out a study of the cultural and political debates centred on Chinese popular music, but this time he turns his attention back to early twentieth-century China. Illustrating the relationship between American jazz and the politics of colonialism and modernity, this historically grounded book offers a rich account of race, politics, popular culture and technology from angle of popular music and the emergent transnational mass culture of 1920s and 1930s China. Alongside biographical depictions of both western and Chinese musicians during the period in question, this book examines the use of music as a tool for social and political manipulation and the expanding popular music industry in Shanghai during the interwar period. Jones' study is also significant in that it undermines the then-extant media and historical Chinese music studies which emphasize western cultural hegemony during this period by illuminating a colonial modernity; the book tells how America and Chinese popular music existed in a reciprocal relationship in colonial Shanghai. In a way, this book is also a kind of historical record of the development of China's audio technology and infrastructure, a subject which has become increasingly part of mainstream music studies. This makes an interesting comparison with content from Chinese-language research on the history of popular music in China, such as Chen (2001: 34-37), Cheng (1992: 6-9), Guang (1997: 18-21), Tan (2007: 47-49), Wang (2009) and Zhou (1981: 15-16), much of which lacks systematic academic analysis. In fact, Jones' book further intrigued my interest in music carriers, by showing how they collaborate in the development of new musical movements, and its focus represents a subject until then less valued by native Chinese scholars.

Baranovitch makes a comprehensive study of the culturally diverse and rich popular music scene in contemporary China (up to 1997) in his *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, and Politics, 1978-1997* (2003). This has already become essential reading for anyone interested in ethnomusicology and Chinese culture. By focusing on three important contexts: ethnicity, gender, and state politics,

Baranovitch points out that, combined with new technologies and the new market economy, pop music during the 1980s and 1990s facilitated marginalized people in finding their own voices in and around the usual ubiquity of the state in China. Based on qualitative methodologies, Baranovitch gathered information through formal interviews and conversations conducted with musicians, music critics, industry insiders, scholars and also ordinary people, so allowing him to present both professional and lay viewpoints on popular music culture. With extensive fieldwork, Baranovitch also observed many related activities including recording sessions, concerts, dance parties, and television broadcasts. Covering a period of twenty years, *China's New Voices* contextualises the situation of Chinese rock in relation to the popular music of Hong Kong and Taiwan, providing focus on contemporary mainland Chinese identities and music production as a result.

The book is strong on socio-political commentary, and it elucidates how different styles of C-pop music are linked to gender and ethnicity issues. However, its musicological content seems over-simplified: there are many other points that could be explored further, not least the ways of composing such music. Like the literature mentioned above, Baranovitch offers detailed analysis of the lyrics of numerous popular repertories from the 1990s by investigating their social and political meanings. Such an account provides an understanding of the C-pop musicians' intentions and the visions that hide behind them. Nevertheless, I am more interested in finding out the latent ideological changes that underlie the lyric text and musical text of C-pop, a reason which has caused me to study lyrics from a linguistic perspective, and also to take a musicological view of songs in order to reveal the music-maker's ideologies and principles. Furthermore, the way the music is consumed by the public is not treated at all in this book; there is little systematic explanation of how C-pop music is received by its listeners, although Baranovitch explains that popular music is highly participatory in nature (2003: 4). In this case, my study of Fan Culture can be seen as a complementary study to both monographs on C-pop such as Baranaovitch's study and also to journal articles by western scholars who are mostly concerned with C-pop music receivers from the angle of youth culture (Chong 1991: 55-74; Gold 1991: 594-612; de Kloet 2005: 609-626). The section that explicates Fan Culture in this thesis focuses on the way that music is received, the conduct and the changing function of the music receiver, and the increasingly dominant role of music fans.

In terms of the role and function of the media in C-pop, *Chinese Media,*

Global Contexts (edited by Lee Chin Chuan, 2003) is a valuable account from the western point of view, in which multidisciplinary analyses examine how global forces collide with Chinese ideology and nationalism. A Chinese account by Bao Zhaohui, *I Moved, I Got Dizzy* (*Wo dong, wo yunxuan*, 2004) offers a contrasting case. Bao provides an elucidation of C-pop from the perspective of media transformations. Bao unfolds the changing ways in which people experience music, for instance as related to their lifestyle choices, and consequently investigates the interrelationship between the media, people's daily lives and cultural structures. Bao's writing remains very much within a Chinese cultural perspective, which leaves space still for the expanded perspectives of researchers able to draw a larger frame of reference around their subject area.

One such example is *China with a Cut: Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music* (2010) by Jeroen de Kloet. My thesis and Kloet's work are similar from the aspect of the researcher's position: we both work as cross-space researchers experiencing and scrutinizing our topic from multiple perspectives. Examining the illegal import of 'cut' compact discs in China during the 1990s, Kloet assesses how this phenomenon changed Chinese youth's views about music and culture, and how they were subsequently inspired by those CDs to explore new musical sounds for Chinese pop. It not only resulted in a new lifestyle for Chinese youth, but also encouraged them to disengage from the long established dominant Maoist ideology. In addition, to further understand Chinese music as a whole and its relation to and conflict with the broader western music culture, Richard Curt Kraus' *Piano and Politics in China: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music* (1989) provides a helpful account. In fact, contrary to Kraus, my thesis takes an up-date perspective and argues that the tight bond between art, music and politics in mainland China (which was the focus of Kraus's book) is loosened in the present day.

Wang Siqi's *Contemporary Urban Pop Music in China: Study of the Interaction between Pop Music and Its Social Context* (*Zhongguo dangdai chengshi liuxing yinyue: yinyue yu shehui wenhua huanjing hudong yanjiu*, 2009), is much more focused on C-pop. Wang depicts the main historical events that took place during C-pop's evolution, to further investigate the interaction between popular music and its social context. Dividing C-pop into five periods: 1978-1985 (period of commencement), 1986-1988 (first development stage), 1989-1992 (modulation period), 1993-1996 (second development stage), 1997-2003 (era of diversity), Wang's writing

covers almost every event taking place during this time. However, the book does not adopt a consistent methodology or theoretical framework. Wang offers the reader few clues as to how he did his research; and music reception, the development of the music industry and media, and textual analysis are all omitted. Nonetheless, Wang's book is still a valuable guide to C-pop and Chinese culture, as it contains a tremendous amount of background and historical information.

A newly published book *Cries of Joy, Songs of Sorrow: Chinese Pop Music and Its Cultural Connotations* (2010) by Marc L. Moskowitz focuses on 'Mandopop' (Mandarin Chinese-language pop music), but Moskowitz explores its cultural implications in the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan, and assesses how the music of each region echoes the other. In Moskowitz's view, Mandopop introduces new gender roles through its lyrics and consequently builds a fresh expression of both male and female identities and individualism (2010: 1). Moskowitz also states that Mandopop is a platform reflecting people's changing concerns since the music is tightly connected with people's life experiences (2010: 40). His book explains Taiwan's historically central status with regard to the Chinese-language(s) pop music industry in East Asia. He explores numerous songs in depth, pursuing the theme of 'loneliness' that Mandopop often projects, which he identifies as a site for 'sharing' and for the purpose of searching for emotional equilibrium (2010: 65). This connects with gender issues, as Moskowitz notes, also describing cross-gender behaviours and constructions. The author also lays bare listeners' roles as active participants in receiving the message delivered by the songs, rather than as passive consumers (2010: 76). In terms of this engaging interchange, it is a little dissatisfying to observe that the book neglects the angle of musician-audience relations, especially as Moskowitz conducts interviews not only with performers and song writers, but also with dozens of ordinary people in Taipei and Shanghai. However, this gives me the chance to conduct further research into this aspect in my thesis through interviewing both music-makers and receivers. Furthermore, Moskowitz mainly draws attention to music from Taiwan and how it appeals to audiences in both the PRC and Taiwan, rather than the musical genres created in the PRC.

In order to generate a better elucidation of C-pop, cross-references to studies which focus on other nations' popular music culture are also useful, especially those accounts concerning popular music from East Asian countries and regions. Many journals provide such studies, for instance, *Popular Music, Ethnomusicology, CHIME*,

Popular Music and Society, Asia Music, Cultural Studies, The China Quarterly, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies. As comparative and contrastive references, these studies supply analysis based on various perspectives including cultural, linguistic, colonial, post-colonial, globalization, glocalization, and transnational angles. In this thesis, my elucidation of C-pop has benefited from accounts that focus on the music of Hong Kong (Erni 2001: 389-418, 2007: 86-108; Ho 2000: 341-353, 2003: 143-157), Taiwan (Gold 1993: 907-925), Singapore (Khiun 2003: 217-233; Kong 1994: 19-36), Japan (Aoki 1994: 5; Moody 2006: 209-222), South Korea (Lee 1992: 429-450) and their influence on the PRC. Furthermore, for understanding popular music in a global context, *The Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World* (edited by John Shepherd, David Horn and David Laing, 2005) provides useful knowledge in terms of world popular music, and this encyclopaedia facilitated my thesis with both comparative views and connective information.

On the subject of C-pop, many journal articles are concerned with the social and political flux and people's activities, and how they react with each other through experiencing C-pop music (Chow 2009: 544-564; Fung 2006: 71-88; Huang 2003: 183-202; Steen 1998: 151-164). For instance, in Anthony Fung's "'Think Globally, Act Locally", China's Rendezvous with MTV' (2006: 71-88) Fung illustrates the transformation of the changing ideologies of the state through focusing on the reception of popular music through media such as MTV. Though this study's focus is centred on the state authority's function and stance in C-pop production; as a researcher Fung is a good role-model since he observes C-pop with the eyes of the 'other' but is also 'allied and associated' as he examines mainland C-pop from two external political locales (Hong Kong and Taiwan).

Therefore, in terms of framework, this thesis will differ from many other popular music studies which usually offer analysis in terms of a dichotomy of official/unofficial, elite/non-elite or hegemony/resistance. My research will even out the balance with a closer consideration of how C-pop is produced and received within studies of musician-audience relations; and by examining the changing musicality of C-pop by looking at the various cultural transformations, in which the various power struggles between music-maker and music-receiver will be assessed. The analysis of musical and textual characteristics will also support the exploration of musicality in this thesis, as it specifies music-making and music-receiving experience through both textual and contextual analysis. In addition, my thesis is framed in a cross-space

perspective; for the purpose of providing a persuasive elucidation of contemporary C-pop music.

My Background to This Study

Basically speaking, I am a native researcher whose formative years as one of the 'seventh generation' (those born in 1970s) matched the growth of C-pop, which should be an additional advantage for me in studying C-pop. Not only has this series of musical trends been engraved on my mind, I am also a witness of and participant in the social and historical changes underpinning the changes in musical tastes. Obtaining my music education in China but further educated in the UK, where I built up my academic skills, my personal experiences have allowed me to observe C-pop as an insider whilst also learning to regard it from a distance as an object of study. Such a situation gives me 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' perspectives, a concept Clifford Geertz (2000) borrowed from psychologist Heinz Kohut and that he argues is necessary in building up a full interpretation of culture. In this, the former attitude is one weighted toward insiders, and the latter toward outsiders.

As a native researcher, I have undertaken research working primarily at home and living amongst musicians and others. One advantage of this status is that I do not have to cross any cultural boundaries to carry out my study (although some boundaries in understanding might exist); however, that does not mean I have no communication boundaries. In the case of Chinese music studies, it can sometimes be easier for a foreign scholar to get access in the field as compared with a Chinese native scholar (with regard to their cultural traditions, some Chinese seem to prefer to speak more freely to foreigners, and may become more guarded when interacting with Chinese researchers). However, although I am not a western researcher, I still obtained certain advantages during my fieldwork as someone with a kind of overseas-based background from my studies abroad, which I will detail in the following section 'Contemplating the Field'.

Studying abroad changed my views and challenged my previously unacknowledged assumptions about listening to and appreciating music. I still remember clearly one particular time when a few Chinese music research students came to my house for a reading group and to share some music videos. I found myself feeling like an outsider when I saw the dancing style and the overall presentation of the

music video. Dancers dressed as soldiers enacted the bravery of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and their willingness to sacrifice their own lives to protect their people and country. I wondered to myself, why do they dance in such a way to propagate nationalism? I was surprised by my own reaction, because the music video showed performances I had seen very often just few years ago when I still lived in China, and in which I had previously regarded as unproblematic and even unremarkable. While pondering my own reaction to the video, I also observed that the other Chinese students, who were then newcomers to the UK, appeared to appreciate the videos as if they were still in China. This helped me realize that my earlier cultural conceptions were being shaken as a result of my western academic training. This small case made me recognize that, once I had experienced distance for a certain time, I could use this to bring a pair of critical eyes to my established perceptions and implicit values.[5]

Situations like this have allowed me to understand Geertz's 'experience-near' state as being one that involves engagement, witnessing and even uncritical participation, while his 'experience-distant' situation involves active self-questioning, pondering and objectification. This connects directly to the 'participant objectivation' means of study introduced by Pierre Bourdieu (2003: 281-94). Bourdieu brings attention to an objective world of habitus. The most common method used during ethnomusicological fieldwork is participant observation, however, Bourdieu's 'participant objectivation' model differs by exploring the social conditions that the observers are able to cognize (which is not the same as being objective or not, a point followed up in much of the rethinking of participant observation by certain US scholars in the 1980s). Bourdieu recognized that a limitation of conventional participant observation is that people cannot observe their own action while being participants. His model seeks to reconcile the objective (field) and the subjective (habitus): it not only stresses the researcher's physical relation to the research object, but also requires a fusion of the inside and outside of the field, in order to 'objectivize' the subject. It rethinks what social conditions construct the views and personal habitus of researchers and informants alike. As a cross-space researcher—one who grew up as native, and came to study this topic overseas—my dual experience enables me to be aware of and identify with cultural comprehension, and also ponder my research from

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[5] In terms of how I developed my critical eyes in my research and practice, please see the next section, Contemplating the Field.

a position of cultural contrast caused by distance.

A researcher's position in fieldwork is not only related to her research perspectives, but also develops through the employment of specific research methodologies. Therefore, in the following section, I consider a series of episodes that occurred during my fieldwork, to reflect further on fieldwork methods within C-pop music research.

Contemplating the Field

The Issue of 'Insider' and 'Outsider' In the spring of 2007, after renewing contact with people I had met during fieldwork for my Master's degree, I went back to China for my first in-depth fieldwork trip on my doctoral topic. I went to meet an important figure, Jiang Xiaoyu, a famous pop music critic who has also experienced and witnessed the development of C-pop for over twenty years. My decision to start with Jiang Xiaoyu was because he is an absolute insider but also has remained detached. A mastermind of the whole C-pop project, Jiang is a former rock band founder, and currently a prominent music critic, song lyricist, CEO of an entertainment company (which contracts a number of professional singers); and he knows and engages well with almost every part of the C-pop industry chain. Most importantly in terms of my research, although he is not a singer, he packages singers and also designs marketing strategies for singers; this means he knows intimately how certain singers and certain music products become as they are. As one of my contacts said, 'You want to know something about Chinese pop during these years? Then ask Xiaoyu.' To take Jiang Xiaoyu's own words: 'Those singers are the product'. So I asked myself why don't I seek for clues from the product designer, rather than from the products themselves.

Jiang was warm-hearted from the time we first met. The first day I accompanied him from afternoon until pretty late; it was midnight when we finished meeting with a musician. I was just about to say 'Thanks for taking me everywhere today, and I'll see you tomorrow,' when he announced, 'Now I am going to Houhai (a lake in central Beijing, famous in recent years for nightlife and home to many popular restaurants, bars and cafes) for my next business, are you coming with me?' I said: 'At this time of the night?' He smiled and replied, 'Now it's just the start of the day'. I looked at him: he seemed not at all drowsy. He added, 'I thought you wanted to find out as much as you can about "our circle" (*quan zi*)'. 'Certainly,' I said, 'Sure, I will

go.' In Houhai, we met his business partner and they were chatting, joking and occasionally talking about a plan about how to promote a new singer. At nearly three or four o'clock in the morning, I could not pretend I was fully awake any longer. Looking at how drowsy I was, Jiang laughed and said, 'How do you feel about "this circle" this first day? If you can't be a night owl, you'll miss a lot of things you ought to know.' The concept of 'circle' was embedded into my mind from then on.

The importance of the idea of a 'circle' connects to another episode. I went to the Midi Rock Music Festival in 2007 with a fellow-student, Zhang Chi, from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. That was the first time we had met, although we had long-term contact online. I knew him because he was also a doctoral student studying pop music. He was the former DJ of a music programme in radio broadcasting. In Zhang's own words, he is one of the gate-keepers for pop singers. As he said this, he received a message from a fairly well-known singer asking for his help to promote a new song. I was there, and he showed me the message to prove his description of himself. Zhang lit up a cigarette, passed me one and asked, 'Do you smoke?' My answer was no, and he looked surprised, asking me, 'How do you communicate with your informants in this circle if you don't even smoke?' I began to be vaguely aware of the first hurdle in my fieldwork: should I become one of that 'circle'? In ethnomusicological tradition, or any of the other disciplines such as anthropology and sociology which take fieldwork as one of their main methodologies, the answer no doubt was yes. However, another conversation just about a month later led me to rethink the issue once again, my status of being 'insider' or 'outsider'.

During my fieldwork, I gradually got to know some singers, and sometimes we went out together for leisure or other activities. Although they knew I was there to do research, bit by bit, as our mutual understanding and trust increased, the conversations between us became casual and relaxed. Like many ethnomusicologists, I prefer this casual and natural conversation to formal interviews, talking in front of a microphone, since the information seems more natural and real, rather than something perhaps refined from a preformed and arranged talk. One particular day I was with Si Han, a female singer from Niaoren Company. Chatting, I mentioned that I had been out for dinner with her boss, the president Mr Zhou Yaping. She listened to what I said while she was also concentrating on driving, and she reacted naturally, saying, 'Don't listen to him! He won't tell you the truth. If you really want to know something, I'll tell you; anyway I am thinking of leaving his company. You are not in his circle, so

there is no necessity for me to hide anything from you.'

Two points here caught my attention. One was that although my relationship with Si Han was obviously closer than with Mr Zhou, how could I really tell which of them was the most reliable if they disagreed over information relating to their work together? The other was that perhaps Mr Zhou might not trust me with the truth because I was an outsider, 'not one in this circle'; but then on the other hand was Miss Si going to tell me the truth also because I was an outsider and she herself was about to become one too? And if so, can a researcher always get genuine information by becoming an insider?

Miss Si's attitude links to a third occasion when a group of us sat together and talked. Liu Xiaoshan, a performance group leader whom I had just met that day was about to say something, but before he began, he paused and asked, 'Is everyone here is *ziji ren*?' (This means 'people on our own side', an indication of people who are close friends in a small circle.) I knew he meant me, since I was the only newcomer there. Another person there whom I had known longer replied, 'Yes, we are all *ziji ren*, come on, don't stand humming and hawing, just speak up.' Again, the importance of being seen as a fellow insider, a '*ziji ren*' or member of the 'circle', was underlined, words that made me think again and again of my own role during fieldwork.

The above occasions drew my attention to my standing as an insider or relative outsider at any particular moment, and show how that standing (and the perceptions of others toward it) led to certain data being offered to me or indeed not being disclosed. On some occasions, it was advantageous to be seen as an outsider, but at other times only a fellow insider gained the trust needed to acquire new perspectives. This ongoing duality corresponds in a way to my own sense of being an insider to Chinese culture, but an outsider prior to this study with regard to the C-pop industry, and with my being a native researcher conducting research from outside China. I had to learn to balance and rebalance my position as it shifted, at times, from being insider to outsider during my research. It reminded me keep being critical about what I heard and saw.

Issues Relating to Data Here, it is necessary to reflect on the reliability of the data gathered, since the above occasions revealed a profound issue about which researchers need to think further. As I mentioned, in the conversation with Miss Si Han, her saying 'Don't listen to him! He won't tell you the truth' about another informant's words, made me wonder about the reliability of data that researchers collect from

fieldwork interviews. We all know the priority and value of first-hand data; although interviewing is the most common method of collecting it during research, can the researcher really trust in interviews? And not only is the information itself reliable, but how long does it then retain its accuracy? In fact, not only is pop music in a liquid state, the related research data also shows liquidity in this quickly shifting area of studies.

A case in point is offered by almost all western accounts of C-pop,[6] which mention Cui Jian and his rock music—to westerners, the ideological and political implications of Cui's music have been a topic of profound interest. Even Cui Jian himself said things like, 'My music is just like a knife that is pointed at you', 'We have nothing, that's why 'Nothing to My Name' (Yiwu suoyou) came out' and other such statements when western scholars interviewed him early in his career.[7] However, a few years later, when interviewers mentioned his early works, especially the song 'Nothing to My Name', Cui Jian responded lightly 'That's just a love song, a simple love song; this song appeared in a special era, people bestowed and endowed it with too much implication and meaning. After the first time I performed it, this song was no longer mine'; 'Whether my old songs or new songs, they are not political songs, they are just love songs.'[8]

Interviews, then, may give rise to different points of view at different times. As researchers we need to be aware of even tiny aspects when we obtain certain data, whether it is first- or second-hand. As we saw in the preceding section, information about the interviewer, his or her background (including standing as an outsider or insider), what kind of interview takes place between the interviewer and interviewee, and so on, all have to be taken into consideration. On this point, second-hand data[9] can be as valuable as first-hand data, in that second-hand data also carries meaning and significance revealing a certain historical situation. It displays the ideology, attitude and standpoint held by interviewees and interviewer alike. Cui Jian's sayings from some years ago may show the cynical and rebellious emotions of the young Cui Jian; on the other hand, the middle-aged Cui Jian nowadays offers more moderate reflections about the significance of his musical works. Or perhaps the earlier

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[6] Chong 1991: 4-22; Huang 2001: 1-11; Jones 1992; Matusitz 2010: 156-75.
[7] Many interviews with Cui Jian can be found on websites (both academic and non-academic), such as http://ent.cn.yahoo.com/star/club/cuijian/; see also Andrew Jones's book *Like a Knife* (1992).
[8] Cui Jian, Yahoo interviews and interviews by Phoenix TV. Please refer to http://ent.cn.yahoo.com/star/club/cuijian/, access date: 29-11-2008; for further information, please also refer to websites such as http://ent.ifeng.com/feichangdao/detail_2009_12/21/208597_0.shtml, access date: 29-11-2008.
[9] Second-hand data here refers to interview data taken from the writing of other scholars, in order to compare data.

interviews show him in a more positive and revolutionary state of mind and the latter reveal him more cautious as a result of political pressure during the intervening years. Or perhaps the interviewer on each occasion has differed, resulting in a contrasting set of questions and responses.

An encounter during my fieldwork, the interview with singer Xue Cun, demonstrates this point. When we talked about his song 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' (Dongbei ren doushi huoleifeng),[10] he told me the true meaning of this song, which is that the spiritual model represented by Lei Feng no longer exists in contemporary China. Xue then said, 'If you publish your research in China, my demand is that you not put this point into your writing.' He added: 'I am telling you because you are doing your study outside China, and your dissertation will not be shown to those who are living here.'[11] I certainly respect Xue Cun's demand, but this conversation makes me wonder about other Chinese scholars' interviews with him. As the most popular singer at the beginning of 2000, Xue Cun was interviewed countless times by journalists, scholars and research students but presumably without making the same disclosure. Therefore, the most important point here is that researchers not only need to bear in mind the question of 'who we (researchers) are talking to,' but also the issue of 'who they (interviewees) are talking to' and 'where' (in what circumstance) and 'when' the talk took place.

The Issue of E-Fieldwork Certain ethnomusicologists have recently referred to the term 'E-fieldwork': although initial reactions to virtual fieldwork were marked by suspicion, these scholars have taken an objective stance to the possibilities provided by new technology and tentative studies have emerged. Abigail Wood, for instance, attempts to explore how musical lives are played out online, how we engage with the Internet as site of research, and how we take on an Internet-based investigation as ethnomusicologists (Wood 2008: 170-87; see also Cooley, Meizel and Syed 2008: 90-107). Following Wood, my reflections on E-fieldwork here deliberate on how we use the Internet as a tool for information exchange when we use E-fieldwork (as a part

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[10] Lei Feng was a soldier of the People's Liberation Army in the Peoples' Republic of China. After his death, Lei was characterized as a selfless and modest person who was devoted to the Communist Party, Chairman Mao Zedong and the people of China. In the posthumous 'Learn from Comrade Lei Feng' (xiang Lei Feng tongzhi xuexi) campaign, initiated by Mao in 1963, Lei became the symbol of nationwide propaganda and the youth of the country were encouraged to follow his example. After Mao's death, Lei Feng remained a cultural icon symbolizing selflessness and modesty. Owing to relaxation of political controls, Lei Feng's life has been more openly questioned by scholars and the public in the post-Mao era.

[11] Xue Cun, interview, 01-06-2007, Beijing. What Xue Cun was concerned about may still be going to happen, but Xue's words did show that he provided the information because he believed in me, that my work in the end will not be accessible by people who live in China.

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of fieldwork, normally when studying at a distance) rather than using the Internet simply as an information archive. Moreover, my reflection here demonstrates the practicality of E-fieldwork as a complementary methodology in the case of pop music study.

During fieldwork, the Internet can be a tool for researchers who are at a distance to utilize, in order to contact and communicate with informants and obtain necessary and appropriate data from them. Such an approach allows one to augment interviews which the researcher feels to be incomplete, and to expand ideas later, since the instant message system is a good way to keep informants in touch and in dialogue. During my fieldwork, I found people regularly exchanged contact details by giving their MSN messenger account or another similar method: exchanging online contacts is as commonplace and practical as exchanging phone numbers.

Besides, not only can real-time online conversation allow researchers to interact with their informants, but some other online facilities also help researchers to reach a better understanding about their informants and their ways of talking about and creating music. In response to my sometimes rather formal questions, a few of my informants told me directly: 'Oh, go to my webpage, whatever new things happen about me, I put the information up.' My scholar friends were the same, such as You Jingbo, a young scholar working on Chinese popular music history, who told me, 'You are welcome to browse my blog; all my thoughts are there. I also update them regularly.' Such individuals are keen to receive hits on their sites and often leave space for comments.

Furthermore, well-rounded fieldwork needs to scrutinize the activities and communications of both music-makers and music-receivers, and the online chat room is indeed a good place to collect public opinion on and interaction with musicians. Almost every singer or band has their own official website, which is not only a place offering information to the music receivers but also a place for receiving information via responses and comments. Public forums like these are also an arena for people where they can meet to discuss music, singers and new musical trends. Objectively speaking, people can express their true ideas and opinions relatively directly and freely, without some of the constraints of face-to-face conversation.

Certainly, no one can deny the priority of physically joining in as a participant-observer; this gives researchers direct understanding of what they see and experience first-hand. However, E-fieldwork through the Internet offers a benefit to

researchers: it enables scholars to keep long-term contacts and it allows them to participate in the Internet culture that surrounds contemporary music making, and seek complementary and additional information when they return from the 'field' and are distant from their informants.

Issues on Native C-pop Studies The study of popular music has been increasingly undertaken by scholars from different disciplines. Ethnomusicology has a particular focus on the interactions of music, people and culture, and so popular music has also been taken into consideration by ethnomusicologists with special emphasis on its profuse social meanings. However, reference to these ethnomusicological pop music studies remains somewhat invisible in mainstream pop music studies. As Fabian Holt pointed out, 'attempts at integrating ethnography into popular music studies have not resulted in collective or organizational efforts', despite the Society for Ethnomusicology founding a popular music section in 1996 which continues to grow (Holt 2008: 40).

The situation is, if anything, even less well integrated with regard to the study of C-pop in China, since there has been relatively little indigenous research on popular music in China so far and since ethnomusicological study there has tended to focus on traditional music. Wang Siqi, who did his doctoral thesis on C-pop, summarises the difficulties facing someone interested in C-pop research. He points out that due to the lack of an academic framework in China, and also because this is a new field, many studies have to start from collation, synopsizing documentary material and including it in the writing. This makes the resulting work feel somewhat like a historical presentation and description. Wang said: 'But I have to, even if such a way of writing turns out to be lacking in academic sense in the end.'[12] During my fieldwork, I realized that the emergent research in C-pop studies often lacks a sense of the trends and approaches of international pop music study.

In part this is because the infrastructure of this subject is only slowly being established. For example, there is a Popular Music Study Centre, founded at the Beijing Contemporary Music Institute; unfortunately, there has not been even one journal or paper properly published by it until now. The institute mainly provides practical training programmes in pop music, and the study centre actually is only a shell. When I looked for native academic suggestions (also with a view to building up

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[12] Wang Siqi, interview, 14-03-2007, Beijing. Wang Siqi is a music lecturer at Henan University.

a good network of native Chinese pop music researchers), the situation seemed not at all optimistic. Orthodox music scholars made no attempt to veil their disdain of pop music research, and the few scholars who focus on C-pop were 'mostly doing work sorting out data.'[13] This situation of historical data collection can also be discerned from the small numbers of articles about C-pop published in academic music journals in the past few years.[14]

Surely, C-pop music studies can take approaches from many different disciplines to build its theoretical framework. I would not say my research is a definitive model for all C-pop studies, but I have applied this composite approach by drawing on ethnographic depiction, participant-observer fieldwork, socio-cultural explication, textural music interpretation, and also some criticism-based illumination. In doing so, I am influenced by ethnomusicologists who have already drawn out study modes for music research in urban settings (Stock 2002) or cross-disciplinary studies (Berger 2008: 62-75; Stokes 2003: 218-239), but I am also striving to find appropriate ways to apply these insights to the Chinese context and so contribute to the stronger growth of C-pop studies there.

Methodologies

After locating my niche within this study, which benefits from both my 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' outlooks, I describe here the experiences and the methods of research that contribute to my overall study approach. The primary methodologies of my work are: Part One, a critical ethnomusicological approach leading to a holistic elucidation of the subject area; Part Two, a musicological approach with ethnomusicological analysis taking the leading role, and this will be a particular contribution to popular music study since this is the first time popular music has been fully transcribed to facilitate scrutiny of the musical text; Part Three, ethnographic thick description as the major methodology. Since these latter methodologies are well established, in the following passage, I mainly enunciate what I see as the critical ethnomusicological approach.

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[13] Wang Siqi, interview, 14-03-2007, Beijing.
[14] Chen 2005: 107-25; Li 1997: 6-10; Wu 2008: 11-5.

1. Critical Ethnomusicology

Since Part One mainly expounds and evaluates a variety of soundscapes which emerged in C-pop in the 1980s, I apply a critical ethnomusicology approach, by which I put forward substantive critical perspectives constructed by speculation and analysis within an ethnomusicological research practice.

'Speculative' and 'analytic' are somewhat different but indivisible branches in the philosophy of history. One attempts to discover certain meanings of significance through the course of history, the other recapitulates logical, conceptual and epistemological matters from the investigating analyses. Popular music as a live entity provides an excellent platform to allow us to examine musical phenomena in a speculative way by looking at ongoing historical processes, and then to review in an analytic manner by focusing on past musical developments. The two are actually interlaced, they work well in combination, and all the way through my research the 'speculative' is definitely marked by an inquisitive interest that is both critical and 'analytic'. As a result, the whole study necessitates 'critical thinking' and 'critical language,' which always dominate the concept of the research within any such study in the social sciences.

Critical Theory Precisely speaking, critical theory has two meanings with different history and origins, one originating in literary criticism and the other in sociology. Critical theory in literary studies is, via interpretation, to understand the connotation of human texts and symbolic expressions. Critical social theory, on the other hand, is a form of self-reflective knowledge which aims to expand autonomy and reduce domination; it is not only an examination of society and culture, but also provides a critique.[15] As an ethnomusicological case study, my research draws primarily on the sociological variant.

In social theory, critical ethnography is a 'Type of reflection that examines culture, knowledge and action... critical ethnographers describe, analyze, and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centres, and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain' (Thomas 1993: 2-3). It does not aim to do what conventional ethnography does—'Describes what is', but 'Asks what could be' (Thomas 1993: 4). Such critical thinking uses an oblique angle to rethink socially dominant or

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[15] Please refer to Hoy and McCarthy's book (1994) as example.

conventional understandings, and it requires the researcher to study with a self-reflective perspective in order to reduce the scope for normative assumptions to impact on the research data itself. In this way, critical theory integrated with social sciences such as geography, sociology, history and anthropology has made a large contribution to improve our understanding of society. As a cross-discipline that covers not only music studies but also requires a thorough socio-cultural grounding, ethnomusicologists regularly employ approaches from the social sciences to interpret the music of a certain society or ethnic group. Therefore, critical theory is an important tool in ethnomusicology where it can contribute to its theoretical and methodological base.

Criticism in Music Study In the Western context, Chinese popular music is studied under the disciplines of Asian studies, ethnomusicology, media studies and so on. When taking Chinese popular music as a research subject and object, I wondered what was the most productive and efficacious way for researchers to reveal the multiple undertones (social, cultural and human) generated by the actual overtones of the pop music industry. Analysis and criticism are the two major ways of elucidating a particular kind of music.[16]

Analysis, naturally, is a common technique on which to base interpretations within music studies; however, it often also builds up a barrier 'between the artist and his audience, and perhaps it does indeed fail to confront the work of art in its proper aesthetic terms' from a musicologist's view (Kerman 1980: 312-313). On the other hand, analyses in ethnomusicological studies have been regarded with suspicion, due to the difficulties in showing that they sufficiently 'represent local understandings' (Stock 2008: 188-206). Socially grounded criticism, then, can be a further means of overcoming this apparent pitfall of analysis.

Compared with analysis, Jonathan Stock states that criticism 'often uses a different vocabulary and ranges more widely through contextual data to form an interpretation of a performance or work' (2008: 195). As 'the validity of a critical account lies not in its ability to stand as a summary of mass awareness but in its aptness (selection of the best examples), its insights (penetrating beyond surface-level description) and its communicative power (saying it well)' (Stock 2008: 195), criticism and analysis seem to overlap and interlace in music studies.

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[16] Moskowitz (2010) offers a good case for overlapping both analysis and criticism when he elucidates the influences and discourses between Taiwanese and mainland Chinese pop.

In the pop music domain, criticism more often indicates the subjective appreciation given by critics when they pay attention to individual works. In terms of pop music interpretation, analysis is entirely replaced by the criticisms offered by critics; on the other hand, criticism remains a rather weak voice within scholarly academic research, where, for a long time, analysis has been the main means of explication.

Criticism of Pop Music Study In popular music studies circles, some scholars have already noticed the analytical consequences of criticism; however, it still fails to be regarded as important in popular music study. Meanwhile, more and more research on popularized traditional music in the ethnomusicological sphere has emerged, with a common method being to frame musical study within ethnographic bases, this due to an emphasis on the 'context', on the 'culture'. Some such studies do not take the music studied as 'popular music' even though such music occurs and circulates in the mass media and music industry. Instead, their major focus is much more on such issues as the traditional music seen (often negatively) under transformation or possibly on the micro-study of a small community of listeners, rather than regarding them more widely as 'popular music' systems. Although this situation is no longer the case in more recent ethnomusicological studies, 'criticism' is still a word rarely found when scholars define their own analyses, owing to their unwillingness to be identified as having a 'lack of intellectual rigor' (Kerman 1980: 311). As Kerman also indicated, the true focus and the outcome of analysis always tackle the 'functional coherence of individual works of art, their "organic unity"... and that is one of the things—one of the main things—that people outside of music mean by criticism' (1980: 312).

Thus, although the concept of utilizing criticism in pop music studies is now on the upsurge in current musicological work, actual criticism has not yet been employed in C-pop studies. Books on C-pop, such as *Like a Knife* (Jones 1992), *Yellow Music* (Jones 2001) and *China's New Voices* (Baranovitch 2003), indeed provide rather valuable information about C-pop music, but in spite of all the cultural exposition and social construction they provide to demonstrate certain pop ideologies and genres, their verdicts are habitually rooted in observation and analyses from a foreigner's point of view, rather than one that questions the existing entity with a critical approach from a native researcher's view.

Critical Pop Music Study in Ethnomusicology Middleton's concern with

pop music draws attention to the 'cultivated' side of his training as a musicologist and the 'popular' side of the research subject-matter; the two together provide a 'fractured unity' of a musical field, recognising which is the way 'to a faithful reflection' (1990: 123). This perspective reflects that he has already restricted himself objectively to look at the subject—pop music. As an ethnomusicology student, who brings both 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' perspectives to work on this native music genre, I would rather use an ethnographical way. If Middleton's suggestion is a unity of two sides within a musicological particularity, I might call my study method the reciprocity of the two within an ethnomusicological individuality.

Therefore, in my writing, beyond analysis from the position of 'experience-near', I use criticism from the stance of 'experience-distant' to ask further questions to which native researchers have not yet paid attention in C-pop study. 'Experience-near' and 'experience-distant' perspectives allow me to question long-known matters in depth, and by fixing myself into such a position, I have already located myself in a critical position. Thus, the combined base of taking an ethnomusicological approach to utilizing criticism will provide a full range of clarifications and analyses for my research. This approach is desirable and it is appropriate to designate it as 'critical-ethnomusicological'.

Critical Ethnomusicology Proposing a critical ethnomusicology is to truly call for employing criticism in all ethnomusicological studies. In the academic domain, everything is and should be questionable and any principle can be polished, argued and disbelieved. Thus, critical thinking is an imperative we ought always to bear in mind in order to construct a rounded exposition. Peter Manuel offers a good case of being critical; he spurned the conventional model of study by taking on an attitude of 'mistrust' to dispute the existing dominant model framework of the field (Manuel 1993: xiv-xvii; 4-7). This is a good example of how to form self-reflective knowledge in order to expand autonomy and reduce domination.

As Thomas notes: 'Critical ethnography is a style of analysis and discourse embedded within conventional ethnography' and 'Critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose' (1993: 3-4). Likewise, a critical ethnomusicology is in fact also a conventional ethnomusicology, but one with a positioned attitude. To take Thomas's definition of critical ethnography as reference, a critical ethnomusicological study also relies 'on qualitative interpretation of data, core rules of methods and analysis' (1993: 3); and it 'refers to the reflective process of

choosing between conceptual alternatives and making value-laden judgments of meaning and method' (Thomas and O'Maolchatha 1989: 147, cited in Thomas 1993: 4). Further, critical ethnomusicologists accept and add to their research the 'task of raising their voice to speak *to* an audience *on behalf* of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects' voice' (1993: 4). Therefore, a critical ethnomusicology still consists of elucidation of 'people', 'musical sound' and 'culture', and focuses on socio-cultural aspects and people's music making-receiving behaviours in a local context.

The concept of 'insider' and 'outsider' is a key perspective in ethnomusicology, one that emphasises the needs of personal cultural experience to the external researcher, such as those that become available through participant-observational practice. Since critical theory asks 'what could be', it offers ethnomusicologists a way of scrutinizing another music culture as if the researcher were originally an insider seeking an outsider's more distant viewpoint, such as was my intention in this study. Therefore, my way of scrutinizing C-pop (based on both experience-near and experience-distant points of view), which benefits from all my growth, education and research background, provides a case study for critical ethnomusicology. With reference to critical ethnography, my experience-near perspective allows me look at C-pop and describe what it is from a native angle, and my experience-distant perspective enables me ask what it could be, when viewed externally.

2. Musicological Analysis

In Part Two, further elucidations of C-pop's primary presentational devices, such as language and voice—the textual sounds, are provided. I also transcribe three songs into full score to make a further explication on the aspect of the instrumental backing music, and I believe this is a particular contribution made by this study, to both C-pop study and pop music study worldwide. A musicological analysis is employed to deal with the resulting scores. Although musicological analysis does not count as a common methodology in pop music studies,[17] the full score musicological analysis is even rare

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[17] As I mentioned earlier, musicological pop music study methods still play an important role, for further details about this kind of research please refer to Brackett 2000: 122-40; Middleton 1990, 2006; Moore 2001; Tagg 2000: 71-103; Winkler 2000: 27-58.

within the field, but such forms of analysis have a long history in classical music studies, therefore, I shall not detail this methodology further here.

3. Ethnographic Thick Description

Part Three is about the cultural background of C-pop, dealing with the various cultural settings within which C-pop is created and consumed. My main method in Part Three is to combine practical and classical anthropological methods: making an 'ethnographic thick description' of the observed data, with the aim of assessing the data and eventually forming an individual analysis around it. Interviews and detailed observations are all included.

For the observed data, I shall use the 'thick description' of anthropology deployed by Clifford Geertz in his interpretation of culture, a term which originally comes from Gilbert Ryle (Geertz 1973). In Geertz's essay, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,' he explains that even a small event needs to be elucidated within a context in order for us to know what it means; because as the context changes, the meaning changes. He argues that all human behaviour should be explicated in the same way. Geertz also further explains that a 'thin description' is one which only describes the event itself. Thus, in anthropology and other fields, a thick description of human behaviour is one that explains not just the behaviour, but its context as well, the practices and discourse within a society. The behaviour consequently becomes meaningful to outsiders (Geertz 1973: 3-30).

The anthropologist Victor Turner concluded that the following three kinds of information are all legitimate: observed data, informants' interpretations, and anthropologists' analyses (Turner 1977). Indeed, ethnography requires researchers to go into the field to collect data and make faithful and detailed descriptions. As certain scholars have noted, if a description is thick enough, logic, law and even concepts will emerge from it. Accordingly, I attempt to frame Part Three within a thick description of cultural and music activities.

Structure

In the popular music domain, different musical trends emerge one by one; the shifts in C-pop's musicality follow on from changes of musical expression. Amplifying the

changes that have occurred requires a comprehensive investigation of the 'people' and 'surroundings' that affect 'music', which I structure in the following way. There are three parts to my work; each consisting of two or three chapters, as summarized below: Part One, focused on the soundscape, outlines C-pop fashions since 1985 illuminating the ongoing series of changes within C-pop; Part Two, centred on the textual sound (also referred as presentational sound in my writing), to better explain C-pop as a genre; Part Three relates this sonic information to the broader cultural setting of C-pop in each period, and accordingly investigates how changes in the musician-audience relationship have in turn resulted in shifts in musicality. In other words, Part One describes the actual change, Part Two deals with how C-pop changed textually and Part Three elucidates why it changed culturally.

Part One, 'Soundscapes' takes into view the succession of musical phenomena which carried great weight within C-pop from the 1980s to the present day. The two chapters in Part One take 1996 as the watershed, showing that C-pop's musicality changed from popular to pop, a change embodied in the quality of the music. The two chapters show a transformation from a top-down cultural enlightenment centred on music to a bottom-up mass amusement based on the music-receivers' attention; and from an age of diversified music to an era of diversified production.

The three chapters in Part Two focus on the presentational sound of C-pop, which I break up into aspects of linguistic code, vocal code and musical code. In other words, the three chapters in this part explain in detail the sound of C-pop music from the perspectives of language, singing and the instrumentation of the backing music. In addition, a tripartite correlation will be used to map out the interrelationships of music with its receivers and makers. This reinforces the picture of changing musicality already generated in Part One, with particular emphasis on the changing musician-audience relationship.

Part Three branches out from how music is constructed in relation to people's music-making and music-receiving behaviours in China, drawing a broader discussion into the issues of 'scapes' (which indicate different cultural frames). This part scrutinizes and examines the configuration of C-pop and each of its components, such as the fans' culture (music-receiving behaviours), the carrier culture (music-transmitting and disseminating behaviours), and music industry culture (music-making behaviours). The three chapters in this part give an in-depth study that

reflects on changes in C-pop musicality as related to adaptations in the cultural surroundings. This part finally uncovers the power struggle that currently exists between music-maker and music-receiver in C-pop, with the shift in musicality being grounded in the music-maker-centric or music-audience-centric organization of the genre itself.

Contributions and Originalities

The relationship between a society and its popular music is a topic that has been given importance by researchers and commentators in several fields, including ethnomusicology, cultural studies and sociology. In almost any location, the interpretation of this particular topic is constructive to many other areas of study owing to the wide scope and rich social content of such a study. In China, pop music culture shows an ongoing pattern of continuities and change that needs to be considered by scholars. I take a cross-section of musical phenomena from across this subject area into account, an approach that may not tally with the expectations of scholars who wish to read a more detailed, but narrower, analysis of a specific issue within the wider field in question. I believe it is still significant to present the most up-to-date musical phenomena to both native and western scholars and readers, as it not only factually demonstrates the ephemeral nature of popular music, but also records each developing segment within the pop music domain and assesses their collective impact as a whole. My study therefore contributes material and perspectives to such different study areas such as ethnography, anthropology, Asian studies, cultural studies, popular musicology, and ethnomusicology.

It also contains originality in its contents and methodology. From the aspect of its contents, this study focuses on the most up-to-date C-pop music, providing a branch of new information (including detailed transcription) for western scholars and readers about contemporary mainland Chinese pop music. My work re-examines the attributes of C-pop's music and re-thinks pop music's social position in the Chinese context. It not only poses questions about C-pop's musicality, but also contemplates further the relationship between people, music and cultural context by taking C-pop as a case study. Furthermore, a musicological analysis of the full score transcriptions of three songs are also provided in my work.

In relation to methodology, I bring a critical ethnomusicological approach

into use with an insider-to-outsider viewpoint, to study C-pop music from a native researcher's perspective. This allows me to question inherent understandings of the music with which I am culturally and musically familiar. Therefore, my study brings a fresh angle to Chinese pop culture study and one that is potentially applicable in many other parts of the world as well.

Beyond this, my role is also that of a bridge, one built to connect Western and native scholars, and to connect internal academia with other critics. Many insiders (including singers, producers and critics) I met during my fieldwork have described Chinese pop music and its industrial base as not yet fully established, suggesting that this is a reason not to develop popular musicology in Chinese academic circles yet; if so, this is exactly my reason for studying C-pop now. This study is synchronous with the changing music: a simultaneous study is exactly the best opportunity to record the major musical development as it occurs, rather than waiting until contemporary data and people's opinions have been lost.

Part One

Soundscapes of C-pop

This section identifies a series of musical phenomena that were found in China between 1985 and 2005.[1] By musical phenomena, I refer to the actual expressions of people and cultures in music, including distinct genres, broadcasting habits, instrumental and vocal styles and so on. These musical components together form a 'soundscape'. According to Shelemay, a soundscape 'refers to one of the many musical traditions that combine to make up the broader musical landscape of our daily lives. ... [and] is performed in places with which the sound then becomes associated. ... A soundscape consists not only of a series of musical events but also the time and place within which the events take place and to which they lend both form and significance.' (2001: 8)

In this writing, the term 'soundscape' describes C-pop geographically but it also draws attention to matters of time and place and the role of music in daily life. The account below shows how the soundscape of C-pop developed over the two decades in question, following a series of musical stepping stones. Along with the key musical and cultural characteristics of these phases, these linked musical phenomena—including Chinese rock,[2] *xibeifeng*, *minyao*, *xin minyue*, internet music, idol phenomena, and English songs—will be introduced chronologically. Doing so not only reveals a noteworthy phase of musical development, but also exemplifies a gradual conceptual shift in contemporary Chinese popular culture.

Therefore, in Part One, I choose the seven most influential musical phenomena in C-pop's twenty-year history since 1985. In my exposition, different music trends in C-pop successively come into view as a series of voices which can be characterised as follows: 'self-revelation', 'self-awareness', 'the nobody', 'self-affirmation', 'self-expression', 'self-fulfilment' and 'self-appreciation'. As a totality, these voices (which necessarily overlap in practice) reveal a diachronic change in the Chinese people's sense of national identity. A key question is what factors drive

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[1] Before 1985, C-pop was recovering from the impact of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The music mainly consisted of lyrical songs which were greatly influenced by Hong Kong and Taiwanese popular music. The tunes were typically catchy, and sung softly and with a gentle tone.

[2] 'Chinese rock' here refers to the musical phenomenon that emerged after 1986, when Cui Jian presented the first Chinese rock song 'Nothing to My Name'. This musical form became highly popular but sadly declined after 3 years. As a genre, rock still exists within Chinese popular music as a minority interest. It is also categorized as 'noisy pop music' by non-musical audiences in China (Chen 2001: 34-37).

changes in the soundscape? Namely, what caused the successive emergence of these musical phenomena? And also whose voice does each such expression represent? By examining all these concerns, the ultimate issue of how C-pop's musicality has changed over time will be answered clearly.

As this part of the thesis will show, C-pop developed from diversified musical creation (music-centred) to diversified music production (industry-centred). It also moved from a position where songs were created for a programme of top-down, rational cultural enlightenment, to the current situation where songs are a mass-produced cultural product consumed by people as part of their daily sensorial enjoyment. The 'rational' to 'sensorial' shift here coincides with a shift in the ideology of C-pop, from that of a sense of vocation (when songwriters and other cultural activists strove to contribute on debates such as democracy, national identity and social reform) to one concerned with sensory pleasure (where audiences now valued music primarily for its ability to provide aural and visual enjoyment). Part One describes the corresponding changes in C-pop's musicality, as the method of production of C-pop developed from a music-maker-centric to a music-receiver-centric system.

Part One consists of two chapters, taking the year 1996 as a watershed, since most C-pop insiders deem 1996 as the year that C-pop began to decline, moving towards a relatively formalized marketing production and away from creative musical invention (for many musicians' views on this, see Chapter 2). The first chapter focuses on Cui Jian's rock, *xibeifeng* and *minyao* before 1996, to demonstrate how these three voices were embodied within a rational cultural enlightenment. This also supports the idea that the era before 1996 was one in which C-Pop creativity was centred on the music-maker's personal expression. Chapter Two switches attention to the period after 1996, looking at *xin minyue*, internet music, the idol phenomenon and English songs in the C-pop domain. Here we see the focus of C-pop since 1996 turning from music-oriented to industry-oriented patterns of expression.

Chapter 1

Before 1996: The Age of Music-Maker-Centric Values

This chapter consists of three musical phenomena taken as representative expressions of C-pop's sound before 1996: Chinese Rock (with Cui Jian as the major case study), *xibeifeng*, and *minyao*. This chapter shows how musical phenomena that emerged in the decade between 1985 and 1996 were music-centred, with different musical trends showing the varying expressions of music-makers.[3] During this period, C-pop was stylistically diversified, and occurred in an atmosphere of rational culture enlightenment; that is, the movement of music in this decade flows in a top-down fashion from the cultural elite (music-makers) to the grassroots (music-receivers).

1.1 CHINESE ROCK

In the sphere of Chinese music and Asian studies, Chinese rock is the genre that has most captured the attention of Western scholars. This appears to be due to its potential political implications, which have been interpreted by researchers from totally different political environments. Cui Jian and his rock compositions, such as 'Nothing to My Name' (Yiwu suoyou), have been discussed in diverse ways by different scholars (Jones 1992; Micic 1995:76-95; Baranovitch 2003: 31-48). Since the song 'Nothing to My Name' came to public attention in 1986, Chinese rock has gone through another twenty years of change and development, nowadays regarded as a venerable genre in mainland China. In this section, I examine the rise and fall of Chinese rock music, and in contrast to those Western scholars who have paid considerable attention to the political implications of Chinese rock, I focus on rock music as a musical form, and then expand my view to consider the development of the wider Chinese popular music industry.

1.1.1 Rock's Position: In Society or as Society?

Chinese rock experienced a glittering yet controversial period in the mid-to-late 1980s

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[3] Many Chinese musicians and Chinese writings agreed that C-pop music was more music-valued before 1996, when the production of C-pop had not yet been industrialized on a large-scale. See Wang 2009: 25-58, Jin 2006: 45-54.

and the early 1990s, and thereafter entered into a sustained decline. What is the position of Chinese rock music relative to the whole parabola of Chinese pop?

Just before Cui Jian achieved his rock revolution in 1986, the British band Wham! gave a performance in Beijing in 1985. Intriguingly, audiences responded with almost dispassionate silence to George Michael, the lead singer of Wham! (Zhao 2003: 44-51), but reacted ebulliently to Cui Jian only a year later. From this perspective, we cannot say that Chinese rock started at a strikingly high point due to its utilization of Western musical style. Instead, the particular permutation of instrumentation, sound, voice, lyrics and even the performance style of Chinese rock collectively engaged the audiences' attentions at that time. The following table summarizes the key events in Chinese rock since the mid-1980s.[4]

Figure 1-1: *Outline of Development of Chinese Rock, 1983-2006.*

1983-1984	The Chinese rock circle was formed in Beijing.
1985	Cui Jian released his first album, *The Dissipater Returns* (*Langzi gui*).
May 1986	'Nothing to My Name' , performed by Cui Jian, gave both musicians and audiences a new understanding of mass music.
1987	Cui Jian's songs were banned by the authorities.
1988-1989	Two concerts established Cui Jian as the father of Chinese rock: the two events also boosted the Chinese rock circle.
1989	Cui Jian released his second album, *Rock on the Long March* (*Changzheng lushang de yaogun*). After the Tiananmen Square affair, Chinese rock became an underground activity.
1990	Six rock bands participated in the 1990 Beijing Modern Music Live Concert, showing different styles of rock to youth audiences.
After 1990	Rock singers remained part of the subculture.
1994	Moyan issued three influential single albums, by rock singers Dou Wei, He Yong and Zhang Chu respectively.
1997-1998	The real downturn of Chinese rock took place.
1998-2006	Rock singers kept chasing their musical dreams, yet remained at the margins of Chinese popular music.

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[4] This diagram was based on articles in Inertia 1995, 'From "Red East"' to "The Egg of Red Flag"' (Cong "dongfang hong" dao "hongqi xia de dan"), *Investigating Rock* (*Yaogun yanjiu*) (11): 46-49; see also Jiang and Zhang 1999: 33-39.

This timeline of events articulates the shifting social status of Chinese rock. Initially it emerged as an integral part of society, as demonstrated by both its voice and audience reception. Nonetheless, after going through some illusory transitions under quickly shifting social realities, Chinese rock is not now able to command the widespread approval it once had, although it does have its own committed enthusiasts. Therefore it is not accurate to present Chinese rock as still functioning as a major influence on either society or the Chinese pop industry. In fact, it now forms its own unique rock society, as musician Yan Jun has pointed out:

> Should we, the rockers, re-survey what the rock representatives appealed for? Do we seek the approval of society, which usually reflects a disapproval towards rock?... The present situation is gratifying, I and those rock fans from the same generation understand one thing, that is, we do not expect to get social approval any more, unless this society is approbatory towards us; in other words, there are different communities in our society, but as rockers, we only construct our own, that is, a rock community.[5]

1.1.2 Political or Apolitical?

The reason why rock song 'Nothing to My Name' and other *xibeifeng* music (which I shall describe in the following section) were able to become hits in the mid-1980s was because they offered a truly original creative conception. In addition they also firmly connected with the social background of the times (Brace and Friedlander 1992: 115-128). In the 1980s, along with the Chinese government's new 'open door' policies of the post-Cultural Revolution, the Chinese woke up to both substantial material gains and also a certain reduction in ideological certainty. The searing collision of native and Western cultures stirred up in many Chinese a mixed sense of aspiration, anxiety, isolation and loss. Permeated by such feelings, Cui Jian's 'Nothing to My Name' was effective in releasing people's latent and so-far unexpressed sentiments. In reflecting on the causes of the success of 'Nothing to My Name', and the effects of musical, social and psychological release that were effected by the song, Cui Jian acknowledged very bluntly:

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[5] Yan Jun 2005, personal website, http://www.rockstyle.com.cn/subjam/index.html, access date: 31-10-2006.

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I think the connotation of the songs and the modalities of the music should be united, to correspond to social issues. In fact, the reception of 'Nothing to My Name' in those years was just like a drug. People's pent up emotions, which were caused by the oppression of long-term subsistence, were suddenly released as a result of hearing the song. It engendered an effect. If we released this song now, I presume nobody would pay attention to it. This song was right for its era and right for its generation, because we were the first generation of musicians to compose freely. It was absolutely not the intention when composing 'Nothing to My Name.' Even if I were to try to write this song intentionally now, the effect and the result would not be as good as then and there (Cui and Mao 1998: 28).

The song provoked a prodigious social reverberation among those who followed Chinese rock; it therefore elicited numerous ideas in response. Trawling through the internet, entries under 'Chinese Rock' or 'Cui Jian' all depict how political implications were reflected, as do Western scholars. Yet, in another interview, Cui Jian claimed the song was simply a love song, and he indicated that its content was linked to calm rather than troubled circumstances:

After the launch of 'One Red Cloth' and 'Nothing to My Name,' they are not MINE any more, people imbued them with too much bearing and significance. I don't want to force the original notion of [my] works; how people apprehend the songs is actually all the sense of the works. This is the meaning of the art of poetry, you can imagine infinitely (Cui 2006: 2).

To the present-day audience, rock music and musicians, on the other hand, the defining of social reality is more important than political idealism. 'The youth of the 1980s wanted to be a hero, but now he just cares about where his salary comes from' (Cui Jian's words in Inertia, 1995: 48). Thus, we might re-consider the politics in Chinese rock: it is initially conceived apolitically, (although it may become politicized if society endows it with further connotations), but with a certain a political awareness. In terms of current Chinese rock music, its contents have hardly any link with politics; the issue of whether political or apolitical, therefore, is no longer relevant in contemporary Chinese rock. Although the general view of rock held by the masses is still negative, such as the common impression that it is always related to drugs, sex,

and a chaotic lifestyle, live performances continue and the rockers continue to be enthusiastic about creating their music. More appropriately, the situation of Chinese rock at present seems a bit embarrassing for the rockers, since the reality is that although it still exists it is no longer as prevalent as other pop genres in China. What caused this to happen?

1.1.3 Wandering on the Margin

Chinese rock has always been wandering on the margins, originally because of external social factors and thereafter by internal subjective factors. Initially, although it did not meet with official approval, rock brought a major shock to many in Chinese musical, literary and wider cultural circles. Nevertheless, since the mid-1990s the impact of Chinese rock has not been as striking as before, and it has never again achieved hit status. What has caused Chinese rock to stray from its former central position?

1.1.3.1 Cultural Fissure

> I still feel there is a big gap between rock culture and our country. Now external
> pressures and tensions do not exist any more, and the internet is accessible, but why
> are songs such as Mouse Loves Rice [one of the internet songs, normally displayed
> with a Flash animation] the hottest, not rock? (Wang and Zhang 2006: 3)

In this section I am going to examine the cultural fissure between Chinese rock, its place of origin, mainland China, and the cultural settings in which Chinese rock was borned. The theme of 'music and place' has been considered and discussed by many scholars from an ethnomusicological perspective (Stokes 1994: 1-27; Rice 2003: 151-79), mainly focusing on how place constructs music, and vice versa. Certainly, this is a fundamental point when examining music and the key factors surrounding it. Here, however, my core concern lies in what I would describe as the process of compatibility between the two; that is, how well attuned the music is with the place of its physical creation and subsequent continuation.

Firstly, is reception attuned to the music? The audiences of rock music in the Cui Jian era were the same age as Cui Jian and they had the same social

experiences and the same concerns, which is why Cui Jian's music was able to trigger such a strong reaction in Chinese audiences at the time. However, after the 1990s, there has been not only an increasing difference in age between the new generation and Cui Jian's generation, but also a gap in understanding of the experiences Cui Jian's generation had gone through. The new generation, to a large extent, has enjoyed a relatively comfortable life style and abundant material resources; therefore, they do not question or even think much about the social context in which they live. This lack of experience and understanding of what went on in the past means that the content of Cui Jian's music is lost to them.

> The new epoch has come, nobody is being naughty any more. You said that everyone's ideals have been rinsed off by this era. Just watch TV, listen to radio, and read the newspapers. You said conflict between ideals no longer exists (Jiang and Zhang 1999: 36).

Secondly, is social change attuned to the music? Social change in the place might be the best relative explanation of why there is a gulf in understanding between the reception of rock music and other types of music. After the 1990s, the economy became the central concern throughout Chinese society, as it seems everyone switched their attention onto factual issues. Chinese rock, as the one musical genre that was supposed to give voice to the spiritual ethos of society, lost its leading role from this time. 'Those issues are not problems any longer, nobody pays attention to those concerns. Problems have disappeared, braveness doesn't exist any more, independence lost its meaning; this is an era in which you have no rivals, no one can act as a hero.' (Li 1997: 7) This is a sarcastic claim; it describes the lamentable situation of the Chinese people, that is to say a cultural philistinism and a lack of soul searching. In other words, Chinese rock has lost the one key point that could win the audiences' attention, to set the masses on fire, as Cui Jian had done.

Thirdly, are the ideas of new rockers attuned to the music? On the other hand, the new generation of rock musicians has failed to create a rebellion musically; they give the impression that they are rebels only in the social behaviours they represent. This has also caused a cultural fissure; the audience has failed to grasp any profound, thoughtful and insightful ideology from the music of the new era (although it is sometimes misinterpreted). Negative reports from newspapers, internet and much

hearsay expose the rockers' disordered life style; their songs, however, enumerate social truths but without concern. '70-ish grandpas interested in aviculture and floriculture; 60-ish old uncles think about how to fulfil the "Four Modernizations" (*sige xiandaihua*);[6] 50-ish uncles just walk around; 40-ish big brothers still dream of getting rich. Somebody working for reformation; somebody working to go abroad; somebody busy with gambling; somebody has no job at all' (Chang Kuan's song *Cynicism*, cited in Huang 1998: 265). In the new era, such songs do contain the truth, but with no depth. Thus, rock music in China is no longer in vogue, nor is it any longer as striking as the unconventional unorthodoxy of Cui Jian.

Finally, is the cultural orientation attuned to the music? Moreover, although the appearance of Chinese rock demonstrated its orientation towards elite culture, it did not become part of the mainstream and mass culture. This situation was mainly due to official pressure in the late 1980s, and the materialism and worship of money that arose amongst Chinese people in the beginning of 1990s.[7] It ultimately caused the cultural fissure between Chinese rock and its place. As I will point out in the *Xibeifeng* section, Cui Jian's 'Nothing to My Name' tallied with a cultural movement amongst the cultural elite and literati and it was able to reach a peak to a certain extent due to its role as the vanguard of this movement. Nonetheless, as time goes on, the older rock music has also lost its confirmed fans, as I mentioned before, as a result of external official pressure. Therefore it lost the opportunity to move into mass culture and the mainstream. Neither does its role of elite culture meet with support from the majority any more. This undoubtedly forms an incompatibility between the music and its place.

No matter whether the rockers want to face up to their fate or not, the situation in mainland China is that, compared with other pop stars, they do not attract much attention from audiences, nor can they get official approval or industrial support.

1.1.3.2 Unable to Industrialize

Many musical forms go through a process that turns them from a cultural trend or

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[6] The Four Modernizations were goals set forth by Zhou Enlai in 1963, and which were henceforth a focus of the Chinese government, especially under Deng Xiaoping. The Four Modernizations were in the fields of agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology. The Four Modernizations were designed to make China a great economic power by the early 21st century. These reforms essentially stressed economic self-reliance.

[7] For the ideological change of Chinese people from 1980s to 1990s, please refer to Wang 1996.

action into a commercial phenomenon, as I shall show in the following sections, which consider some other popular musical genres such as *xin minyue* and internet music, but this is not so in the case of Chinese rock. On the contrary, rock music in China seems to be becoming more peripheral to both the musicians and audiences.

In the west, a rock band is signed up, packaged and promoted, all details being overseen by the company to which it belongs. The converse can be seen in China, as Cui Jian pointed out: 'I noticed that there are many magazines which talk a lot about rock music, but seldom can we find a recording company making an effort with rock music. It means Chinese rock music hasn't made any practical progress, it remains a phenomenon, rather than rock culture.' Indeed, the actual situation is that the chief arenas for rock performance now are mainly bars in Beijing and some live music festivals. This demonstrates that the present status of rock music is a non-mainstream form of entertainment. There is no commercially operational mechanism for the production of rock within the music industry. This situation has been recognised by many Chinese rockers, entertainers, producers, and even scholars,[8] but no one has tried to find out why and how. Compared with pop music, there are numerous gifted musicians in rock circles, but not many gifted commercial rock managers, nor any marketing professionals. This is a big issue related to the main finding of my whole dissertation, which I shall expound upon and clarify in the following chapters. Here, I intend only to make the point that, owing to the lack of management backing and music industry support, Chinese rock musicians can only wander on the margins. Interestingly, unlike other musical forms, which initially emerged from the periphery of the C-pop domain before either vanishing or entering the mainstream and then turning into commercialized pop, or even progressing into a new form and therefore continuing to exist, rock music in China did not take either direction. This is another issue I shall investigate further later, in order to articulate the Chinese pop realm as a whole.

To sum up, Chinese rock progressed from an initial position at the centre of Chinese popular music to its current one at the periphery; and both at the beginning and now, its music is self-revelatory. No matter whether through insightful representation in the beginning or the indulgence of self-admiration in the present situation, Chinese rock and rockers keep confirming their self-centeredness, which

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[8] Cui Jian, Yan Jun, Zhang Yongguang and many other rockers; others also hold such a view such as scholars, entertainers and DJs, see Jin 2003.

gives them their distinctive conception of their music and social surroundings. As the voice of a turning point for Chinese pop, from the middle of the 1980s Chinese rock gradually aroused the concept that lay beneath the mindset of most ordinary Chinese: from then on, the Chinese started to discover 'self-ness'.

1.2 XIBEIFENG

Xibeifeng ('the northwest wind', where the word 'wind' is synonymous with 'fad' or 'fever') as a musical phenomenon, occurred between 1986 and 1989. The term *xibeifeng* indicated music that drew on musical elements from northwest China's regional folk songs (Jin 2003). The emergence of this new style can be illustrated by looking at two songs of those years, Cui Jian's 'Nothing to My Name' (Yiwu suoyou) and Cheng Lin's song 'Xintianyou'. The former song is of wider significance in Chinese rock, and I return to it in detail in the following section; here, I introduce it to show how it triggered the generation of the *xibeifeng* phenomenon. Then, in the rest of this section, using what is widely seen as the first *xibeifeng* song, I analyse how this musical phenomenon fitted into its cultural background; how and to what extent *xibeifeng* was an incarnation the combined sense of cooperation, realism and romanticism which reflected the ideology of contemporaneous Chinese people, both composers and listeners. After illuminating the background that enabled *xibeifeng* to burst onto the Chinese pop scene, the reasons why it subsequently went into a rapid descent will be clarified. However, I begin by mentioning how 'Nothing to My Name' actually established certain musical characteristics that became central to the *xibeifeng* phenomenon.

'Nothing to My Name' shook the Chinese music sphere in 1986, and become a landmark in Chinese rock. Apart from the youths who welcomed this song simply on the basis of its passionate rock sound, for most audiences the clear-cut individuality of this song lay in its dramatic reinterpretation of Chinese folk music. For these listeners, its appeal emerged from the fusing of familiar traditional elements, such as use of the double-reed instrument *suona*,[9] and a vigorous new manner of performing (certainly one which was new to Chinese audiences at that time), including both a strong rhythmic character and a forceful, aggressive singing style. 'Nothing to My Name'

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[9] *Suona* is a traditional Chinese instrument. The *suona* is found in much traditional music and is distinguished by its rough timbre; for further details see Liu 2006.

hinted at the possibility of the utilization of native Chinese traditional musical elements in a music that was also modern and international in style. These same aspects made *xibeifeng* possible in its turn, with musicians finding themselves drawn into what they described as a more liberated idea of musical creation, resulting in Xie Chengqiang's song 'Xintianyou' and many other *xibeifeng* songs.[10] Before elaborating on this concept, which ultimately changed Chinese pop music as a whole, I explore 'Xintianyou', a song which is now identified by Chinese mainland musicians and audiences as being the opening work of the *xibeifeng* C-pop phenomenon.

1.2.1 *Xintianyou* as a Folk Genre, 'Xintianyou' as a Pop Song

'Xintianyou' (the song that spread in 1986) followed up the ideology of 'Nothing to My Name'. As its composer Xie Chengqiang said: 'just through a challenging mentality, deliberately wishing to write a sense of present day using the elements that used to be the creative headstream in the past' (Jin 2003: 4). From this compositional motive, some issues emerge: in the view of those composers what elements constituted 'the creative headstream'? Why were these particular elements selected and not others? Within what cultural contexts are such concepts engendered? How far do these factors tally with contemporary Chinese ideologies? An examination of 'Xintianyou' and its roots in the folk genre *xintianyou* will shed light on all these questions.

　　Xintianyou is actually a kind of folk genre from Shaanbei in northwest China, generally with a character of free rhyme, a loud, sonorous and resounding tune, and a simple, rough and open singing style. The tunes of *xintianyou* are normally divided into two categories: ditty (*xiao diao*)[11] and mountain song (*shan'ge*), the latter being predominant. Although Shaanbei is known for its many genres of folk songs, *xintianyou* is still the most distinguished, and is often taken to represent Shaanbei folk songs more widely. The Shaanbei region is one of mountains and plateaus, and the daily work of the local people has tended to be heavy and monotonous. The local people extemporized songs to turn away grief and loneliness, to express their sentiments and emotions.[12]

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[10] Composers Chen Zhen and Xie Chengqiang both pointed out the liberated conception of musical creation during this time, see Wu 2008: 11-5; Xu 2008.

[11] *Xiao diao* is a form of folk music, which is normally neat and even in its structure and rhythm, soft and smooth in tune. For further details see Yuan 2000.

[12] Further discussion on Shaanbei folk songs, see Li 2003.

The pop song 'Xintianyou' was released at the end of the 1980s, on the other hand, and is a work that utilized traditional musical material and features of a *xintianyou* folk song, including the singing style, but was newly-composed by a professional composer and performed by trained singers. The song starts with a few chords played on the electric guitar; after these are repeated, the drums start to play, and then a loud and forceful solo *suona* performs a cheerful northwest folk-style tune. Finally, after the *suona* solo, the singer begins:

Figure 1-2: 'Xintianyou' (lyrics, translated by Zhao Yue)

I lower my head, looking at the mountain gully,

Chasing those past years.

Sand blown by wind full of the valley,

My childhood has disappeared.

I look up, towards the sky,

Seeking the far-off former times,

Clouds flowing in the air,

Nothing has changed.

The wild goose heard my song,

The little river kissed my face,

The flowers cover the mountain, blossoming and fading,

Year after year.

The bold and unconstrained vocal style, always one of the noteworthy traits of traditional *xintianyou* folk songs, appears here with a Western-style fast tempo, forceful rhythm, strong beat and aggressive bass line. This may also explain why the composers gave their attention especially to the north region, exactly because that musical style had parallels with the harsher sounds of Western rock. As Jin Zhaojun pointed out:

> Zhu Yigong took the demo of 'Xintianyou,' and after listening to it, everybody (the most active composers and lyrists in Beijing by then) realized the potential of one composing mode, namely, utilizing some elements of western rock music, and unearthing folk musical material, especially that from the northern region (Jin 2003: 2).

However, one puzzle remains: why this northern region rather than others? If it is only

because the folk styles of the north are bold and uninhibited, then the *yangge* of the northeast is also a style which exhibits such characteristics. The term *xibeifeng* literally indicated the popularity of the folk style of this particular region, but why was northwest folk music especially targeted in the popular music creations of this period? The cultural background is informative. In reality, this style of music was related to the large-scale 'Root-Seeking' (*xungen*) cultural movement that was simultaneously manifested in literature and in film, and therefore it could be regarded as the musical branch of this cultural movement. On the other hand, the question of what constitutes 'roots' for Chinese people, and why the northwest region can represent this 'root' may be the crucial keys for interpreting the importance of *xibeifeng* as a musical phenomenon.

1.2.2 The Roots

The Root-Seeking movement arose in 1984 and reached a climax in 1985. The author Han Shaogong's work *The Roots of Literature* (*Wenxue de gen*) proposed that literature ought to have roots, which should lie beneath mass culture.[13] From seeking the root for literature, authors started to seek out the roots for culture as well. This movement represents 'culture digging'; a search for national identity in order to disseminate a vision of national culture. Some literary works such as *The Old Well* (*Laojing*) and *The Red Sorghum* (*Honggaoliang*) were made into films. Whether readers or cinema audiences, all can evidently sense the colour of the yellow earth of the remote area and their corresponding folk culture. The song 'Sister Go Boldly Forward' (Meimei ni dadan de wangqian zou) in Zhang Yimou's film *The Red Sorghum* came to represent an earthy, primordial masculine image, and this song is without any doubt in the *xibeifeng* style. In Chinese thought, the Yellow River is the mother river, and yellow earth is the symbol of nurture. The Loess Plateau, located in the north-west of mainland China, is a barren area of thin and impoverished yellow earth which causes the colour of the Yellow River. Thus, if we say the Yellow River and the yellow earth are symbolic 'mothers' in Chinese cultural thinking, then, the folk elements of this region (such as *xintianyou*) would be the most appropriate images to represent in sound the root-culture in music. From this angle therefore, *xintianyou* is the most

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[13] See Han 2001; in terms of the roots-seeking culture movement in the 1980s literary domain please see Xiong 2000: 10-13; Chen 2000.

appropriate style of music to cry out 'Chinese roots'.

In many cases, people conventionally conceive of a place in a particular way, and musical representation usually reflects that perception. Some scholars have pointed out the geographical image as a certain totem in the concept of certain ethnic groups in their 'ideology and iconology' studies,[14] and presenting the music of such areas is commonly used as a channel to reflect such a conception. Regarding Chinese culture and thinking, Peter Micic points out that, 'the Yellow River - [is] the cradle of Chinese civilization - and to a lesser extent, Yan'an, [is] the hallowed revolutionary base of the Chinese revolution' (Micic 1995: 89). This explains why Chinese musicians and audiences culturally, geographically and historically chose *xintianyou* from the north-west region to represent the cultural roots of mainland China.

1.2.3 The Tri-Identity: Implicit Realism, Romanticism and Criticism

The lyrics of 'Xintianyou' started to show a sense of realism, and this characteristic was further incarnated in a critical voice contained in the *xibeifeng* music that followed. By reading between the lines of the song lyrics, the phrases 'chasing past years', 'childhood has disappeared', 'seeking the far off former times', 'nothing has changed', contain a retrospection of the past and introspection of present day reality. Meanwhile, there is a sense of pathos given by romanticism implied along with the implicit realism, 'the wild goose heard my song'; 'the little river kissed my face', 'the flowers, the mountain, blossoming and fading', 'year after year.' When Micic looked at another well-known *xibeifeng* song, 'Loess Plateau' (Huangtu gaopo), he pointed out that: 'the romanticizing of peasant life in the countryside is coupled with a realistic image of its harshness and strangely primeval landscape, a place which is at once desolated and impoverished' (Micic 1995: 90). Micic's words have already pointed out the threefold identity that is reflected throughout *xibeifeng* songs, which contain a criticism in the manner of depicting life in the northwest, an implicit realism when drawing the image out, and also a romanticism which arises from combining the harsh reality and poetic depiction.

Besides, the critical contents and latent meanings found throughout *xibeifeng* songs, which deviate from the norm and reveal the shift in compositional concepts,

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[14] In both literature, history and some other study domains, scholars all pointed out the interrelationship between ideology and iconology. See Rainwater 1999; Argan and West 1975: 297-305.

also aroused the attention of the audiences and therefore made possible the popularity of *xibeifeng*. The Root-Seeking literature of the same period typically uses mundane value concepts to illustrate the transcendent-mundane aesthetic ideal. The significance of the creations of such literature rests with the fact that they offer a new narrative direction, exclusively different from the limited creativity of former times, which always contained some explicit political sense.[15] In *xibeifeng* works, such lyrics often clashed in the audiences' ear. For example 'nothing changed', 'the life has got to change', 'I do not know', 'the tatty shack, the bitter well water'; as musician Bian Liunian said, at that time, who (amongst mainland Chinese audiences) had ever heard such lyrics before?[16] Compared with other musical forms, such as punk, which also contain criticism in both content and meaning, the criticism in *xibeifeng* was different in approach but equally satisfactory in result from the point of view of audience reception. The criticism found within punk exhibits an essentially anti-social attitude (You 2002; Bennett 2001); *xibeifeng* on the other hand did not show a cynical attitude towards the society of the time. However, it elicited a new, creatively unconstrained form of Chinese popular music, and this change of direction allowed a new voice through the concept of free creation becoming available to the wider audience. Concerning the songs of this period, Cui Jian said:

> I know a lot of people haven't heard works that are freely composed for a long while, in that before [1985], we had to listen to the traditional music, the model opera etc., not many choices. [so,] when people hear a love song, or revolutionary songs being dealt with in love song style, they feel this is people's own choice, they deem this is a blazoning forth of freedom...so, the meaning is that, this is the creation which under the desire for freedom from the human body, is resonant with creativity.[17]

Cui Jian not only gave a hint at the situation of C-pop at the time, but also delivered a message to show how Chinese audiences desired a diversified music creation in that particular historical period; at least, *xibeifeng* music provided an example to tell mainland audiences that Chinese pop music could sound this way. Therefore, the viewing of *xibeifeng* as the musical branch of a cultural movement is

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[15] Here, we are talking about the songs which always praise the party and its leaders; such as 'The Sun is Red, Chairman Mao is Dearest' (Taiyang Zuihong, Mao Zhuxi Zuiqin) etc.

[16] Bian Liunian, interview, 15-06-2007, Beijing.

[17] Cui Jian 2006, http://cn.ent.yahoo.com/060515/322/27wd9.html, access date: 25-03-2008.

part of the search for 'selfness'. *Xibeifeng* not only afforded the discovery of a new identity of 'self' through music as a new identity, but also urged musicians and composers to start searching musically for a self-identity for their musical creations; and *xibeifeng* transformed this composition concept into an imperative position. Music of this era, including both Cui Jian's rock and *xibeifeng* songs, were a big wake-up call to Chinese musicians and audiences, announcing 'C-pop has now begun to become truly Chinese.'

1.3 MINYAO

After *xibeifeng*, mainland Chinese pop faded. Although the flow of Taiwanese and Hong Kong made an impact on mainland C-pop at the time, and also the music industry in mainland China began to bloom, C-pop music generally sounded weaker than in the era of Cui Jian's rock and *xibeifeng*. In 1993 songs such as 'A Letter to Home' (Yifeng jiashu) and 'My Desk-Mate' (Tongzhuo de ni) became popular, and in 1994 they became a new style: *minyao*. The first form of *minyao* was known by Chinese musicians and audiences as urban *minyao* (*chengshi minyao*) and the second as campus *minyao* (*xiaoyuan minyao*). It is necessary to explain what '*minyao*', 'urban *minyao*' and 'campus *minyao*' are in a Chinese context, and why they are labelled as such in the historical circumstances of Chinese pop music.

   Minyao is the equivalent of 'balladry', and is musically similar in style to 'country music' in a western context, also with a predominantly story-telling content. In fact, in Taiwan and Hong Kong, the same style of music is known as folk (minge). However, in the context of the mainland Chinese, *minyao* differs from the term 'folk' (*minge*) since the latter normally indicates a traditional musical term which specifies the folksongs of Chinese rural areas (Yuan 2000: 3). *Minyao*, on the other hand, is normally regarded in mainland China as a form of pop music. As one of the musical forms of C-pop, there is no formal or official explanation to define '*minyao*' in China, nor could we find a definition in the Chinese music encyclopaedia.[18] The derivation of the word '*minyao*' was influenced by Taiwanese folk (Taiwan *minyao*), where it mainly indicates campus songs in a picturesque narrative style and with simple musical features. Representative singers are Qi Yu and Pan Yueyun, and songs such as 'Olive

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[18] In terms of *minyao*, there is a historical usage though, and the earliest collection of Chinese *minyao* was made by Shi Jing, for further information, refer to Lu 2006.

Trees' (Ganlan shu) and 'The Country Road' (Xiangjian de xiaolu). In fact this genre has many features similar to conventional concepts of folk music, namely that it is plain in composition, unadorned in language, sincere and genuine in emotion and vivid in content. To illustrate these features, I shall focus on the two sub-genres, urban *minyao* and campus *minyao* as starting points, in order to question further to what extent pop can be considered the equivalent of folk music in an urban setting.

1.3.1 Urban *Minyao*, the Reflection of Urban Life

Urban *minyao* portrays urban life and urban people's sentiments. Li Chunbo's 'A Letter to Home' and Ai Jing's 'Yanfen Street' (Yanfen Jie) were the best known urban *minyao* at the beginning of the 1990s. In these songs, an aspect of urban living is always reflected in the lyrics.

Figure 1-3: 'A Letter to Home' (lyrics, translated by Zhao Yue)

Dear dad and mum, how are you?

Still busy at work? How's your health?

I am in Guangzhou, everything is fine, don't worry too much.

Although I don't write to you very often,

I actually miss home dearly.

Does dad go to work everyday?

No necessity to go there if there is no one to clock you in and out,

You spent your whole life working for revolution; it's time to take a break.

I bought a sweater for mum, don't take it as an ornament and not wear it,

Your son was too naughty and stubborn,

He has grown up and understands your love now.

......

Do my brother and sister go home often?

Don't do too much housework when they are back home,

Let them do it, this is what children should do.

......

By all means I shall go back home this Spring Festival,

Ok, it's time to put down my pen.

......

Best Wishes, 18th March, 1993.

The song gives the audiences the impression that the singer is reading out a letter to his parents, plain but full of love and warmth. There is no rhetorical wording presented in the song. An ordinary family is depicted for the mainland Chinese audience, who are naturally and unsurprisingly attracted to the song due to the familiarity of the situation, since their family structures, living style and situation are similar to the picture painted by the song. People in real life can identify with all the characters mentioned in the song, such as the young son who works in a far-away modern city in order to find his own way in life; the father, a hard worker, cautious and conscientious throughout his whole life; the mother, the image of a typical traditional Chinese woman, thrifty and managing the family's daily life. In addition to the traditional Chinese conception of 'family' and 'home' as revealed in the song, 'A Letter to Home' also portrays the living mode of an urban family: children go to explore a new life when they grow up; when Spring Festival comes, they all try their best to go back home and spend time together with their family; children should be dutiful to their parents, and doing the housework is one way of showing this. With all these nuances, a vivid picture of urban life and its challenges are given by this letter narrated in song.

1.3.2 Campus *Minyao*: Profile of Campus Life

Apart from the contents, which focus on the university life of graduates, the presentation of campus *minyao* is similar to urban *minyao*, although the campus version is even more musically unadorned, more poetical in wordings. Campus *minyao* is often regarded by native critics and both musicians and audiences as having great profundity and connotation in terms of its content and aesthetics, since the songs are about mainland university students who are normally assumed to be among the elite of society and so are China's future hope. The campus motifs stem from the fact that the composers and singers have all belonged to the campus, and so are themselves part of university life. It is in this age group where people are normally more idealistic, more sentimental, more inclined to write poetry about a bashful, immature love. Lao Lang's 'My Desk-mate' (Tongzuo de ni) is the most significant song of campus *minyao*.

Figure 1-4: 'My Desk-mate' (lyrics, translated by Zhao Yue)
Tomorrow, will you ponder the diary you wrote yesterday?

Tomorrow, will you think about the girl who was always tearful?

Teachers have forgotten you, the one who could never get the right answers to the questions,

You come to my mind, my desk-mate, when I randomly turned over the photo albums.

Who married that sentimental you, who read your diary,

Who tied your long hair, who put the wedding dress on you? [*part 1*]

......

Once upon a time, you always bashfully asked for half the rubber from me,

Once upon a time, you unconsciously said you love the feeling

of being with me,

The sky was blue in those days, the time went slowly on,

You often said graduation day seemed far away, but in no time, we each went our own way.

Who met that sentimental you, who comforted tearful you,

Who read the letters I wrote to you, who threw them away into the wind? [*part 2*]

......

The old days have gone; I shall have my wife soon,

I shall show her those photos, tell her about you. [*part 3*]

Lalalalala... ...

Part 1 is written in the future tense to narrate the things which might come to pass, part 2 depicts the past in the campus, as the singer has already graduated. It is not difficult to see the graduates' attachment to the campus where they spent the most precious, true and carefree years of their lives, and moreover, the sincerity and yearning are latent in every segment and scene of the song (Bao 2004: 60-3).

The campus *minyao* songs mostly depict nostalgic memories of university life, the graduates first love, or hidden, unspoken crushes. By picturing campus life in this way, the composers and the major audiences group of campus *minyao*—the university students or those former students who have become the elite and ruling class of the society—have made campus *minyao* well respected in China.

1.3.3 Discovering in *Minyao*

The famous Taiwanese musician Li Zongsheng once said: 'a fair-sounding song is easy to compose, we can easily get one by using different techniques, ways and means;

however, it is difficult to obtain a sincere, earnest and genuine song' (cited in Bao 2004: 61). Whether urban *minyao* or campus *minyao*, what is pictured mostly is ordinary life shown with keen, insightful discernment and expressed with unembellished lyrics and a lyrical, sentimental and touching musical quality. *Minyao* songs in the first half of 1990s reflect young people's feeling of being lost and adrift from reality, from their ideal; but they also reveal a yearning for well-being and happiness.

Therefore, the songs historically generalize and express the ideology and mentality of young people and this is the key to their popularity. In terms of its content, *minyao* evidences a particular zeitgeist, which is intertwined with a plain phrasing style. As a result, *minyao* voices a life which is real but unfathomable. An urban *minyao* song such as 'A Letter to Home' pictures how an ordinary family exists (young fellows go away to pursue their own life); the nature of the parent-child relationship (once the children grow up and become independent, they need to remind themselves to look after their parents); and also the expectations of Chinese tradition (no matter how far away children go, they all come back to their parents to celebrate Chinese New Year). There are even lyrics reflecting young people's ideology about working life, such as the lyrics 'no necessity to go there if there is no one to clock you in and out', this not only shows that young people love their parents dearly, but also mirrors people's indolence and feelings of lack of duty when they work in a state-owned company or factory.

To relate it to its literal meaning and pronunciation ('folk' in Chinese is pronounced as *minge*, and in both *minge* and *minyao* the '*min*' means 'the people'; moreover, *minyao* also means *minge*, namely 'folk' in a Chinese context which indicates the ballad style of folk songs in rural areas), *minyao* can be regarded as folk, a version derived and popularized in urban settings. On the other hand, *minyao* differs from traditional folk music, as folk music in China mainly refers to the music of rural settings, performed for peoples' own entertainment. Furthermore, it has no parallel with western folk music or electric folk, which also resembles the 'folk rock' of the west and is prominent for its ideological side.[19] However, musically *minyao* is rather like country and western music, preformed in a narrative style accompanied by an acoustic guitar. It presents music as the path for delivering the emotions of 'the nobodies' of society. Nonetheless, *minyao* as the musical expression of the most

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[19] For western folk music and electric folk, see Sweers 2005, *Electric Folk.*

ordinary people is still produced by pop musicians or the elite youth in mainland China, rather than as a bottom-up style of music production, although its key musical element, the recently popularized guitar, is also the one of 'the nobodies'.

1.3.4 The Acoustic Guitar, Soul of *Minyao*

Once, when Lao Lang (the trendsetter of campus *minyao* and the singer of 'My Desk-mate') was asked during an interview: 'Can *minyao* be sustained as a style to hand down?' his answer in fact responded to another question, which demonstrated the role of guitar in *minyao*. His reply was that, 'Guitar might be the only affordable instrument for university students, they still continue playing acoustic guitar on the campus, singing while playing' (Hong 2006; Li 2006). Not only in campus *minyao*, but also in urban *minyao*, the acoustic guitar plays a central role. Its tender timbre even determines that it became the soul of *minyao*. As Bao Zhaohui noted:

> The choice of using guitar for accompaniment is due to the style of these songs (*minyao*) which is close to the feel of this instrument. The range of guitar is not too wide, but on the other hand, it possesses a clear quality and timbre and shows a Mediterranean style. Listen to someone playing guitar, you can feel the greenness, warmth and youth, so it is suitable for young students to play... the guitar is used to accompany those *minyao* songs because it is easy to master. In addition, to those students, it is impossible to spend a lot of time practising piano or violin, they love music, they are interested in it, but they just started as a hobby, they can only compose songs in their spare time (Bao 2004: 67).

Composed with narrative style, earnest lyrics, stamped with an indelible image of people's memory (e.g. daily life in urban *minyao*, memories of the old days in campus *minyao*), Chinese *minyao* has also been marked by one of its features, the acoustic guitar. What made *minyao*, this simply-composed and plainly-presented musical form stand out in the early 1990s Chinese pop music domain and what kind of emblem is it within Chinese pop music as a whole?

1.3.5 *Minyao*: The Artistic C-pop

In the first part of the 1990s, *minyao* unfolded with a solid aesthetic value, as many

music critics and scholars have noted.[20] The early *minyao* was presented almost as a poem and also pronounced an aesthetic, which proved that 'popularized' is not synonymous with 'vulgar'. Pu Shu's 'The Birch Hurst' (Baihua lin) is an example. The song depicts how a couple's love was broken by the war; although the young man devoted his life to the battle, his lover still waited for him for the rest of her life. The poem-like lyrics are as follows:

Figure 1-5: 'The Birch Hurst' (lyrics, translated by Zhao Yue)

The sky remained hazy as before,

The pigeons flew without noticing it;

Who can attest to love and life with no gravestones?

Snow was dancing in the air,

and the village stayed quiet and serene...

This elegiac song touches those used to experiencing change and difficulties in their lives, as many people are left with some regret and defeat. This song in a minor key voiced those common but eternal human sentiments, such as love and death. Chinese *minyao* therefore displays an aesthetic contribution to Chinese pop. As Bao Zhaohui said: 'In this era, there are fewer and fewer differences between so-called art songs, or "high culture" songs and popular songs; "The Birch Hurst" is one example.' (Bao 2004: 67) Furthermore, *minyao*'s aesthetic importance is also being recognized, as Jin Zhaojun, a well-known music critic and scholar once asserted: 'from *minyao* songs, such as 'My Desk-Mate', audiences can match their own experiences and memories with the song. The songs evoked audiences' desire to run away from the stressful reality that faced them and recalled their naïve and pure past, it is a refraction of their mind; and certainly, it is aesthetical.' (Jin 2000: 3)

However, entering the market failed to bring *minyao* any further enhancement; indeed, once the aesthetic concept that *minyao* possessed was mass-produced, the aesthetic value was diluted. As Li Wan pointed out: 'Even if it does not repeat the commercialized musical language, it repeats itself constantly, it induced plenty of replication.' (Li 1997: 147) To a certain extent, the aim of becoming professional also led to a decline in *minyao*: 'It is a pity that, until now, there are still many campus *minyao* singers looking forward to certain recording companies taking

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[20] Critics such as Jiang and Zhang (1999: 33-39), and Yan Jun (2005), and scholars Wang Siqi (2009) all affirm *minyao*'s aesthetic value and contribution to C-pop.

notice of their songs, in order to get a chance of recording. Some recording companies are also anxious to contend for the market, they instantly take note of any artists possessing popularity at the time.'[21] Therefore, when *minyao* entered the C-pop industry, its original artistic colour lost its uniqueness. *Minyao* does not exist as an independent individual style anymore, but has gradually become part of the wider popular music industry.

1.4 CONCLUSION

The three music musical expressions studied above revealed three voices of C-pop—Chinese rock, *xibeifeng*, *minyao*—and charted a change in voice from self-revelation, to self-awareness, to 'the nobody'. For music-makers in mainland China, these were the main three styles that formed the musical resurgence of the late 1980s. From the contents of the music of this era, an outlook of rational cultural enlightenment was also revealed, with the music posing searching questions about society, cultural identity and human nature. In this era of awakening, musical phenomena centred on the music-maker's personal expression, resulting in a period of diversified musical creation.

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[21] Yu 2002, http://www.bjcma.com/beiyinwang/djt/luntan/14.htm, access date: 14-03-2008.

Chapter 2

After 1996: The Age of Music-Receiver-Centric Values

Chapter 2 focuses on the musical trends that have emerged since 1996. The industrialization of C-pop and associated structural development had become rather standardized by 1996, and by then the 'market' as a concept was firmly implanted into the C-pop industry. This was accompanied by corresponding shifts in musical content.[22] As Su Yue said: 'After 1996, the Chinese pop industry started to industrialize, but new problems also emerged, and my feeling was that mainland pop music wouldn't make another leap forward until five years after that.'[23]

This chapter considers four more recent trends in musical phenomena: *xin minyue*, internet music, the 'idol' contests, and English songs. It will reveal how music after 1996 became music-receiver-centred, with differing musical phenomena advanced in turn to capture the attention of music-receivers and cater to audiences' changing tastes. This chapter will also demonstrate that during the decade after 1996, music became diversified in terms of its industrial production, rather than in its musical creation as in the decade before 1996. C-pop gradually became a diverting sensory amusement within mass popular culture, with the entertainment and fashion needs of the grassroots (music-receivers) beginning to take a leading role within music production.

2.1 XIN MINYUE

On 18th June 2001 the 12 Girls Band was founded in Beijing. This female group had, by 2003, pushed *xin minyue* to a climax, breaking into the international market and enjoying particular success in Japan. The band drew on traditional and national music aesthetics and musical structures which they merged with the performance styles of contemporary popular music forms. The following section centres on *xin minyue*—the musical expression of this newly-packaged Chinese national folk music. It also continues to consider the subject of music and place, as discussed in the previous section on Chinese rock. However, this is pursued here with a view to understanding the interplay between music and other places. Doing so allows me to examine how *xin*

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[22] Liu Huan, CCTV interview, 30-11-2009, program *30 Years of Chinese Pop.* www.cctv.com.cn.
[23] Su Yue, CCTV interview, 30-11-2009, program *30 Years of Chinese Pop.* www.cctv.com.cn.

minyue signifies Chinese culture, values and aesthetics in a national and international setting, and how it represents a voice of 'self' in such environments. In addition, I reflect further upon the question of what exactly *xin minyue* authentically incarnates.

2.1.1 The Roots

The effort to create a unique Chinese popular music with national characteristics had already started with *xibeifeng* in the late 1980s, and this fashion of creation has never vanished. Since *xibeifeng* and Cui Jian's rock, the experimental use of traditional musical components in the creation of popular music has formed a striking trend. Pop music that projects a strong national identity has been constantly visible. The pop industry eventually created the term '*xin minyue*', which appeared at the end of 1990s and was also widely used at the start of the new millennium. Literally, *xin minyue* means neo-national folk music;[24] and it indicates the dual implication of a re-formed *minyue* and popular music. From the title, music scholars will instantly recognise the basic modality of this kind of music, which displays the flavours of both native and western music. As a Chinese version of global music, it departs from tradition both musically and conceptually.[25] The development of *xin minyue* follows the same route as other similar happenings in world music which, with its legacy, presents difficulties for scholars who wish to determine its contribution to the conventional musical landscape (Sung 2006: 10).

The national flavour of *xin minyue* bestowed both nativism and nationalism on C-pop as a style, by utilizing traditional musical and instrumental elements to form a popular music genre that represented Chinese cultural values and aesthetics. This

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[24] "*Xin*" means "new", "*minyue*", means "people's music", and so could refer to national (*minzu*) or folk (*minjian*) music. In China, the common thinking is that *minyue* is a synonym for national music, which includes collected and conservatoire-specialized traditional and folk music of both original and conservatoire-created production. See, Sue 2003: 157-58; also Yuan 2000; Xia & Chen 1989. Furthermore, from the view of the academic scene, *minyue* is counted as a type of traditional music, which contains folk music, and national music is seen as a kind of folk music. In terms of the categories of Chinese traditional music, Chinese scholars hold different standpoints based on their differing angles and the aims of their study. For instance, *An Introduction to Chinese National Music* (*Minzu yinyue gailun*), edited by the Music Research Institute of the Central Conservatory and published in 1964, categorizes traditional music into five types: folk and ancient songs, dancing music, narrative music, traditional opera and national instrument music. This classification is a common one, but now, the majority of researchers realize that this method cannot include all the wide variety of Chinese traditional music, and is only suitable for folk music. Thus, in 1990, Wang Yaohua proposed a new point of view in *An Introduction to Chinese Traditional Music* (*Zhongguo chuantong yinyue gailun*), which categorized traditional music into four types: folk music, (including folk song, dancing music, narrative music, traditional opera, national instrumental music and universal music); literati music, (including *qin* music and poetry with music); court music; and religious music.
[25] For the detailed temporal background and the reasons for the emergence of *xin minyue*, please see my MA dissertation, *Crossover Music in Contemporary China: Xin Minyue, a Modern Version of Traditional Music*. 2004, Sheffield University, Music Department.

nativism shows in both regional and national levels, which in the former draws on linguistic and musical resources specifically marked in performance as local, while the national nativism points to elements of the broader Chinese cultural domain but avoids reliance on those of a specific region.

Regional nativism was clearly seen through the singing language, musical texture, costumes and stage performance, in order to present the customs of minorities or ethnic groups. *Xin minyue* pushed ethnic musical elements from the periphery to centre stage. In China, Mandarin is the official language, and pop songs sung in Mandarin are understood and popular in every region of China. This situation changes when minority and local languages or dialects are used, but hybrid songs can still win great popularity. For instance, Tengger, from the national Mongolian minority, sings a whole section of the song 'The Mongolian' (Menggu ren) in Mongolian. Another example in the post-*xin minyue* period is Xue Cun's 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' (Dongbei ren doushi huo Lei Feng, which essentially means 'All north-eastern people are warm-hearted'). It has a countrified (even redneck) flavour, a distinctive north-eastern tune-pattern, a local vocal accent and a simple story based on the ideology of the north-eastern people. Despite, or even because of, the roughness of the song it became all the rage within the nation.[26] These songs are also musically localized. 'The Mongolian', for example, contains considerable elements of a Mongolian pastoral song style, including the accompaniment of a traditional Mongolian instrument, the *matouqin* (horse-head fiddle). The traditional music style *yang'ge*, meanwhile, is broadly employed in national pop songs given north-eastern settings. Many *xin minyue* performers who have minority backgrounds prefer to appear in traditional costumes to emphasize their identity as 'not of the masses', in order to win public attention rather by 'individuality.' The local voices, including their elements of musical form, content and style, are all important evidence of recent cultural, political and economical transformations, as Tim Taylor has testified (Taylor 1997).

A national flavour is also displayed in this era's *xin minyue*, in that the quintessence of Chinese national culture remains important; ancient poetry, folk tales which reflect Chinese traditional philosophy, and traditional musical elements have all been employed. If the songs by singers such as Xue Cun and Tengger present an

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[26] Recordings of Xue Cun's song 'Every Manchurian is Living Lei Feng' were the top best seller in 2002; this song also had the highest click rate and download rate on the Internet. Data from China Pop Music Billboard of 2002. As Xue Cun said, 'who was the hottest singer in 2002 in mainland China? Me!' Xue Cun, interview, 15-06-2007, Beijing.

ethnicity, then the songs with a national flavour rather present a nationalism. For example, there is Peking opera music in the song 'Chinese Gongfu' (Zhongguo gongfu) sung by Tu Honggang, which communicates the unique charisma of Chinese *gongfu* by describing different schools of martial arts in both its music and text. If the regional elements of nativism point to the more exotic areas (relative to the majority of Chinese who are *Han* people—the major ethnic group of China) of the Chinese periphery—'now but not here'—these national usages point to elements of the archaic Chinese national ethos—'here but not now'.

Nationalism, on the other hand, appears primarily as pride in national superiority and patriotism. Paying tribute to the state was a standard theme of the mass-mediated songs performed by singers trained in China's conservatories, who employed a so-called national singing style which parallels the use of *bel canto* style in China. This same topic occurs in Chinese national pop. In the song 'Great China' (Da zhongguo), for example, the singer portrays the charm of the country and the people's love for their nation. This song has been continuously promoted since the end of the 1990s, and its prominence was emphasized at one particular Spring Festival Evening Gala (the primary event in the Chinese New Year's Eve celebrations, broadcast worldwide) when three top male singers, Mao Ning (from the mainland), Liu Dehua (Hong Kong) and Zhang Xinzhe (Taiwan) performed it together.

Figure 1-6: 'Great China' (lyrics, translated by Zhao Yue)
All of us possess one home, named 'China'
Numerous brother and sisters, wonderful scenery.
The Tibetan Altiplano is even wider than the sky,
...China, all the best to you, you will live in my heart forever,
China, best hopes to you, without needing thousands of words.

Patriotic songs extolling national superiority are typically performed in a musically upbeat manner. Those that create a more patriotic connotation, however, tend to be performed more seriously or more formally. For example, the words of the song 'My Loving China, I Love You' (Qinai de zhongguo, wo ai ni) are:

Figure 1-7: 'My Loving China, I Love You' (lyrics, translated by Zhao Yue)
Since I came to this world, I chose you,
A thousand million people just like me,

Whether leaders or common folk, all are beloved children of yours.

Your brave-heart makes me courageous wherever I am,

Your yellow skin is China's flag,

Whatever pain or happiness, I always want to tell you:

My loving China, I love you,

The more I love you,

The more I understand the hardship of five thousand years;

The more I love you, the more I know no one is as beautiful as you.

In an overlap with the nativist category, widely-known national heroes may also become the subjects of national pop songs. Tu Honggang's song, 'Loyally Dedicate My Life to My Country' (Jingzhong baoguo), for example, draws its material from a famous historical story, which tells how General Yue Fei's mother tattooed 'Loyally dedicate my life to my country' on his back before he went into battle.

Nativism and nationalism are both aspects that represent the Chinese consciousness of 'self'. The question is how is this awareness of 'self' manifested in *xin minyue* musical practice? Is it the embodiment of diversified music creation, or the incarnation of diversified music production?

2.1.2 *Xin minyue*: Aiming at Music or Market?

Although many composer producers claim their *xin minyue* music making is an attempt to explore new possibilities of musical creation, the range of viewpoints concerning the *minyue,* such as it being a hybridized music, always mean this genre is debated—whether to place it as nationalized popular music or popularized traditional music. This situation is similar to that obtained in other countries. For example by studying new Korean folksongs, Sung noticed that categorizing such musical practice as a nationalized popular music could earn it more tolerance and less deprecation (Sung 2006: 14-5). I shall now look at them again from the angles of audience and performers, suggesting why listeners appear to find social value in nativistic songs, and why performers adopt patriotic postures, to further demonstrate how *xin minyue*'s purity does not result in diversity of musical practice, but more accurately leads to diversity in music production and marketing.

Firstly, marketing needs to take advantage of the resurrection of national self-worth that can be found in nativism. The economic status of a nation plays a major

role in determining people's conception of their own cultural worth. If the Opium War in the 1840s symbolically reduced China to semi-colonial status, and subsequent warfare and political conflicts left China in a state of economic and political upheaval and instability up until 1949, all these factors imbued a 'worship of the West' into the subconscious of the majority of ordinary Chinese. By the 1980s, however, China was reopened to the rest of the world and had gradually developed an increased sense of its own national power and cultural identity.

The turn to nativism in Chinese national pop, then, is closely tied to musicians' and producers' awareness that music with such ingredients caters better to the tastes of current audiences, and is therefore more marketable. Just as Wang Xiaojing, the producer of 12 Girls Band, said:

> After so many years imitating other people's music, audiences have been eager to listen to something new. Whatever the academics have said, this project won the market, even the international market.[27]

Two clues are revealed here: this practice was for marketing purposes, and it was intended to be a marketing project, not a musically conceptualized innovation. Therefore, for *xin minyue*, the music is essentially commercial in nature, existing in an environment in which success or failure is determined primarily by the volume of record sales. Nativism here is both a marketing tool and a carrier for nationalism; in other words, by using nativism not only can the international market be won but also national support since to Chinese people it successfully showed the pride of the nation on the international stage, as one of the interviewees, Luo Qiying noted:

> I don't understand why there are still some so-called scholars pointing their fingers to 12 Girls Band, and also those jealous pop musicians; at least they are successful, at least they have won fame in the international market by playing traditional Chinese musical instruments, at least now in Japan, this band is very well-known for presenting Chinese music.[28]

Luo Qiying's view also addressed deep-seated Chinese desire for international approval, which has now been fulfilled via the nationalism that is displayed in *xin minyue*. From the 1990s to 2000, alongside the growing strength of the economy and

[27] Wang Xiaojing, interview, 12-05-2004, Beijing.
[28] Luo Qiying, interview, 26-05-2007, Beijing.

the nation as a whole, the Chinese craving for having its own place on the international stage has presented itself in different areas, including in the domain of music. In that, the economic status of a nation normally determines people's concept of their own cultural value. In one country, its people might detest their own traditional culture when the country is poor and weak; by contrast, when the economy returns to prosperity and power, the people will again approve of the traditional culture. This phenomenon has been observed in many parts of the world; to cite countries such as Japan and Korea that share a similar culture with China as examples, the psychological changes in their cultural values since the 1960s have been closely related to their overall national strength.[29]

Thus, *xin minyue* as a musical practice is not an absolute musical desire, but is more clearly defined as a desire for the market, and it fulfilled the Chinese longing for a place on the international music stage. To take the producer Wang Xiaojing's view:

> I observed the music market for a long time; Japanese music, African music, European music, Latin-American music and so on, all have been absorbed into 'world music.' Chinese music on the other hand was still silent, so I always held a belief in Chinese traditional music. After that, I kept thinking how to deliver Chinese traditional music to the world, bit by bit, after discussing with friends, the idea for the 12 Girls Band came gradually into shape.[30]

Therefore, even though *xin minyue* embodied nativism or nationalism in its music, it is clear to perceive that these were deployed for a whole set of commercial as well as personal and ideological reasons, not simply one or the other, and any analysis has to take into account these multiple social, personal, and economic functions. As such, we cannot judge it as a musical creation made for the sake of diversified music practice. *Xin minyue* then, is both a contemporary hybridized world music like so many others but also very much an arena in which deeply-felt local, regional and national expressions vie for attention.

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[29] See Herd, 'The Cultural Politics of Japan's Modern Music, Nostalgia, Nationalism, and Identity in the Interwar Years.' In *Locating East Asian in Western Art Music* 2004: 40-56, which is about Japanese musical change; also see Lee, 'Contemporary Korean Musical Cultures' in *Korea Briefing, 1993 Festival of Korea*, 1993: 126, which about Korean musicians' reflections on traditional music.
[30] Wang Xiaojing, interview, 12-05-2004, Beijing.

2.1.3 Interpretations of *Xin minyue*

Taking the 12 Girls Band as a case study, who achieved tremendous success in Japan rather than in their native China, one question again arises; that of compatibility of music and place. In the section on Chinese rock music (see Chapter One), I considered how well attuned the music is with the place of its physical creation and subsequent continuation; the success of the 12 Girls Band seems to offer another answer but as a converse example.

From a cultural standpoint, Japanese audiences not only possess a shared cultural understanding of Chinese traditional music, but they were fascinated by what the band stood for, as the name refers to the ancient culture of the Chinese Tang Dynasty, which has the greatest historical connection with Japan. Also some instruments used by performers have sister versions in traditional Japanese musical instruments, and the performers are young, pretty, but also decent since they are all well-educated in the top Chinese music conservatories, which suits the taste of most Japanese men (many Japanese youths became their fans, and most of these were men). The observer Li Ying pointed out:

> To make a hypothesis that we take the Chinese National Symphony Orchestra to perform the same repertoire, how would they react? I believe apart from praising how wonderful Chinese national music is, they would not bring the entire people nation-wide to adore it; if they did, Chinese national musicians could all become stars in the Japanese market. However, if the 12 Girls Band use the same instruments used to perform Beethoven or Mozart, they would still come to the fore.[31]

Besides, the adoration of idols has a rather long historical tradition in Japanese culture; this is one of the reasons why the Japanese entertainment industry has produced the most 'idol' stars.[32] By means of looking fashionable, and promoting 'a traditional voice from China,' the 12 Girls Band gained a lot of attention in the early promotional stage, even before their actual appearance.[33] Therefore, the orientation of

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[31] Li is a commentator from *Informational Directory*, this article has been published in different websites and newspapers, for detail please refer to http://www.people.com.cn/GB/paper2836/11364/1026233.html, access date: 12-04-2005.

[32] Lin Ying, http://www.ccm.gov.cn/show.php?aid=39516&cid=62, access date: 28-06-2007.

[33] Zhang Tao, interview, 27-06-2004, Beijing.

this band project was clearly to create performers for their target audience. In Wang Xiaojing's view, the cultural connection is the key reason for success and he claimed: 'Japanese culture has something in common with Chinese culture; that is why our band can be so popular in Japan.'[34]

To scrutinize *xin minyue* from an economic perspective, *xin minyue* in fact appears to continue since the late 1990s to be used as a general term for hybrid types of music, which we can trace back to the *xibeifeng* in the late 1980s. Nowadays, pop music has the property of being a commodity, because it is not only an outcome of the arts, but also a product of the entertainment world. Taylor has expounded the key function of capitalism in the music scene by using 'World Music' as an example (Taylor 1997). When Chinese people once more became interested in traditional culture, businessmen engaged in the cultural industry sector noticed that there was a huge potential market. National music has therefore naturally become a valuable resource for music producers and a good business opportunity for music publishers. Thus, the needs of the market also promoted the forming of *xin minyue*. The founder of the 12 Girls Band, Wang Xiaojing, also admitted that: 'When I first organized the 12 Girls Band, its commercial purpose was much more important than its musical exploration, although after putting out this item, some people said it made some contribution to the promotion of national folk music; but to be honest, I did not think about this at the beginning.'[35]

In sum, *xin minyue* made itself plausible as a popular music genre signifying Chinese culture, values and aesthetics. Although it literally means 'neo-national music', whether it actually possesses a national voice or not remains controversial. However, one thing that cannot be doubted is that, although the nativism and nationalism in *xin minyue* embody a consciousness of 'self', it is not the incarnation of a diversified music which is realised, but one aimed at the diversified production of music. *Xin minyue* as a voice of self-affirmation is still centred on the music-receivers, even if it produced its own cross-over music in C-pop.

2.2 INTERNET MUSIC

This section focuses on internet music, a rising musical phenomenon in China since

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[34] Wang Xiaojing, interview, 05-07-2004, Beijing.
[35] Wang Xiaojing, interview, 05-07-2004, Beijing.

2000. It explores a new music style brought about by the internet, the new medium for transmitting and circulating music, and the impact on our daily life of music in virtual space. 'Internet music' is a term used in mainland China by musicians and audiences to distinguish pop music originally disseminated and popularized on the internet. In terms of this musical phenomenon, I am going to examine it in terms of its socio-cultural role and shifting functions. This musical phenomenon has become widely popular with audiences, even if most of the songs are unprofessional and made for the purpose of self-entertainment. Thus certain scholars and critics describe internet music as embodying 'vulgar culture' (*su wenhua*) in present-day Chinese urban settings.[36] Such music can sometimes change from cultural product to cultural merchandise, and in consequence emerges from virtual space into real-space. Such a change in the cultural role and function of the music facilitates a change in the cultural property of internet music in turn.

2.2.1 Internet Music

At the turn of the century, internet music came to the attention of the mainland Chinese with lightening speed, and people call the singers of this music 'net-singers' (*wangluo geshou*). The first net-singer who obtained extraordinary public attention was Xue Cun with his song 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng'. With a comical animated music video, strong local colour, amusing contents and style of singing, this song became immensely popular. In 2003-2004, singer Dao Lang published his song 'The First Snow of 2002' (2002 nian de diyichang xue) on the internet, he therefore became the most successful singer of the year on account of the marvellous access rate through the internet. Subsequently Dao Lang released his debut album in 2004 after he had become nationally renowned; this recording was also a top seller in terms of volume of sales according to official statistics.[37] Thereafter, well-known internet songs such as 'Mouse Loves Rice' (Laoshu ai dami), 'Two Butterflies' (Liangzhi hudie) and 'Lilac' (Dingxiang hua) emerged one after another and also took the lead within the C-pop market. Internet music through the virtual space of the internet therefore became a

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[36] Liu Yong, Zuo Jicheng and He Yong, interview, 26-04-2007, Beijing. Although scholars use the term *su wenhua*, which literally means vulgar culture, they also point out vulgar (*su*) indicates the most grassroots level, and does not always mean indecent (*di su*).

[37] According to the two major online music sellers in mainland China—Dangdang and Joyo Amazon, Dao Lang's album was the highest selling album in 2004. Cheng Wenye, interview, 19-05-2007, Beijing.

major consideration of the media and the market, as the chairman of FAB Jingcai Recording company, Zhang Baocheng remarked: 'now internet songs are widely accepted and practiced, I am also thinking of changing the marketing strategy for promoting my own contracted singers and songs.'[38] Some internet music, including the three songs mentioned above, has even achieved a popularity as great as that of music produced through more conventional means, namely by recording companies in real life.

The primary points we need to clarify are: What is an internet song? What are the unique traits and that determine its popularity? The common understanding of internet music is as follows: generally, in a Chinese context, 'internet song' refers to the songs which singers upload on to the internet sung by themselves, either newly composed or reworked cover versions of existing songs. Internet songs are mainly produced by amateur music-makers: the creators of new works are singer-songwriters, those performing revised songs also are recording in their homes; the majority of the singers are untrained, and the construction of the songs is plain and simple. The melodies and tunes of newly-composed works are catchy and memorable, whereas reworked songs are normally given new lyrics and sung in a new style which often contrasts with the original style. The titles of the songs are always remarkable and memorable (such as 'Mouse Loves Rice', 'Gangsterdom Is Not the Local Speciality of the North East', 'Song of a Pig' and so on), the contents normally project the current social psychology of the masses, or embody social concerns in a very sharp, allegoric or amusing way. The method of expression is normally sarcasm and cynicism, accompanied by Flash (software used to make animated cartoons) animations, and access is via the internet. All in all, because of their popularity and simplicity, plus the exploitation of the internet—a mode of transmission which has penetrated people's daily life and is considered as the 'information superhighway'—in present-day China, net-songs in virtual space have overwhelmed the real-life mainstream popular music domain.

2.2.2 Internet as a Music Carrier

The Internet is a real example of a broadband, wide-area computer network that allows each individual user an equal voice, or at the least an equal opportunity to

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[38] Zhang Baocheng, interview, 22-05-2007, Beijing.

speak (Foster 1997: 23).

The Internet has become an indispensable part of Chinese urban life. People have not only an equal access and exposure through online communication, but also now have the opportunity to exhibit themselves, due to the attributes of democratization and equality of internet communication (Foster 1997: 23; Graham 1999: 62-66; Graham 1995). These fundamental reasons are also a precondition of the rise of internet songs and singers, although the motives for composing are various. The Internet therefore has turned into one of the arenas for people to display themselves. To be fair, there is limited internet access in the remote rural areas of China, but this does not influence C-pop making very greatly, since the pop music industry has always been based in urban settings in China.[39]

The rise of internet music began with some music-lovers making their own music for the purpose of self-entertainment, and the Internet as a carrier, having the ability to disseminate music quickly, has launched these amateur singers and their music from obscurity into the limelight. Consequently, many artists have now realised that the Internet is one of the best means of getting their music into the public domain. One representative example is the singer-songwriter Xue Cun, and another is Dao Lang. Xun Cun's work 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' became a hit at the beginning of the 21st century, since he uploaded this song, which had previously received no approbation from other professional musicians or music producers. The accompanying Flash animation was produced in a very simple but amusing way. It has a countrified (even redneck) flavour: a distinctive north-eastern tune-pattern and a local vocal accent that non-local people always make fun of. The cartoon characters in the music video are depicted in a funny and rustic way, and the storyline is a simple one based on the ideology of the north-eastern people. The song became a hit, in spite of or perhaps because of its rawness. Xue Cun, when he negotiated with recording companies after composing the song in the mid-1990s, had found that no one was interested in his work and therefore no one intended to issue his songs. Xun Cun told me that due to financial difficulty, he eventually found a Flash producer and created a cartoon music video for his song, then uploaded it onto the internet without any need

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[39] Information provided in the section on Chinese Rock in Chapter One when I referred to the physical location of C-pop which changed from Guang Zhou to Beijing during 1980s and 1990s. The history of popular music in China can be traced back further, to the 1920s-1940s, when it was located in old Shanghai. For further details see Wong Kee Chee 2001; Chen Szu Wei 2005: 107-25.

for capital.[40] Dao Lang experienced a similar series of events. His song 'The First Snow of 2002' spread from virtual space to actual life, and he became a contract singer of the Universal Music Group.[41] By virtue of the internet he achieved what other singers could only dream of.

On the other hand, some amateurs or internet users (netizens) upload their own home-recorded works just for fun. Either original creations or reworks, these net-singers produce music using only a low-cost microphone and an audio card, but their productions can make them as popular as those of proper vocational singers. From these living examples, we can perceive the extraordinary function of the internet as a music-transmitting carrier. Compared with conventional music-production procedures, the internet affords an equal chance to every one who wants to achieve their musical ambitions and all the internet musicians engage in interaction democratically and freely.

When singers use virtual space as a vehicle to distribute their music, the internet provides a music-transmitting carrier. Equal competition attests to the democratization of internet communication. This idiosyncrasy forms a precondition for internet music, in that equivalent opportunities and a performing platform can be obtained by ordinary people, although sometimes other motivations such as personal reasons occur. Low-cost music making and distribution gave birth to internet songs, and the cross-spatial and instantaneous attributes of Internet communication further prompted their spread. As internet singer A Shui said:

> Normally I just make music with my own computer, apart from this, the only thing I
> need is a microphone. I make the music which I think is fun, then I just upload it.
> There are more and more music websites now, so we have more and more arenas to
> present ourselves. Well, now, most of the websites charge for uploading our own
> songs, but it's ok, not too much; a few years ago some websites even offered you
> free uploading, hum... you can hardly find free uploading now.[42]

Certain scholars have pointed out that people's interaction through this virtual space is even livelier than through the real space in which we physically live (for discussion on 'virtual community' see Rheingold 1994: 5; Aoki 1994; Watson

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[40] Xue Cun, interview, 01-06-2007, Beijing.
[41] Universal Music Group—UMG, one of the world biggest recording companies, for further details about contracted singers in the UMG China region, please refer to its official website www.umusic.com.cn
[42] A Shui, internet singer, interview, 21-10-2007, Si Chuan.

1997: 102-132). After being viewed and downloaded by numerous internet users, internet songs spread globally via the internet, and the extent to which the songs and singers become well-known is dependent on the click rate.

2.2.3 A Shift in Singer Identity

The netizens and music-lovers bring fashionable internet songs to the real world, and have rapidly expanded the influence of these songs. Recording companies have attempted to sign some well-known internet singers, such as Xun Cun and Dao Lang, mentioned above, who are now professional music producers. The status of Yang Chengang, who sings 'Mouse Loves Rice', is now known to the public since his song became a hit though the internet. 'Global', 'Warner' and more than ten mainland Chinese recording companies competed to sign him as a contract singer. Xiang Xiang, another successful female internet singer, is also being pursued by different recording companies and media to perform live shows. Therefore, we can see a shift in the identity of successful internet singers who have come into the professional music industry from virtual cyber space, and their identity has been transformed from amateur internet singers into professional career singers.

Becoming a contract singer means that music creation is for market purposes and whatever the company issues, either singles or albums, will count towards the sales volume; the music now has turned into merchandise rather than remaining, as before, a simple cultural production without any commercial aspect. For example, Dao Lang's album was the 'in thing' in 2004. To sense its popularity, listen to one of my interviewees, Li Lulin: 'You can hear Dao Lang's song everywhere within the nation, in recording shops, restaurants, taxis, buses, or maybe from your neighbour's house; and if you ask for a new listening recommendation, someone might recommend one album, called "The First Snow in 2002".'[43] This contrasts clearly with the previous situation when music was just created by the unknown singers in order to seek approval from audiences, or for amateurs to enjoy themselves, or even for some good corporate citizens to engender latent social appeal.

After certain internet singers gained considerable reputations many of their live shows became commercial. The performance expenses of some top internet

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[43] Li Lulin, interview, 20-04-2007, Shanghai.

singers are increasingly high, and now they have both fame and fortune enough to beget jealousy from pop stars; for example, Dao Lang's appearance fees reached 1.2 million Yuan in 2006.[44] They exist as cultural merchandise, rather than cultural product, as they used to be; and the market profit is the key difference between cultural merchandise and cultural product, in which the former's aim is the market and the latter's to induce social attention. In other words, their ultimate function is different.

Internet songs were created and circulated in virtual space, but when their commercial function started to be performed in the real space of our society, the shift in social-cultural role and function has suggested a shift in social-cultural property. From being a peripheral music phenomenon, internet songs have moved into the mainstream, the C-pop industry, even though their rise subverts the conventional pattern of music production.

2.2.4 New Expression

Internet music presents a new musical expression in the C-pop domain. Its do-it-yourself quality, grassroots music-making coupled with a widespread reception reveal that internet music exists as mass music in an urban setting. The following section will look into the presentations of internet music and consider how local folk-customs and realism embodied in the songs are key features which demonstrate its cultural property as vulgar culture. It will also examine the spread of internet music from cyberspace to popular culture and commercialisation in the pop music industry and how it deconstructs the habitual and normal expression of music.

Firstly, some of the songs gain netizens' attention through their local flavour and allusions to folk-customs. Songs such as 'Qing Dao Rednecks' (Qingdao laobaizi)[45], 'He Nan Ren So What?' (Henanren zenme le?)[46] and many other songs tell about their local problems in a local dialect or slang. Xue Cun's 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng', here again is a very representative example. In an unadulterated northeast dialect, this song tells audiences about the ideology and characteristics of the north-eastern people. Some of the lyrics in this song became well-known throughout the nation. For example, the sentence *Cui Hua, Shang Suan Cai*, means 'Cui Hua,

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[44] According to Dao Lang's new album press release conference on 31-03-2006, Beijing.
[45] *Qing Dao* is a seaside city in northern China and *Laobaizi* is Qing Dao dialect for 'yokel'.
[46] *Henanren zenme le* means 'What's wrong with the He Nan people?' The song asks why those in other regions look down on those who come from He Nan.

another portion of pickled vegetable' ('Cui Hua', is the name of a waitress; 'Suan Cai', a kind of pickled vegetable, typical north-eastern traditional food for the winter). This sentence has become a classic joke and southern friends often sing it in a teasing way to make fun of north-eastern people.

Secondly, some songs capture people's attention because of their realism; some aim at expressing personal emotion, some are created for societal concerns while others become famed for 'criticising.' Most of the songs are created and performed in a sarcastic or cynical way, such as 'Da Lian Train Station' ('Dalian huoche zhan', to doubt and even debase the civilized manner, public spirit and civility of Dalian people) and 'Befooling Sphere' ('Yule quan', the pronunciation is the same as 'Entertainment Sphere', to disparage the entertainment industry). The song 'I Don't Want to Say I Am a Chicken' (Wo buxiang shuo woshi ji) talks about the impact of bird flu from the point of view of the chicken. This song was presented at a concert, and the chicken star sings out the concerns of all chickens during an outbreak of bird flu:

Figure 1-8: 'I Don't Want to Say I Am a Chicken' (lyrics translated by Zhao Yue)

I don't want to say, I am very clean,

I don't want to say, I am very secure.

But I cannot deny humans' misapprehension,

Look in the locked hencoop, count our eggs,

Awaiting the danger of being killed.

......

Eating my meat (chorus: eating our meat),

I agree with it (chorus: we agree with it),

Take my eggs away (chorus: take our eggs away),

I am ready for that (chorus: we are ready for that).

But I can't stand being seen as polluted,

Think about the bitter fate, wipe the weeping eyes,

I can understand humans' mood.

......

The same meat, the same eggs,

How we turn into the current of infection

Bird Flu, very dangerous (background: sounds of sneezing)

Why our ancestors are birds...

......

Dad has been executed, brother has been assessed,

Nowadays, there is more hardship in being a chicken than in being a man,

Worry along today, get over tomorrow, the next day you might be dead.

. . . . . .

The same meat, the same eggs, why are we made worthless?

Humans need chickens, humans need to eat,

The human world cannot live without chickens.

Most of the internet songs are displayed as a reflection of present-day social reality, issues and concerns. The above 'I Don't Want to Say I am a Chicken' is one instance of this. This song emerged when bird flu was spreading and a large number of people in China felt intimidated by the presence of chickens and other such related products. This song was sung about the sad situation of being a chicken from a chicken's viewpoint, by using the melody from the song 'I Don't Want to Say' (Wo buxiang shuo) which was a hit at the beginning of the 1990s. Besides, the title of this cover version—'I Don't Want to Say I am a Chicken', is already arresting since 'chicken' also means prostitute in Chinese, as Pu Ruijian said when she talked about this song:

> I remember that day I was surfing the internet and a friend sent me a link with the
> message 'hi, this song "I Don't Want to Say I am a Chicken is fun"'. I thought, wow,
> it is fun! As I opened the link, I saw a picture of a little baby chicken holding a
> microphone and standing on a stage, very cute! When the music started to play, a
> very familiar tune came out; haha, that's Yang Yuying's [a top female singer during
> 1990s] song 'I Don't Want to Say'. When the cool baby chicken started singing, in
> tears, and telling humans how sorrowful it was for being a chicken, wow, it was just
> so cute and laughable, I shared it with many friends afterwards![47]

Therefore, internet songs essentially deconstruct normal and customary music expressions, by taking a musical theme and infusing it with new ironic contents. It defies the normal tastes of Chinese music-receivers.

2.2.5 New Experience of Music-Receiving

With conventional music carrying media such as television and radio, the major role of

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[47] Pu Ruijian, interview, 13-11-2008, Beijing.

music receivers was to accept music the way it had been arranged, so that the music reflected little of the voice of the masses. However, the emergence of internet music offers a new way for listeners to enjoy music. The internet not only provides for a flexible self-expression and a certain degree of autonomy for the choice of music, but also offers an open door for music making that further embodies the autonomy of experiencing music. The internet actualizes the musical ambitions of many amateurs. A tremendous amount of music is uploaded every day. One interviewee, Jia Ran said:

> I choose whatever I like, not caring about the 'music taste'. I want to have fun, I want to laugh, I want to relax; so I love to search for some easy and funny songs. Who cares how those professionals and scholars debase this kind of music as vulgar, low or exceeding the moral base line; I don't want to listen to their voices, and yes, they don't necessarily need to hear my voice either. The internet is equally available for everyone. I am so glad the internet has become the main carrier for music.[48]

From Jia Ran's view point, the most significant trait of the relationship between the internet and music—the former being the carrier of the latter—is equality. Besides, to most unprofessional people who are not satisfied with being just a music receiver, it also fulfils their wish to engage more in other kinds of musical experience such as composing, music-making and recording.

The equality of the internet is even more functional and valuable to amateur musicians, as it allows them to engage in different musical activities. The internet has provided new ways for listeners to hear music; it has also enabled the emergence of online communities. The idea of community as a phenomenon has always been central to anthropological studies, and in later years, the study of online communities has also drawn widespread interest from anthropologists (Wilson and Peterson 2002: 449-67). Virtual communities are shaped by netizens who hold similar-minded discourse and contributions (Murphy 1997: 2-3). However, within these communities the music experience differs from other experiences within the online fraternity in that it offers dual experience both within online communities and in real life too. This contrasts with what Rheingold posits: 'people in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind' (Rheingold 1993: 3). Internet music, in fact, has a much broader sphere of influence beyond the internet.

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[48] Jia Ran, interview, 15-11-2007, Beijing.

According to Wikipedia (which, although not always as reliable a source as information found in academic publications, can still be used to find out the common points of a subculture), 'a subculture is a set of people with a distinct set of behaviour and beliefs that differentiate them from a larger culture of which they are a part'. Dick Hebdige described subculture as a matter of style: 'The word subculture is loaded with mystery, it suggests secrecy, Masonic oaths, an underworld. It also invokes the larger and no less difficult concept 'culture'' (Hebdige 1988: 4). Thus, we might say this vulgar culture embodied in internet songs, which has only been made possible since the shaping of the virtual community, is a kind of subculture derived from internet culture. Yet this subculture increasingly influences the mainstream. Singers who have become career-singers such as Xiang Xiang, Xue Cun, Dao Lang and Yang Chengang, and have issued their own formal and professional singles or albums after they signed up with leading recording companies. For example, Dao Lang is contracted to the Universal Music Group as mentioned before. In putting their albums out into the market, such singers have managed to follow up with numerous business performances all over the country; in doing so they have fulfilled a shift for their musical career from virtual space into real life. Some orthodox career singers have changed their strategy, choosing the internet as the first place to issue singles (including Hong Kong and Macao singers, such as Ding Wenjun and Pan Liezhi). The internet, this open music carrier, has led to a certain blurring in the dividing line between periphery and mainstream music.

To sum up, internet music has become one of the voices of the C-pop soundscape as a whole, deconstructing both habitual and customary C-pop making and receiving. This has then revealed internet music to have its own voice of self-expression. The idiosyncrasy, equality and democratization of the internet as a music-transmitting carrier offer equivalent opportunities and an arena for self-expression to ordinary people. Because of its simple presentation and realistic content, internet songs and singers possess a natural affinity with their audience. The social concerns articulated in the songs absorb peoples' attention meaning that internet music is therefore widely accepted by netizens, which further promotes it into real-life. As a form of contemporary mass music, internet music is a good example of how the internet has become an increasingly important carrier for the C-pop industry, with the equality that it provides for musicians and listeners alike playing an essential function.

2.3 THE 'IDOL' PHENOMENON

Here, I focus only on one particular idol show, 'Super Girl'. The following discussion examines the contribution made by this phenomenon. It gives evidence for seeing musical behaviour in this setting as both a success of the attention economy and also an implement of anti-elite attitudes within the C-pop industry. There are also major connections with my study of fandom, which will be considered in Part Three—Fan Culture.

2.3.1 Super Girl: Super Voice?

'Super Girl,' like idol phenomena in other countries of the world, is a singing contest, similar to 'X-Factor' and 'Pop Idol' in the United Kingdom. 'Super Girl', meaning 'super female voice', was an annual national singing contest for female contestants, programmed and organized by the Hunan Satellite Television in the Peoples Republic of China. It became one of the most popular shows between 2004 and 2006. One of the key factors contributing to its success was a new democratic element, in that spectators were able to play a part in the judging process by texting messages to vote for their favourite contestants. Taking the example of a regional contest in the Chengdu area in the 2005 'Super Girl', 307,071 votes were cast by text message for the final three contestants (Miao 2005: 3). Even though certain commentators remarked in the official and formal press 'How come an imitation of a democratic system ends up selecting the singer who has the least ability to carry a tune?'[49] the show itself was deemed an exercise in cultural democracy (Shi 2005; Yardley 2005).

The final winner was Li Yuchun, a girl with no distinctive voice nor fine singing in the view of many professional musicians.[50] Her success was one example of the supremacy of the grassroots, since her first place was won by her fans' votes. The title Super Girl, therefore, does not indicate that a super voice will prevail, but rather that super support can in the end make a contestant stand out.

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[49] Such as the comments at Yahoo, see http://ent.cn.yahoo.com/060605/353/27z3l.html, access date: 13-04-2008.
[50] Many professional musicians came out to criticize Li Yuchun's singing during the Super Girl contest, such as Jin Tielin, one of the most famous musicians, composers, vocal educators, and music professors in China, who bluntly stated: 'Li Yuchun really does not sing well'. Bei Fang, interview, 08-11-2007, Beijing.

2.3.2 Success of the Attention Economy

As mentioned above, the format of the show as a television programme mainly relied on the spectators' voting, turning this phenomenon of the music scene into a multi-faceted economic activity, since it boosted communication by mobile telephone, and also encouraged the appearance of voting companies and fan clubs. From the very nature of the show as a dramatic spectacle, it is clear that the idol phenomenon is a successful expression of the attention economy[51] in entertainment.

The first thing to consider in explaining how the attention economy is realised by the idol phenomenon is to see how it builds a long-term relationship with consumers. An idol phenomenon such as 'Super Girl' provides an idea of how the music industry has been incorporating its jealously-guarded intellectual property and familiar modes of industrial self-presentation into existing media environments to build long-term relationships with consumers (Fairchild 2004: 4). And the word 'long-term' here both refers to this phenomenon's scope and time within the pop industry, for it not only involves television and radio broadcasting, DVD and CD products, mobile phone and internet engagement, but also lasts for around five months. The attention of the audience is extended. In addition, the wide array of opportunities to take part in 'idol-making' is central to the success of this particular attention economy, as the figures below demonstrate:

150,000 contestants took part; 540,000 audience members were involved in voting; 200,000,000 viewers watched the programme; it generated the highest advertisement slot fees (¥112,500 for 15 second advertisement slots in 2005); the hottest media discussion; and a broadcasting hit for several months.

The results of an investigation within primary and high schools in Chang Chun city between 15 and 20 July 2007 produced the following findings: 95% of students were aware of 'Super Girl'; 90% watched the programme every Friday (when it was on air); 50% voted for their favourite contestant via their own mobile phone, and each vote cost ¥1 (Yue 2007: 63).

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[51] The connection between the pop music industry and the attention economy is explained in Part Three when I consider Fan Culture. Generally speaking, the attention of its recipients is the essence of strengthening information in the contemporary age (Simon 1971: 40-41). The term 'attention economics' is mainly used in connection with the problem of getting consumers to consume advertising (Adler and Firestone 1997), and it also touches upon almost all media creations such as novels, films, software and so on (Beller 2006).

Indeed Fairchild notes, 'the more taxed public attention gets, the more valuable it becomes' (Fairchild 2004: 3); an opinion backed up by Davenport and Beck (Davenport and Beck 2002: 49-55). All the figures above show how the wave of interest aroused by the idol phenomenon has created a huge economy, the whole thing being executed by participation. Besides, the means of reaching consumers has shifted in parallel with a change in the attention economy brought about by the idol phenomenon, since it is inspiring new thinking about how to create lasting, flexible and evolving relationships with target audiences (Fairchild 2007). This draws on an existing anti-intellectual focus since the grassroots are considered an important market by the C-pop industry.

Each show has its own interesting and gripping opening, the personal stories of contestants, and also some riveting plots to intensify the atmosphere, leading to the final destiny of the contestants, either a happy ending or a sad farewell. Audiences are drawn in by the emotional highs and lows of the show, every process creating dramatic conflict. During the show, the participation and reaction of the audience adds further drama, for they are as much involved in the scene as the idols on stage. As it is an elimination game, all the contestants have to go through many competitions in order to get into the final; taking part in processes such as 'PK' (meaning 'player kill' in internet games, to indicate the decisive battle between two contestants) and the 'voting' moment where the true cruelty of the game is revealed. As producer Huang Xiaomao noted:

> The show is the same as a drama, you can see the fans perform walk-on parts, crying and shouting; even the judges are performing a special role. All these are just the TV series factors but put into a music show; every actor is only acting as the director requires.[52]

The dramatic effect brings a further concrete 'idol' since the winner's appearance is endorsed through open engagement in the process of public ratification. Therefore, the 'idol' generated through the practice of the attention economy is not only part of a grassroots movement in the C-pop domain, but also provides a position of absolute power to the music-receivers.

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[52] Huang Xiaomao, interview, 05-06-2008, Beijing.

2.3.3 The Success of Individuation

The slogan of 'Super Girl'—'Sing As You Want' actually suggests every ordinary girl holds the potential to be a star, and the decisions are made by the common people voting by sending text messages. As fans normally take part in generating promotional strategies in order to support their idols during the show, this idol phenomenon essentially lays down a challenge to the conventional elites—the intellectuals too in the Chinese context, whom economist Thomas Sowell (2010: 4) defines as people whose occupations deal primarily with ideas' as distinct from those who apply ideas practically.

Besides, unlike the 'celebrity idols,' scholar Yue Xiaodong calls the winner of the idol phenomena 'populace idols;' and also points out that adoration of these populace idols is essentially due to the prevalence of the bottom-up grassroots culture (Yue 2007: 85-86). The grassroots fandom is just like a mirror that reflects certain unconscious desires of youth; the success of the new idols is something close to a 'projective effect' for their fan groups, since the idols achieve the dreams treasured by many young people.

As the grassroots possesses a strong and vast but also independent foundation, it in fact offers a platform for the extension of individuation. According to Jung from the psychological perspective, individuation is the 'process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated [from other human beings]; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology' (Jung 1971: 757). Individuation has been embodied even further through idol contests after 2000, although scholar Yue Xiaodong has claimed that the awakening of 'individuation' took place in 1990s mainland China (Yue 2007: 86). After the Super Girl contest, the final result of the show further revealed that individuality had gained a new status, above aesthetic appreciation. The winner in the end was Li Yuchun, a boy-like girl, whose singing was not the best, and who also was not considered particularly good looking. However, her neutral style became the top quality that won her attention. As a cultural symbol, Li Yuchun's appearance tallied with many young people's desire to be individualistic, specifically not to situate and orientate oneself by sexual and social requirements. From this symbol, the spectator realized, the 'idol' was not one who can only be watched and appreciated at a distance, but one 'we' can be, which is the best way of

expressing fulfilment of the inner aspiration of individuation. This empathy with the idol shortens the distance between the idol and the fans. Li Yuchun, therefore, has been labelled as a singer with a strong 'individuality'. Even when singer and performer Ying Zi was invited a year later to train all the singers and dancers at the Taihe Maitian Recording Company, (where Li Yuchun was finally signed up as a contract singer after she won the contest), she asked to train Li Yuchun, telling the owner of Taihe Maitian, Song Ke, 'that one particularly needs training,' but Mr Song replied, 'Li Yuchun is not included as a trainee. She's got her own individuality, that's her style; we don't want her to be changed. What audiences valued about her, is exactly her individual character and style.'[53]

Although 'individuation' in China cannot be completely deemed 'grassroots culture' as socio-psychologist Yue Xiaodong pointed out (Yue 2007: 86), for grassroots' refusal of society's norms and emphasis on 'the importance of self,' we can certainly tell that grassroots culture is based on the desire of 'being self.' The idol phenomenon offers 'dominance' to them, and enables young people to be 'self' or support those who are strong in 'selfness.' Therefore, 'self' is the centre, not better or worse; and the churning out of the idol is not modelled by the elite as producers any more, but is being selected by the populace, although it remains within certain industry parameters. Li Yuchun is a good case to demonstrate the success of individuation in the C-pop domain from 2000 onwards. Individuation is predominant in today's C-pop industry, the voice of the mass confronting the elite's dominance and building up a real game for self-entertainment (Yue 2007: 81; Hofstadter 1963).

To sum up, although the idol phenomenon is only a media production that uses a music contest as a vehicle, it has still had an influential impact on the C-pop domain. The attention economy achieved success creating idols; the implementation of individuation also actualized the emergence of populace idols. Highly-regarded individuality resulting in a strong sense of self-ness counteracts and confronts the power of elite culture, which signifies that anti-elite and grassroots culture are in the ascendant in the C-pop domain.

2.4 ENGLISH SONGS

English songs are a musical phenomenon which took place during the entire growth of

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[53] Ying Zi, interview, 29-10-2007, Beijing.

C-pop. It is included in this chapter that focuses on the years after 1996 rather than before because, in later years, English songs played a dynamic role in C-pop, not least since idol phenomena singers perform many English songs. Thus, it seems more rational to add English Songs as one of the voices of the C-pop soundscape after explaining the idol phenomenon. Foreign language songs are chosen by many C-pop singers in an attempt to be different. In this section, taking the practice of English songs as a case study, I show how this displays a voice of self-appreciation in C-pop, and how it situates the singer in a central position so that the singing itself becomes merely peripheral.

It should be noted that the impact of the prevalent usage of English in C-pop on Chinese audiences, and the attitudes of the authorities towards this increasing linguistic code-mixing in C-pop will also be referred to, although these are not elucidated as the main theoretical or empirical concerns in this part of the writing.

2.4.1 Comparative Views on English Songs in Asia

In urban China nowadays, especially in the big cities like Beijing or Shanghai, English is frequently used daily just as one of the local languages. Turn on the television or radio, and many native pop singers are heard singing in English, either partially or entirely. This circumstance seems quite normal in today's globalized situation, but is it as simple as it appears? By tracing differing usages of the English language as found within C-pop, the following section aims to identify the interpretations and misinterpretations of English-worded songs. First, I shall briefly review some studies on Korean pop, Japanese pop and Singapore pop, which I shall refer to as K-pop, J-pop and S-pop for short.

Lee believes that the use of English in K-pop functions to generate a discourse of self-assertion and resistance, which displays a certain sensuality, a struggle with unsettled identities, and execration or resistance (Lee 2004: 429-50). In J-pop, on the other hand, evidence suggests that the redefining of ethnic identity, and attitudes toward the Japanese language may be changing due to the language mixing within J-pop resulting in 'code-ambiguity' and a change of Japanese ethnolinguistic identity (Moody 2006: 209-22). S-pop differs from the situation of the other two nations; it forms a construction of local identities and is still an expression of local and national influences under increasing globalising forces found in Singapore (Kong 1997:

19-36). Compared with these three studies, here I focus on similar happenings in mainland Chinese pop to decode the functions and meanings of English wording in mainland Chinese pop songs, and move on to decipher what is the true voice beyond this linguistic code-mixing phenomenon in C-pop.

2.4.2 The Variation of English Songs in C-pop

In C-pop, the size of English language units varies from a single word to an entire song. Firstly, I shall give some examples which will illustrate different code-switched constituent-based types of linguistic code-mixing observed in C-pop song texts, to show how different types indicate different functions of English wording in C-pop.

Firstly, single words or repeated use of single word switches. This is an attempt to achieve a rhyming effect, which is not possible with the use of equivalent Chinese wording (see figure 1-9). The original lyrics are presented in Chinese Pinyin in the left-hand column (in which the words marked in bold and italic are sung in original English pronunciation, in order to make the end of every sentence achieve a rhyming effect) and the translation in the right.

Figure 1-9: 'Mr. Honey' (showing the rhyming effect)

Mr. Honey,	[i]	*Mr. Honey,*
Ni Dian hua xiang bu ting,	[ing]	Your mobile keeps ringing,
Ni guan shang le shou ji,	[i]	You switch off your phone,
Ni he shui zai yi qi.	[i]	Who are you staying with?
Mr. Honey,	[i]	*Mr. honey,*
Wo yi zhi zai *call* ni,	[i]	I keep *call*ing you,
Ni mei you hui ying,	[ing]	You didn't answer,
Ni he shui zai *party*.	[i]	Who are you *party*ing with?
Mr. Honey,	[i]	*Mr. Honey,*
You le dian *money*,	[i]	Got a little bit of *money*,
Jiu jue de zi ji,	[i]	Suddenly feels himself
Duo le dian mei li.	[i]	Becomes more attractive,
Mr. Honey, bu yao tai shen qi	[i]	*Mr. Honey,* don't be complacent...

The second type shows an attention-getter. The semantic contribution of these English expressions to the entire theme of a song is somewhat limited, but some of the others on the contrary, are there to add emphasis, such as in the song 'I am Sorry' (song title in English) sung by Wang Rong. Here the verse 'I am sorry' is repeated many times (see figure 1-10).

Figure 1-10: 'I am Sorry'

I am sorry, I am sorry.	*I am sorry, I am sorry.*
Wo yi ran shen shen, shen ai zhe ni,	I still love you dearly,
I am sorry, I am sorry.	*I am sorry, I am sorry.*
Ke shi wo xian zai bi xu li kai.	But now I must leave.
	(repeated many times)

The third type of mixture of language is adopted for the stylistic purpose of a duet, the two singers singing in two languages. There is also another method of English usage in C-pop, which is for a singer to sing a song, either original or imitative, entirely in English.

Most of the partially or entirely English-worded songs are written by Chinese pop musicians and song-writers themselves. These examples are given for the purpose of clarifying that such a phenomenon is not only to show a kind of 'stylishness', as most ordinary Chinese audiences simply deem it. Looking superficially at such a phenomenon, it seems only to present linguistic code-mixing. However, after further exploration, we might find that it truly builds up a new perception for both performers and audiences. Furthermore, other questions can also be asked, such as: What is the real voice behind this kind of action in C-pop? What kind of cultural token is it? And finally, what pattern of relationship between music-makers and music-receivers is revealed through English songs?

2.4.3 Performer's Stance

To find out what English songs signifies in C-pop, the following comments from interviews conducted during my fieldwork in China in the summer of 2007 could offer some clues:

'Just trying to be modish'

-----Zhou, Yaping (Producer, Chairman of Niaoren)

'Some singer-songwriters like to insert English words. It shows they are in vogue....that's their own choice'

-----Miss Zhou (Publicist, Taihe Maitian)

'It (singing in English) does show a kind of ability, which is, you can speak good English'

-----Xue Cun (singer)

'Sometimes, using English can express some emotion very well and easily, and, if you translate it into Chinese, it sounds strange; whether the voice or the meaning'

-----Julianne (singer)

The perspectives quoted above, given by those who are engaged with this musical practice in the C-pop industry, are the most representative from my interviews. They may help to clarify the function of linguistic coalition in C-pop. Whatever the attitudes they hold, their various motivations are disclosed by key words within their remarks, such as 'modish', 'vogue', 'ability', 'position/status', etc. In other words, for those who sing in English, the purpose of such an action is simply trying to build up an image of who they want to be, or they deem it as something 'out of the ordinary.' From the viewpoints of the producer, publicist and performers above, who can generally represent that of the majority, their comments demonstrate that to those C-pop performers, linguistic code-mixing might to a certain extent be able to bring about an individualized or even a specialized identity.

In the C-pop domain nowadays, trying to be 'out of the ordinary' is done for the sake of building up individuality. Nonetheless, is this individualized identity accessible and acceptable to the community, and what does it mean to the audiences, their music-receivers?

2.4.4 Understanding English Songs

It is common when a singer starts performing to find that there are subtitles to translate the lyrics for the audience. This demonstrates an effect caused by linguistic code-mixing, namely, there is a rift engendered by linguistic code-mixing in C-pop between the music practice and its reception. And what this rift projects is not an impassable distance, but to the general audience it is a reason for admiring the singers. To the audience, the important thing is not what the singer is singing about, but who is singing; who is on the stage. The following paragraphs will seek to unravel this further.

The above situation raises another question: are people attracted by the

melody or the lyrics first while listening to music? I asked people of many different backgrounds. However, their answers were different even amongst a group of people from similar educational and musical backgrounds. In the pop music domain, it seems both are less important than the singer him or herself; it shows again that the individuality of singers is the major concern to the audience in the present situation of the C-pop domain. Fans adore the singer more than the music; that is the reason why they do not care much whether they understand the songs or not. I asked audience member Jia Zhilin about the English songs after one particular live show (Chaoyang Music Festival, in Beijing Chaoyang Park, 03-05-2007). He said:

> Yes, you know in the big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, English is very common, the majority of white-collar workers can speak English, no matter how well or badly. To them it is for being modish and trendy, or even simply for learning English, whatever. Other people may be pleased to listen to English songs too, since they also want to be in vogue; but you know, their English levels are just basic. So think about it, they are not even able to speak English in general terms, how come they understand songs that are sung in English? To be honest, how many listeners can really understand the cultural meaning and implication that is embodied in every English song? I bet not many... [54]

It is interesting that singers choose to sing in English to audiences who only understand partially or not at all what they are singing about. Obviously, what singers are trying to show off is not the particular song or even their singing skill, but an ability to sing in English. In other words, singing in English is an opportunity, or a strategy, that demonstrates a difference between the singers and their general audiences. Therefore, the remarks above by the interviewee not only reveal the rift in understanding between musical practice and its reception, but also further elicit another rift caused by cultural understanding from the aspect of music performers, which I shall explore further below.

2.4.5 Performers' Understanding: The Cultural Rift

Some singers who are enthusiastic performers of English songs do possess fluency in English. However, compared with a few singers (such as Xiong Rulin) who have

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[54] Jia Zhilin, interview, 03-05-2007, Beijing.

experience of living and studying in western countries, most of the singers already have problems in linguistic understanding. They consequently and inevitably create a rift in cultural understanding too. A young pop idol, Li Yuchun, once performed a cover version of 'Zombie', The Cranberries' protest song about the troubles in Ireland, with a rocky rhythm, pleasant voice and joyful performance, so the song totally lost its original emotional impact, which was sadness, optimism and strength. Her singing failed to express the inner sentiment of the song: conflict, nationalism, death, blood and political coercion. This performance caused the singer to be criticized and scoffed at by certain audiences on the internet, but despite all this she became a top pop idol. The conceptual collision incarnated through such a creative mistranslation demonstrates that there is a breakdown in understanding between singers and the original songs, which further causes a rift in cultural understanding between the audience, the singers and the songs. These rifts result in a performance which is mere entertainment and lacks any depth.

Thus, although the show was accessible to the audience, understanding of the music itself failed to be accessible to the audience. In a live C-pop performance, the key is not whether the audience understands the song; what the audience cares about is WHO is singing. Just as Li Yuchun's fans retorted on the internet forum to the voices that were criticizing Li's misinterpretation of 'Zombie': 'you guys look down our Chunchun (the nickname of Li Yuchun given by her fans) because you cannot accept people with individual character; Chunchun doesn't understand the song? Why don't you guys go on the stage and perform to show us what is right? Chunchun is the best, seeing her on the stage is already enough, that's what "star" means!'[55]

The question here is, in the pop domain, is a live performance an arena for fans' screaming or for music appreciation? What is the audience's real aim? Is it only to see those pop idols, or to listen to their singing? Just as I explained in the section on idol phenomena above, the group of fans crying, shouting and screaming are actually performing off-stage as actors together with the idols on-stage in the 'play' (the live performance). The performers and the audiences are all taking part in constructing and delivering the show.

The live show reveals that, as a performance scene, the show is able to be accessed by the audience; the music, on the other hand, in this 'idol-centred' era, often

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[55] Such comments can be found numerously on Li's website, blog and so on, for details please refer to http://t.sina.com.cn/liyuchun, http://blog.sina.com.cn/liyuchun.

fails to be comprehensibly accessed by the music-receivers. Nowadays this is a common situation in most live performances of C-pop. Therefore, this state of affairs where the 'singing' is less important than 'who is singing' demonstrates that the real production in C-pop is the 'persons' (singers). Their singing merely provides embellishment to accessorize their personal image, and constructs the whole performance. As the real product in C-pop, singers are the focal point, attracting most attention from the audience; music, however, is in a peripheral situation, only performed and deployed as the singer's accessory.

In summary, this study of language mixing in C-pop demonstrates that the fact that C-pop musicians and audiences use of English has been accepted unquestioningly. Neither does this study claim that there is a causal relationship between English usage in C-pop and its popularity. Although there is some unjustified and misaligned English wording in C-pop, leading even to an amount of emotional or content-related misrepresentation by pop stars, that does not influence the performers' image as a radiant idol.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter Two examined *xin minyue,* internet music, idol contests and English songs in detail as the four voices of self-affirmation, self-expression, self-fulfilment and self-appreciation in the C-pop soundscape after 1996. It showed how the voices produced an era of obviously diversified musical production. For both music producers and performers, the most important thing became how to win the music-receivers' attention. From then on, the musicality of C-pop moved into an age of self-entertainment.

Part Two

Textual Sound of C-pop

The first two chapters in Part One were mainly centred on the soundscapes of C-pop, depicting the overall pattern of C-pop during the period in question. Even though the previous part laid bare the change in C-pop musicality as it shifted from a music-maker centred to a music-receiver centred system, it only provided a profile for that change. In other words, Part One described the change, but did not explain how C-pop changed textually or why it changed culturally. Part Two deals with the first of these questions: how has C-pop changed textually?

In Part One, I characterized different music phenomena to illustrate how they functioned as distinct musical and expressive voices within the cluster of C-pop soundscapes; in Part Two, I focus only on the textual sound of C-pop, which I break up into three aspects: linguistic code, vocal code and musical code. In other words, the three chapters in this part explain in detail the sound of C-pop music from the perspectives of language, singing and the instrumentation of the backing music. This not only reveals the textual traits and patterns of C-pop, but also reinforces the picture of changing musicality already generated in Part One. In addition, with particular emphasis on the changing musician-audience relations, a tripartite correlation will be used to map out the interrelationships between the music and its receivers and makers.

Music, people and culture are the three principle subjects of ethnomusicological research,[1] and the relationship between these constituent parts remains a long-term issue in many studies, whether seeking to understand certain music from outsiders' or insiders' points of view, or to discern music's social functions. Accordingly, this Part begins with C-pop's textual sounds, in other words its music. In relation to the other two positions in my scheme, I have decided to set culture aside (as it embraces all those involved and the musical sounds themselves) and to subdivide the people involved into those who actively create music for the C-pop industry and those who receive it, the latter including specialists such as critics and researchers. Such a division is not without precedent. For instance, Kaemmer categorized people who become involved with music activities as music-makers (professional,

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[1] For Alan Merriam's original model, constituted of 'concept, sound and behaviour,' see Merriam 1964: 32; Timothy Rice developed this by constructing a three-dimensional space of musical experience as the model for exploring human musical life, see Rice 2003: 151-179.

semi-professional), consumers, agents, or critics (Kaemmer 1993: 43-56), a more complex scheme than my own. This also differs in emphasis from the music-culture model structured by Slobin and Titon, whose diagram of concentric circles is intended to reveal the human experience of music (1996: 3-4). Here, my focus is on the interrelations and interactions between music and music-maker, music and music-receiver, and also music-maker and music-receiver (see figure 2).

Music

Music-Maker ———— Music-Receiver
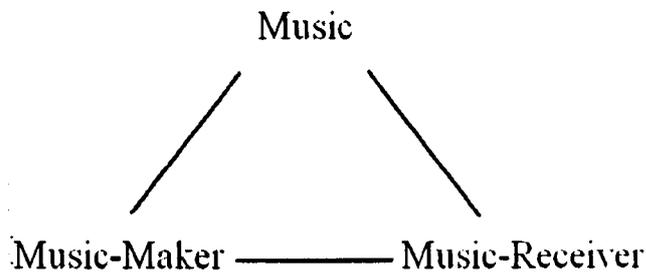
Figure 2: Model of key interrelationships in C-pop

Each of the points in this framework is multiple in actuality. For instance, C-pop music contains three audible aspects—linguistic code, vocal code and backing musical code (the instrumental part of C-pop music; i.e. the whole musical aspect apart from the singing). In order to reflect this complexity but also to maintain analytical clarity, I utilize only one of these audible aspects in each chapter below: that between music-maker and music-receiver is examined primarily through the linguistic code (Chapter 3); that between music and music-receiver primarily through the vocal code (Chapter 4); and music and music-maker through the backing musical code (Chapter 5).

Therefore, the exposition in Part Two consists of three chapters which scrutinize the validity and properties of C-pop from three angles. Chapter Three considers the language aspect of C-pop, and endeavours to spell out the associated pattern of correlations between music-maker and receiver. It shows how music-makers shifted from a 'host perspective' (which can also be deemed as an 'emic' position) to a 'guest perspective' (a contrasting 'etic' stance) in terms of the linguistic usages deployed in C-pop. Moreover, audience views of the authenticity of the song's cultural values and expression can become disjointed from those of the music-makers who created the song. Under such circumstances, the importance of the music itself is

diminished, and it is relegated to being primarily an adornment of the star singer.

Chapter Four thereafter elucidates the relationship between music and music-receiver, by considering the aspect of vocal singing in C-pop. It demonstrates that C-pop has entered an era where the music-receiver is dominant, and where music is produced with a very clearly targeted sense of the desires of the receiver. Finally, in Chapter Five, the focus will switch to articulating the relationship between music and music-maker, looking now at the patterns of backing music employed in C-pop. This rather musicological chapter uses notated transcriptions to demonstrate that the musicality of C-pop has a planar rather than three-dimensional and solid quality. This is shown mainly from the aspects of harmonic texture, rhythm and structure. The conclusion of this chapter is that as the relationship between music and music-maker has changed, C-pop's musical creation has experienced a parallel shift from a liberated individualization to a formulaic construction.

Chapter 3

Linguistic Code

This chapter explores the relationship between people and C-pop, and how C-pop displays its traits and textual patterns. The chapter assesses language to provide a profile for the interactive relation between music-maker and music-receiver. In fact, music and language as an interdisciplinary topic has inspired numerous research projects across many disciplines (Feld and Fox 1994: 25-53). The relationship of music to language is also a main issue within ethnomusicological studies (Feld 1974: 197-217; Powers 1980: 1-61). In terms of Chinese music, linguistic aspects have been taken as important primarily in studies that focus on traditional music; Bell Yung's analysis on the role of linguistic tone in Cantonese opera is one case (Yung 1983: 29-47). Although a succession of Western academics have interrogated Chinese rock song lyrics for their supposed political implications, the wider linguistic characteristics and qualities of C-pop have so far been generally neglected. In the chapter as a whole, my focus will be respectively on linguistic structure and linguistic code (from the perspective of the music-maker, which in this part mainly concerns singers and singer-songwriters), and also linguistic perception (from the spectator's perspective). Altogether, these linguistic characteristics form latent messages that are delivered through C-pop songs, and the analysis of these aims to demonstrate how people—both music makers and music receivers—define themselves within musical activities.

Since pop songs are a musical form contained in language, it is reasonable to assume that the nature of the language articulated in pop songs constructs, embodies and reveals the ideas of the people who create it. Meanwhile, when people take part in musical activities (such as perceiving and understanding the music they are listening to) they always do so from a certain angle. Linguistic anthropologist Kenneth Pike constructed the terms 'emic' and 'etic' (from 'phonemic' and 'phonetic') to suggest the two perspectives which can be exploited in the study of a socio-cultural system, and proposed 'insider' and 'outsider' as two opposite standpoints (Pike 1971; Geertz 2000). Briefly, in the research methodology of many researchers in the social sciences, 'emic' is the position of 'us' and 'etic' is the position of 'the other'. These two terms can also be utilised in further ways. For instance, in some studies the former suggests a sense of 'experiencing life' and the latter a way of 'gaining knowledge', and in anthropology it

is common to read of the 'emic' as the insider's interpretation and the 'etic' as an outsider's perception. The difference between the two in any such dualism is their stance, a key principle which has had a tremendous impact across the social sciences.

Conventionally, ethnomusicological studies have used 'emic' and 'etic' to distinguish the perspectives of cultural insiders and from the ethnomusicologist. However in my writing here, 'emic' and 'etic' will be deployed to indicate the situation and position of musical participants within China—both musicians and audiences, and I use them to suggest that someone is assuming one of two potential subject positions in relation to the music in question: 'emic' (a sense of 'self') or 'etic' (a sense of 'others'). This may occur both in relation to specific lyrics and the wider theme of the song as constructed through its ongoing linguistic deployment. Overall therefore, this chapter reflects on the properties of people's positions with regard to the words of C-pop.

3.1 LINGUISTIC STRUCTURE

Figure 2-1: 'Nothing to My Name' (lyric, translated by Zhao Yue)
I have been asking you for so long,
When will you come with me?
But you always laugh at me
For I have nothing to my name.
I want to give you my hope
I want to help make you free
But you always laugh at me
For I have nothing to my name.
Oh, oh... when will you come with me?
Oh, oh... when will you come with me?

Figure 2-2: 'Sister Drum' (lyric, translated by Zhao Yue)
Unable to talk as a girl, my sister left home while I was green,
She has been in my heart ever since, O my sister.
Till when I became as old as she was, I recognized her heart all of a sudden.
So I'm looking, looking for her day after day, O my sister.
An old man sits at the Mani ruins, reciting the same words time and again,
Om Mani Padme Hum, Im Mani Padme Hum.
So I'm looking, looking for her day after day, O my sister.

Here comes from the horizon drumming after drumming,

It's my sister talking to me,

Om Mani Padme Hum, Im Mani Padme Hum.

Figure 2-3: 'Mouse Loves Rice' (lyric, translated by Zhao Yue)

When I heard your voice that day, I had a special feeling.

Let me always think, I don't want to forget you, I remember the day.

You are always on my mind, even though I can only think about you.

If one day in the future, this love will become real,

I've never changed my mind, I will love you forever.

I don't care how foolish it is; I will let my dream come true.

I will tell you something I want to let you know, I let you know:

I love you, loving you, as the mouse loves rice.

Even if every day is stormy, I will always be by your side.

I miss you, missing you; I don't care how hard it is.

I just want you to be happy, everything, I do it for you.

The three songs above, which function as landmarks, being huge hits in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s respectively, illustrate an interesting change in people's self consciousness which can be recognized in the linguistic structure. The singer of 'Nothing to My Name' shouts out a desire; the concept of 'I', as the subject of the sentence as well as of the song, is emphasized and centred. The consciousness of 'I' was also powerfully displayed in some other contemporaneous songs such as 'Xintianyou', the lyrics of which I presented in Chapter One: 'I lower my head, looking at the mountain gully, chasing those past years…I look up, towards the sky, seeking the far-off former times….'. In songs a decade later, the linguistic subject had changed to the third person, as in 'Sister Drum' (A jie gu), in which the subject was 'my sister'. Interestingly, although the subject in the top songs of the 2000s such as 'Mouse Loves Rice' returned to 'I', in this particular case a parallel was drawn between 'I' and 'mouse'.

3.1.1 An 'Emic' or 'Etic' Message?

In language study, the 'subject' and 'theme' are different concepts, but the 'theme' can be taken on by the 'subject.' In many cases, 'theme' and 'subject' overlap. Linguists

believe that the theme is the starting point of the message that lies beneath the sentence (Thomason 2000: 119); from this perspective, song lyrics also contain their own 'message' and are the starting point of a theme. Thus, in the pop songs of the 1980s, the consciousness of 'I' was remarkably central and pivotal, whether in Cui Jian's rock or *xibeifeng* music, and also all the messages in songs started from a sense of 'I'. What this strong self-consciousness embodied was an 'emic' attention and realization in C-pop during that time. The songs of this era were not only created from an 'emic' perspective, but also communicated an 'emic' sense to the audience.

In 'Sister Drum', the example from the 1990s, the subject deviated, turning aside from 'I' to the third person—'my sister'. Seemingly, the theme of the song moved a little from the 'emic' sense towards an 'etic' sense; however, if we carefully scrutinize the whole song, the starting point of the song's message is actually 'my memory,' in which 'my sister' lived. Besides, the song theme is literally about 'me' searching for 'my sister'. The important message delivered through 'Sister Drum' still has an 'emic' stance, which transmits an even stronger 'emic' sense and spatial image to both Chinese native audiences and those overseas, although it is based on an 'etic' sense of wording.

Although the music video released with the song is full of images of the Tibetan landscape, the singer's image is in contrast rather ambiguous (Upton 2002: 99-119), neither too Tibetan nor too *Han* Chinese (the main ethnic group in mainland China), as demonstrated by her hair style. Both the singer and songwriter are *Han* people and the song is sung in Mandarin. As Chinese people deem Tibet to be part of China, the singer in fact showed a 'self'—an 'emic' audio image—from the perspective of cultural knowledge. It might be thought that, if Dadawa (Zhu Zheqin, the singer of 'Sister Drum') sang a song about Tibet, then everything would have to be very 'Tibetan' in order for it to be recognized as 'emic'. Dunbar-Hall once claimed that 'music can be discussed both as a set of universal elements, and also as a symbolic object that carries meaning dependent on cultural interpretation. The former of these approaches is 'etic', the latter, 'emic'' (Dunbar-Hall 1996: 217-18). In this sense, both Dadawa and the composer made the song from an 'emic' stance, since the message underlying the song starts from 'my memory' and the theme—the sister drum—is a symbolic object that carries 'our' cultural meaning. As the motif for producing this song, both composer He Xuntian and singer Dadawa claimed they were aiming to produce a Chinese version of New Age music which could illustrate 'Chinese native

musical flavour' or alternatively 'Chinese regional musical flavour'.[2] 'Sister Drum', therefore, is principally intended for mainland Chinese and certain overseas listeners to whom this song really appeals. As the song-making is focused on *Han* Chinese (more accurately speaking, the major ethnic group in China) rather than Tibetans, the stance of the music itself and even the music-makers indeed tends to be 'emic', although it may not sound absolutely 'emic' in relation to Tibet. Certainly, this 'emic' stance is not only a musical concept which is organically and systematically assembled but is also based on an aggregative concept of 'nation'.

3.1.2 Self-'Eticalized'

The reason the sense of 'I' could become such a popular subject of songs was because its 'emic' consciousness in a broad sense rang true with the music. For example, in Cui Jian's 'Nothing to My Name', a strong 'emic' sense was elicited, since it was part of a 'new ethos that combined individualism, non-conformism, personal freedom, authenticity, direct and bold expression, and protest and rebellion' (Baranovitch 2003: 32). The singer not only started searching for the consciousness of 'self' and some ideology that 'we' (i.e. the Chinese) needed to possess, but the song was also 'written about his own personal experience' (Baranovitch 2003: 32). Therefore, it shows a realistically 'emic' stance, and this 'emic' implication is also strong enough to include a broad sense of non-conformism and other wider significances. Moreover, not only is the 'emic' revealed strongly in the sharp-cut motif of 'Sister Drum', but the tradition and the story shown in the content also reinforces the 'emic' colour of 'Sister Drum', since it is a song about an ancient Tibetan tradition of making a drum for religious purposes from a maiden's skin. Scholar Zhang Geng pointed this out as following when he interpreted the cultural meaning of 'Sister Drum':

> In the social upheaval of the 1980s, no matter whether people were for or against, they always clustered around a certain motif; therefore, the 1980s was an era full of passion. As we moved into the 1990s, the whole of Chinese culture seems to have lost its basic motif, people becoming just like drunkards wandering on the road after a grand banquet (Zhang 2002: 26-31).

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[2] These views from composer He Xuntian and singer Dadawa have been noted in many different broadcast interviews, see http://lxgq.bokee.com/5179401.html, access date: 29-08-2009; http://style.sina.com.cn/travel/trans/, access date: 29-08-2009.

This can be applied to the music of these two decades as well. The solid motif of 'Nothing to My Name' undeniably made it representative of 1980s' C-pop music. Since 'Sister Drum' in the mid-1990s, this aspect of C-pop has been weakened. By 2000, any motif that reflected in a broad sense a way of expressing the 'emic' in C-pop songs was even more trivial and weaker. As in the third example I gave at the beginning of this section, 'Mouse Loves Rice', it is rather hard even to find a 'motif' which can inspire the listener's deeper cogitation. Although this song still begins with and retains an 'emic' perspective, the subject 'I' and the second person 'you' are paralleled with 'mouse' and 'rice.' In other words, the subject and the theme of 'love' (between the two persons) are 'eticalized'. Even if it is only a metaphor, it still switches a sense of 'I' (self) into one of the 'other.' Most importantly, this well-known song of the early twenty-first century essentially mirrors the inane motifs and connotations of the music of the era. Practically the 'etic' stance is induced and incarnated through the singer's rendition of the song; which subsequently leads us to question on what footing people stand to conduct their musical behaviour? Namely, how do people locate themselves when they take part in various musical activities, from both music-making and music-receiving angles?

3.2 'ETIC' MUSIC-MAKER

The following writing will focus on examining the position of the music-makers, discerning the content of C-pop from its linguistic code to reveal that language expression in C-pop has gradually broadened in practicality towards diversity; however, conceptually, this places singers themselves into an 'etic' stance.

3.2.1 Musical Stand

When a music-maker produces written music as the initial and original means of music production, it may be supposed that this is the stage where the music-maker notionally poses in an 'emic' stance. However, most strikingly, C-pop singers habitually present their music from an 'etic' stance. To take *xibeifeng* music as example, even though the theme mainly concerns 'another place', the north-western region of China, the linguistic code fails to show any features or colours of that 'other'. In other words, when the singers performed the music they were 'etic' and they also performed as

'etic'. In one of the representative songs 'Yellow Earth Plateau' (Huangtu Gaopo), a modishly-dressed modern girl singing in Mandarin came into view projecting an image of a fashionable urban girl. Yellow Earth Plateau was distributed through Shanxi, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces (the three regions are the most economically backward areas of mainland China), where there are many local dialects. Although Mandarin is spoken as the official and school language in many provinces because of the government's policy of generalizing Mandarin nation-wide, local dialects are still used daily; in spite of the image of *xibeifeng* songs displaying 'another place' constructed by the text, this was interpreted by means of a voice and visual image which were not from the 'other place'. This echoes Taylor's 'strategic inauthenticity', in which he explores the way non-western musicians undermine the images and expectations constructed for them by Western spectators; that is, their image as authentic musicians (non-western musicians) and their expectation of making music remains faithful to traditional culture, in the eyes of western audiences and observers (Taylor 1997: 26).

In fact, the linguistic code in C-pop changes along with the transformation of the cultural concept. In the late 1980s, C-pop was going through a momentous time, absorbing many influences from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Western pop, while the native pop industry was also starting to flourish. At that time, apart from a few singers who issued a very few recordings of English songs,[3] people were more attracted by Cantonese songs.[4] Since Hong Kong dominated the C-pop market, young people even imitated the Cantonese dialects heard on these recordings. In recent years, singing English songs has become more and more popular, with many native pop singers performing either partly or entirely in English, as I noted in Chapter Two of Part One. Here, I shall take English songs as an example to further explore the position of music makers.

3.2.2 To Be 'Etic': A Case Study of English Songs

Although C-pop musical phenomena emerged one by one, the fate of C-pop seems

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[3] For example Cui Jian: his first album *The Egg of Red Flag*, issued in 1985, contained five English songs out of a total of twelve.

[4] This is based on ten interviews with lay people, aged 16-25 in the period 1985-1990, and also three DJs from radio and TV stations, Yu Minxi, Qu Yingjuan and Shang Lili (all interviewed in Shenyang, 13-04-2010); they were working as DJs around 1990 in Shenyang Jiaotong Radio Station, Shenyang TV station, and Shenyang Yinyue TV station. During that period, many radio and TV stations broadcast programmes to take calls or correspondence from the audience who were able to dedicate songs to their family and friends. The interviewees noted that Cantonese pop was the most popular at that time.

ineluctably plunged into the situation of 'fitting in with *ours* but sounding like *others.*' Since the theme of the music often contains the colours of 'others', it prompts the singers actually to act in an 'etic' way. However, since C-pop performers fail to display the 'others' accurately (the 'emic' theme), audiences from the cultural background of the 'others' also regard them as 'etic'.

In a campus singing competition in Sichuan Conservatory of Music which I observed in autumn 2007, many contestants chose songs in English as their pieces, following the fashion of mainstream of C-pop at that time. The judges' decisions and comments demonstrate the position in which the singers put themselves in the views of native and overseas judges. For most of the singers who chose English songs, the native Chinese judges gave a rather high score; however, the overseas judges did the opposite. One of them, a European musician, told me that the reason for giving a low score was because he couldn't understand what the singers (who were singing in English) were singing about. One point is clear here: the overseas judges gave a low score due to the singers' incomprehensible singing and English pronunciation; this situation further reveals that the native judges did not understand the singing either, since they gave scores which were unexpectedly high (in the eyes of the foreign judges). In other words, if the native judges thought the singers pronounced the lyrics well, it only demonstrated they understood English just a little, or maybe not at all. Therefore, we can perceive that switching the linguistic code caused singers to be in an 'etic' situation regarding both native and non-native listeners. It induced a distance between singers and both native and non-native audiences; the former because they might not even half understand what the singers were singing about, and the latter because the singers are inherently 'other' to them.

However, choosing to sing in English may also be a kind of marketing strategy, as Zhou Tian, a C-pop industry insider pointed out:

> Nowadays singers have to learn English, if they want to enter the international market'... 'Some of the singer-songwriters like to use English wording, it does show they are in vogue, although some of them are not good at English at all, but, that's their own choice.[5]

We can ascertain from this that the purpose of 'being international' is the reason for

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[5] Zhou Tian, working as a market planner for Taihe Maitian, interview, 24-05-2007, Beijing.

being 'etic', for the singers are aiming at an 'other place'. Besides, singers or song-writers may not be in possession of good English, which proves those C-pop singers are attempting to use a non-'emic' skill (singing in English) to show they are either fully or partly out of 'emic' status. In brief, working in English can project a C-pop performer's stance as 'other'—a sense of 'etic.'

Therefore, the action of sounding 'other' by utilizing an external linguistic code is to be self-consciously 'etic'. In fact, for pop singers, an artificial rift would be a way of being 'etic', which could bring them an aura of being a 'star'. As in the example mentioned in Chapter One, many C-pop stars perform songs entirely in English, either original or imitative, although some of them are written by Chinese pop musicians and song-writers. Still, there may be a gulf between on-stage and off-stage. For example, the well-known singer Xiong Rulin has many years' experience of study overseas, so he is able to sing English songs quite well. Nonetheless, when he appears on television, singing in a concert, or just on a music video, there are always subtitles to translate the lyrics for the audience. The subtitles distance Xiong from his audience, telling them 'You don't understand what I am singing, here is the translation.' In other words, the subtitles deliver a hidden message: I am not one of you; I am the one with 'etic' colour.

In fact, this situation of 'being etic' can be found on many occasions in mainland China nowadays, and it does provide a certain superiority if this sense of 'etic' comes from a culture regarded as superior. Once I experienced this personally. While I was in a taxi, on holiday in China in the autumn of 2008, I received a call from the United Kingdom which I answered in English. I noticed the driver kept looking at me in the rear view mirror. When I had finished the conversation and hung up, the driver asked: 'Wow, were you talking in English? What do you do?' I replied that I was just a student receiving a call from an overseas classmate. The driver continued, 'So good! You speak such good English that you can make phone calls with foreigners. I couldn't understand at all! Not even a word!' Although it felt strange to hear him say I spoke good English, I still felt pretty good. I never considered that I spoke English as well as a native English speaker, but at that particular moment, this good feeling actually came from a moment of self-recognition that 'I am someone in some way different' or 'I am well-educated overseas'. On another occasion, I was on a bus where there was a female Chinese university student with a young male Japanese exchange student, who from the time they got on at the University of Shenyang talked a non-stop

mixture of Chinese and Japanese. Chinese buses are normally very packed and noisy, but that bus was rather quiet; no one was talking apart from this girl and, infrequently, the boy. The smile of pride on the girl's face showed that she was enjoying her 'etic' image which differed from that of other passengers on the bus.

These two incidents I experienced in my hometown, Shenyang, a major city which, while not as international as Beijing and Shanghai, is similar to many other cities of mainland China. Mostly, the adoption of an 'etic' posture is perceived as creating an image of high status.[6] This explains why pop singers can employ the use of English as a winning ploy to help build up the presentation of their image.[7]

When a singer starts performing, linguistic code-mixing can engender a rift in C-pop between the music practice and its reception. What this rift projects is a singer's self-consciousness of being 'etic'. This might be a reason for audiences admiring those singers. Thus, being 'etic' is a subjective desire of the singers.

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3.2.3 'Etic' Musical Outcome

Although this 'etic' stance stems from the singer's consciousness of being 'different' or 'modish,' the key factor that influences the basic level of recognition of a piece of music is whether it is situated as 'etic' or 'emic.' To take one example, when top young pop idol Li Yuchun performed 'Zombie', The Cranberries' Irish anti-civil war song, for the first time on 10th June 2005, she did so in a joyful way with a pleasant voice. She gave a flowery performance accompanied with a rock rhythm,[8] totally counter to the imposing nature, sadness, and strength which lay beneath the original song. Her singing failed to show the inner sentiments of the song, which are conflict, nationalism, death, blood and coercion. However, when she first performed it in a TV singing competition, the scene was animated and lively, and the audience was enthused by a top idol singing such a cheerful song. This performance caused the singer to be censured and scoffed at on the internet by certain listeners; one particular observer,

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[6] The Chinese do have a feeling of ambivalence towards foreigners; on one hand they envy those who are able to get along with overseas newcomers, and a man will even be admired as 'upholding the family honour' if he marries a foreign girl, but there may be some imputation if a girl falls in love with a foreigner (See Guo's book *China in Foreigners' Talk* (2003), in which Guo interviews European and American people who spent years in China.)
[7] Film and pop stars have started to employ personal English tutors to improve their oral English. Readers can often find top entertainment stories saying that those stars talked fluent English to CEOs of international fashion or entertainment companies.
[8] This was the view held by both audiences and judges. See the reviews, interviews and comments on the Super Girl's contest website www.video.baidu.com/v?word=chaojinvsheng.

Yang Ligang posted a long article debating and criticising the manner of Li Yuchun's performance and attitude:

> She was in the face of the audience, resolutely using a cheerful rhythm to happily depict the mobs' slaughter of the children and the insulted mothers. She sang again and again 'another mother's breakin' [heart]...' When she sang this key sentence, the fans offstage went mad, they were dancing and cheering. The original singers, The Cranberries, always sing it in a gloomy and sorrowful way. ... When the show was over, some fans interviewed by a journalist said, 'She's so good, she performed the song so well, the original version is just dismal and unpleasant.'... if Li Yuchun offended the people of Ireland, then I was angry with those ignorant fans, and the on-scene MC, judges and audience.[9]

In spite of her supporters' claim that the singer does understand the song, the plea that the way Li sang it, with dancing and a pleasant voice, was an expression of stimulation rather than excitement is too weak to excuse her lively performance and the audiences' joyful reaction. The fact is, to a certain extent the singer set the music in an 'etic' position: audiences who are impervious to the debate are outsiders to the deeper meaning of the song, whereas others who have a certain 'emic' understanding of the song failed to receive any 'emic' interpretation from Li's performance. The musical outcome was consequently placed in an 'etic' niche.

After examining the musicians' 'etic' posture within their music-making process, from writing lyrics to actual stage performance, it is time to look at music-receivers and inspect more closely the stance held by audiences.

3.3 'EMIC' MUSIC-RECEIVERS

While the above interpretation of linguistic structure and linguistic code is from the perspective of music-making and music-presentation, this part focuses on the aspect of reception. This will further illustrate how people locate themselves when they undertake music-receiving activities. The crux of the following section is to demonstrate that the dual authenticity of C-pop is caused by the perspective of

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[9] This comment made by Yang Ligang, can be found on http://bbs.512ms.com/thread-46643-1-1.html, access date: 29-09-2008, and similar ones can also be viewed at http://club.sohu.com/read_elite.php?b=Focus&a=1252008, access date: 29-09-2008. Such comments can be found on many online forums, such as www.baidu.com, www.56.com, www.tudou.com and www.tianya.com, by searching for the key words 'Li Yuchun, Zombie'.

perception, and reflects that the situation of music-maker and receiver rest respectively on 'etic' and 'emic' positions.

3.3.1 Authenticity

In music study authenticity is a major issue in discourses on popular music, although this term is frequently founded on confusion, as this passage from Gilbert and Pearson exemplifies:

> [in post-punk rock culture through to 1988] artists must speak the truth of their (and others') situations. Authenticity was guaranteed by the presence of a specific type of instrumentation... [the singer's] fundamental role was to represent the culture from which he comes (Gilbert and Pearson 1999: 164-5).

The main distinction between 'pop' and 'rock,' is the question of whether it is 'true to its origins' or not. In rock discourse, Moore summarized that 'authenticity' was used to 'define a style of writing or performing', to 'refer to the social standing of the musician', to determine the 'supposed reasons', the musicians' true motif or initiation, to 'bestow integrity... to exhibit realism, lack of pretence, or the like' (Moore 2001: 199). Some debate continues in terms of the status of popular music, mainly about the intrinsic value of pop and rock; pop is described as a form that is more commercial, ephemeral and accessible (Warner 2003). Rock, on the other hand, is more associated with particular subcultures, stresses live performance and vocal or instrumental virtuosity; most importantly, rock music was often deemed as encapsulating progressive developments rather than simply revealing existing trends (Frith 2001: 93-108; Shuker 2001; Warner 2003). The term 'authenticity' in this section of writing however is based on the understanding of the music and the discrepancy between music-maker and music-receiver.

Jin Zhaojun (a top music critic in the domain of Chinese popular music), talking about C-pop at the end of the1980s, once expressed his opinion:

> 'Crescent Moon' (Wanwan de yueliang) was a representative song at the end of the 1980s; it was composed in 1989 and was continuously popular afterwards. It utilized a folk song compositional manner, and the refrain implicitly held an ingrained criticism: 'My heart is full of mournfulness, not for the sickle moon, but for today's

village, still singing an old melody.' Strangely, such a criticism (the latent meaning of the song is that contemporary rural people still live in primitive and backward conditions) has never been noticed by the audience (Jin 2006: 45-54).

This comment testifies that, in C-pop, there is a gulf between music-making and music reception in terms of understanding the music's authenticity. Therefore, in the following, I shall focus mainly on how between musicians and audiences there is a state of discordance regarding authenticity.

3.3.2 Authenticity in Discordance: 'Emic' Position of Spectatorship

When I gave a description and explanation of Chinese rock music and *xibeifeng*, I mentioned the criticism and realistic colour that was possessed by the songs, but apart from a few scholars and intellectuals, most of the ordinary audience were not able to grasp, or maybe was not even interested in grasping, the deep connotations and allusions of the songs. However, spectatorship resides in the 'emic' position.

When C-pop entered the 1990s, the songs gradually became more superficial, but still some of them, which were located only as entertaining pop songs, reflected social problems and played a role in a social context. With the opening of a new millennium, internet music has spread rapidly both in virtual space and in the reality of the music industry; however, the song texts still remain incomprehensible to most audiences. As an example, the contrast between a singer-song writer's interpretation of his own work and the audiences' actual perception of the song will demonstrate this situation. When I interviewed Xue Cun (singer-songwriter of 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng'), one part of the conversation revealed:

> Many people like 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' because they think it is funny and interesting, so that they can make fun of it, but do they understand the song? Let me tell you, this song is not at all as funny as those ignorant people think. The title of the song is about a Chinese hero (Lei Feng),[10] therefore it is an anti-cultural matter, a thing outside the system. Who is the funny person in this song? Is it the northeast people? As in many jokes made in China, there is a stereotype that northeast people are laughable. To make a metaphor of saying northeast people are

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[10] Lei Feng is well-known in China, famous for being warm-hearted, always happy to assist and be helpful to people. There is even a Lei Feng Day in China. See Introdcution p.19, note 10 for detail.

Lei Feng, if seemingly, to look at the song, I am satirizing northeast people, then you might find out the unspoken words of the song are that I am satirizing one person, which is, you know. This song does not air the spirit of Lei Feng, but tries to say that the Lei Feng spirit does not exist any more.[11]

As Bao Zhaohui pointed out, from the perspective of the text, 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' is ironic. The character of Lei Feng in this song deconstructed the character of Lei Feng in history (Bao 2004: 39). However, observing live performancess of Xue Cun in concert on many different occasions, I saw that his audiences did not understand the meaning of the song at all. They were enjoying themselves while Xue Cun was performing, with rapturous smiles on their faces, and many audience members only understood the song as fun.[12] They sang along with the singer, laughing when the title phrase was reached. Although the song has a meaningful social text, the audiences still label it as an 'amusing song'. A more remarkable fact is that this song does not make the audiences introspect and regard Lei Feng as an issue for discussion. On the contrary, their attention is focussed on the people of the northeast, how funny, playful and pure-hearted they are, even to the extent of being derided by others as naive. It is most significant that the song became a hit through such recognition, rather than because of the profound ethos claimed by the composer.

Therefore, for a given piece music, there will be always a dual authenticity existing independently of professional description and clarification: there is authenticity contained in the music itself, and another authenticity which resides in the spectators' perceptions of it. From dualism, or the duality of any matter, the two authenticities might inevitably induce a certain discord. However, in C-pop, the situation of authenticity is to transfer the 'emic' position from the music-maker to the music-receiver, although the former presumably holds the authentic explanation of his or her own musical works.

The authenticity of the music-maker lies unheeded due to its being overwhelmed by the music-receiver's perception. As a consequence, the authenticity that comes from reception is turned into an 'emic' position, which determines the popularity of the music and the singer's rise and fall.

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[11] Xue Cun, interview, 22-05-2007, Beijing.
[12] Based on group interviews after a live performance in Beijing, 27-03-2006. Interviewees included Xie Jinqi, Ma Shiwei, Zong Jia, Qi Yuezu, Zhao Jingwen, Qi Lele amongst others.

Compared with 'Nothing to My Name' and 'Sister Drum' in the 1980s and 1990s, in which the songs were interpreted with an 'emic' understanding from an 'etic' stance, those in the 2000s such as Xue Cun's 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' only met an 'etic' understanding from an 'emic' stance. In this sense, the perception whether the authenticity as perceived by music-maker and music-receiver is accordant or discordant plays a major role in determining the music's recognition. Furthermore, the relationship pattern of music-maker and receiver in C-pop nowadays consequently comes into view as 'etic' music-maker and 'emic' music-receiver.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The language patterns of C-pop reveal correlations between music-maker and receiver through linguistic structure, linguistic code and perception. Over time the stance of the music-maker in C-pop has diverged from an 'emic' towards an 'etic' sensibility, a shift which has lowered and weakened the grounds for self-recognition in C-pop. Such a movement has resulted in a corresponding change in people's sense of what is authentic in C-pop music-making, which is now increasingly detached from features of the musical composition itself. It demonstrates that the term 'authenticity' is not merely one of socially recognised self-justification, but a concept which ought to be considered as holding multiple attributes and perspectives. This chapter also demonstrates that in C-pop activities, the music-receiver now has priority, and therefore, from studying the linguistic aspects of C-pop, we can see another aspect of the change in C-pop musicality. Next the relationship between C-pop music and music-receivers will be considered, from the entry point of the singer's actual singing—how they design and perform their 'voice'.

Chapter 4
Vocal Code

This chapter examines the relationship between music and music-receivers by investigating the voice in C-pop. It will show that, although music and music-receivers are potentially of equal importance to the music-makers, the situation in contemporary C-pop has tended to become unbalanced. The unbalanced stance in the C-pop industry nowadays has led to all mainstream musical production being very much targeted at the perceived needs and whims of elevated and dominant music-receivers.

In fact, apart from being mentioned or summarized in some introductory studies and text books, the analysis of pop singing as an object in different pop styles remains an unexplored area in need of detailed, systematic study. Therefore, beyond the function of coding musical features or clarifying aesthetic value,[13] 'voice' is taken on as one of the main branches in my study in this chapter, including singing style and the use of timbre. This chapter begins by looking into the meaning of vocal singing, then follows with a discussion on how the transmission of meaning is enabled or inhibited by the employment of different voices. Taken together, these will reveal the workings of vocal representation in C-pop.

4.1 THE FLUID ETHNOSCAPE OF MUSIC

The 'ethnoscape' is fluid in nature: it rests on a condition that continuously breaks out from stability (Appadurai 1990: 7). From later sociological studies such as that of Zygmunt Bauman, who proposed 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000), we might realize that our lives have been profoundly changed from a 'heavy' and 'solid' to a 'light' and 'liquid' one. To be more precise, in modern life the fluidity of the ethnoscape plays an important role in the mode of being and features of music, and means the conditions of musical life change constantly. In addition, music's holistic pattern is also influenced.

The changing ethnoscape of C-pop causes an alteration to the pattern of music existence as well as in ideas about music-making. The composed 'voice' therefore practically and reasonably reflects these alterations, in that 'voice' is one of

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[13] For more on the aesthetic values of popular music, see Frith, 'Towards an Aesthetics of Popular Music' in *Popular Music: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, 2004 (4): 32-47.

the most audible factors of pop, being principally a vocal musical form. In order to understand how the fluidity of the ethnoscape of the music-maker accrues changes in music, it will be helpful to present C-pop's main musical characteristics since the mid-1980s, to get a general sense of the 'voice' features in each period. Below are two charts which summarize the general condition of C-pop from 1985-2005 and reflect how the music developed during that time:

Figure 2-4: *Music styles in Beijing (BJ) and Guangzhou (GZ)*

	1986-90	1991-95	1996-2000	2001-06
BJ	*Xibeifeng* and Rock emerge.	Diverse musical styles.	Rock declines. Other styles remain popular.	Mass-produced music era.
GZ	Mainly imitates Hong Kong and Taiwanese pop.	Southern style pop, Southern School.	Southern pop declines.	

Figure 2-5: *Status of Music in BJ and GZ*

Status		1986-90	1991-95	1996-2000	2001-06
	Music Status	Growing from the native pop style.	Multiple soundscapes.	Music flourishes, large amount of music produced.	C-pop becomes grassroots orientated.
	Location Status	BJ and GZ spring up together. GZ recording industry booming.	The two places develop side-by-side. GZ known as the 'centre' of C-pop.	Many GZ musicians move to BJ. BJ now known as the 'centre'.	BJ predominant. Move towards a digital music industry.

Musical styles differed from place to place, although the change in music was very much related to the spatial change. From this, we can also perceive that the musicians' fluidity was the actual crucial factor causing musical change and consequently influencing music, as figures 2-4 and 2-5 reveal. The charts show that the mainstream style of C-pop music changed in connection with the geographical base of the music

industry. In addition the liquidity of the music-maker ethnoscape was a dominant contribution to the change; evidence for this can be found through in alteration in singing styles of C-pop.

Therefore, music speaks for the music-maker's position in time and space. In terms of the relationship between music and time, and also music and space, most scholars would agree that music plays an important role in producing and sounding a particular place and cultural context (Cohen 1995: 434-446; Connell and Gibson 2004: 342-361; Stokes 1994). Just as the very influential Chinese composer Li Haiying said, 'my music corresponds to the era…music is a means of communication. The socio-cultural tidal current is changing, the people's ideology is changing, and my musical language certainly needs to change as consequence'.[14] This claim shows the correlation between the music-maker and the music, in that both music-maker and music respond to the society and culture to which they belong. The timing and the fluid ethnoscape of both music and music-maker are bound to social movement; they all reflect their macro-surroundings.

Nonetheless, while music simultaneously and synchronously reveals the situation of society and culture with the music-maker's physical and psychological fluidity, where does the music-receiver stand? In the following, I shall switch attention to C-pop's music-receivers, taking 'voice' as the main focus.

4.2 VOICESCAPE IN TIME AND PLACE

In this part, 'voice' will be interpreted from the aspect of the musician's singing and the listener's response. The examples and related clarification will articulate the alterations of music-rendering features, and accordingly reveal C-pop singers' concepts of the works they present, together with the listeners' reactions to different styles of voice.

At the opening of the 1980s, C-pop was characterized by a singing style similar to that used in Chinese National Opera (which in turn was influenced by the conventional Chinese national singing style[15]). This showed that the style of popular music had not deviated from the typical Chinese urban folk style, which featured

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[14] Li Haiying, 'Li Haiying: I Found My Root' (Li Haiying: zhaodao wode gen). *Southern Daily* (*Nanfang ribao*). 29-12-2008.

[15] National singing style is a very Chinese characteristic, which combines western operatic *bel canto* aria singing and Chinese folk singing style, a singing method based on *bel canto* but which sounds sharper and more pointed.

catchy tunes and pretty sounding voices, but lacked individualism. In addition, the manner of most of the music making still adhered to the conventional conception of singing aesthetics. The songs of this period were predominantly melodic, with poetic lyrics and a graphic tune. The singers used sweet voices and a tender vocal style, and the whole song was normally performed in a romantic style. The situation shifted in the latter half of the decade, when this 'normal' singing style started to be abandoned. Cui Jian's 'Nothing to My Name' was indisputably the song that represented vocal traits during this time. The *xibeifeng* style that followed Cui Jian's rock was also in line with the rock style of 'Nothing to My Name'. The voice in such songs did not conform to a conventional aesthetic; instead, a raw, unembellished voice with a rugged, even shouting, singing style appeared.

At that time, singers were mainly based in Beijing. The decade thereafter was one of balance between Beijing and Guangzhou and the singing voice showed diversity, but this multiplicity occurred and was displayed more strongly in BJ pop than that in GZ pop. Southern School singers (GZ) often used a comely and caressing voice in an approachable singing style, in songs such as in 'Billows as Of Old' (Taosheng yijiu), 'How Are You My Big Brother?' (Dage ni haoma?), 'Love Within Wind, Smile Within Water' (Feng hanqing, shui hanxiao) and so on. On the other hand, BJ pop was thriving alongside rock, *minyao* folk, and artistic folk genres, and there was therefore a rather broader approach. From 1995, as many C-pop musicians agree, the Southern School gradually declined. This was the time when Chinese audiences started to pay more attention to those singers who possessed 'branded' voices and who also sang in an individualized and characteristic style. In other words, 'individuality' took on importance. For example, the vocal technique of Han Hong, a female singer with a wide vocal range, lies somewhere between bel canto, the national singing style, and the raw voice of popular singing style. To take a further example such as 'Promissory 98' (Xiangyue 98) to reinforce this point, two singers both sang in an easy way, with a mixture of natural and falsetto voices in a plain duet style. This song became the hit of the year.

The above examples from different eras not only demonstrate what happened in C-pop during those years, but also show how and why vocal styles varied in different times and places. Within two decades singers developed a distinctive vocal technique to complement their music, in order to win audience attention and increase their market share. The favoured voice changed throughout the growth of C-pop. An

unmistakable and precise voice that had been trained in the National Opera singing style was transformed into a new, raw, even shouting, singing style as C-pop finally moved into an era of diverse musical styles. In the end a characteristic 'branded' voice displaying 'individuality' became a necessity in the C-pop domain.

The singing styles that singers applied in their musical works were key factors enabling them to achieve success: Cui Jian attained international influence with 'Nothing to My Name', and Dadawa reached international fame with 'Sister Drum'. More accurately, the individualized singing manner and voice utilization ensured certain music became distinctive (I shall say more on the tri-dimensional relationship between song, vocal style and singer later). For example, the rock vocal style of Cui Jian's music broke away from the 'normal and proper' singing style, characterized by the National Opera, normally possessed by singers of C-pop in that era.

The success of a piece of music may be based on the music itself and how it is performed, and in C-pop, the use of the voice altered due to the singers' subjective decision finally to succumb to the objective demands of the listeners. Therefore, although music is the creation of the music-maker, the music-receiver has turned out to be the determinative factor in music-making in today's C-pop industry. Thus, we have to clarify the current relationship between C-pop music and the music receiver.

4.3 MUSIC AND MUSIC-RECEIVER

As music is performed by people and perceived by people, the relationship between music and people is actually a trinity (rather than a duality) in a tripartite form. The relationship between music and music-receiver can shed light on the status of the music. This relationship also shapes the singers' conceptual perspective, which in turn encourages a particular way of using the voice that is fundamental to C-pop.

4.3.1 Music-Maker: Leading or Synchronizing with the Receiver?

The performer's conception spells out that the musician's creative stimulus is always being influenced by others to make it tally with its reception. We can turn this the other way round and ask what do the music-receivers expect from the singers? Here is the view of Liu Ying, the editor of both *Beijing Evening Press* and *Tom Music Website*:

No matter whether it's hip-hop or other kinds of music, to my way of thinking, the most important thing is to deal well with the relationship between the musical work and its reception. With hip-hop, for mainland Chinese, the technique is no problem at all, but the lyrics don't synchronize with the way listeners communicate and their way of expressing modern life… In fact, the mainstream ethos of mainland audiences is a bourgeois living style, lazy and cosy, which is neither radical nor drastic. Failure to synchronize with its reception is actually the reason why mainland hip-hop and some other musical styles remain as 'subculture.'[16]

This critic, who also speaks from the perspective of an online musical trader, stresses two points: one is the synchronization of musicians and audiences, and the other that the audience is actually the frame of reference with which musicians are concerned. Thus, the dominant position of audiences is obvious.

4.3.2 Musical Individualism or Adapted Individuation?

From the description and elucidation of 'voice' in different eras and places, one thing is clear: vocal utilization in pop songs incarnates the reaction which took place when music met cultural collision. To cite one of my informants, 'C-pop passed through from localization to globalization, then to "glocalization".'[17] The singing voice and style of the early 1980s displayed 'localization', precisely speaking; and this was also interpreted, by most Chinese, as 'nationalization' in a Chinese context. C-pop had just started to take advantage of foreign music resources, and the music-makers were mainly preoccupied with replicating the tender lyrical songs of Hong Kong or Taiwan, whilst the majority of the songs during that time also displayed regional expressions (*diyu fengqing*). Thereafter, along with the influx of more and more foreign music styles, C-pop makers began to realize the utilization of 'the beauty of imperfection' and no longer pursued only perfection and aestheticism. By replicating the style of 'others', the utilization of vocal styles became more diverse.

However, C-pop now seems to meet the condition known as 'glocalization,' which is a term coined by sociologist Roland Robertson in the late 1980s. The original meaning of 'glocalization' was to emphasize that the globalization of a product is more

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[16] Liu Ying, 'The Future of Chinese Hip-hop' (Zhongguo Hip-hop de mingtian). *Beijing Evening Press* (*Beijing wanbao*). 20-06-2007.
[17] Hong Yuan, interview, 15-05-2007, Beijing.

likely to succeed when it is adapted specifically to each locality or culture in which it is marketed. It describes the tempering effects of local conditions on global pressures, because they happen simultaneously and have both universalizing and particularizing tendencies (Robertson 1995: 25-44). In C-pop, although music-makers were attempting to make a globally-accepted national pop music, they were in fact making their music glocalized. 'Sister Drum', the song produced in the early 1990s mentioned above, is a typical hybridized music, which might be known as 'world music' in the West. It utilized Tibetan musical elements; the singing and the video all displayed a local Tibetan flavour, and the song won an international prize, accordingly being called one of the most successful pieces of *xin minyue* music.

To take another example, singer Wang Fei (who is also known as Faye Wong and initially found fame in Hong Kong, thereafter giving many performances in mainland China), with her distinctive pure voice and highly professional proficiency at mixing the real voice and falsetto, is also well-known for the uniqueness in her performing style. She formed her splendid reputation by her 'distinctiveness,' but nonetheless, many critics and musicians pointed out her style actually imitates Icelandic singer Björk, the Irish band The Cranberries, and others from the Western world. Such singers gain wide attention by strong personalization, whether they use 'local flavour' or 'imitation' as their 'distinctiveness.' The crucial point is that in later C-pop, individuality became a key factor for the music-makers in the making of a hit. However, the 'individuality' of C-pop performers was from the very beginning its exoticism; therefore, say those music-makers, the concept of 'individuality' can hardly be original in C-pop musical practice.

4.3.3 Exotic Criteria

The above examples testify that the concept of making C-pop is limited by 'criteria' from 'others,' which cause the music-maker to hold an unbalanced view of the relative importance of music and music-receiver. In other words, music-makers have become more concerned with how to attract listeners and give less thought to how to increase the original creativity of the music. The illustrations above show that during the development of C-pop one criterion has been exchanged for another. All the criteria are set by external musical models, whether Hong Kong and Taiwanese or Western pop. Different exotic musical styles are incorporated into C-pop at different times. However,

when that criterion becomes the norm, a deconstruction consequently emerges. Surely this is nothing extraordinary; many scholars in different disciplines have pointed out the nature of any matter is normally a cycle of unceasing construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. Every deconstruction means another reconstruction, which becomes the new construction.

C-pop has been reconstructed again and again, but the criteria are always based on external musical resources. Although the fact 'individuality is only a pattern of glocalization' has been realized by many music-makers, they have not thought how music-making can be original and creative when the music-making concept is framed by certain criteria, especially criteria which derive from something other than its own. Nonetheless, from the communication I have had with music-makers during my fieldwork, one thing is clear: C-pop makers still focus on how they can make their music more accepted internationally, although they also emphasize Chinese 'nationality'.

In music making, this criterion weakens creativity in music. As in the examples of the two singers I gave above, the concept in C-pop has moved gradually towards 'individuality'. However, within the criterion of western pop, the pursuit of individuality finally resulted in glocalization. It seems to show that the practice of combined globalization and individuation normally turns into glocalization in the long run. In making C-pop, the crucial limitation is maybe the 'subjected and restricted criterion', which discloses the stance of people within C-pop as well. When the singers' notion is reflected through their singing style within a very restricted criterion, the music itself accordingly shows a sense of being a replica.

The illustration and illumination above attest that C-pop singers' consciousness of 'being unique' is a base for them to attract listeners, and they are less concerned with whether this 'uniqueness' is authentic or exotic. In addition, it leads C-pop more or less into a replica situation. Therefore, although music and music receivers are both key factors for the music maker to consider, the applied forces of each are unbalanced in the music maker's mind-set. What is the music-receivers' stance when they are facing the music?

4.3.4 Ingredients of Attraction

Here, I shall focus on people's perception of C-pop from the perspective of reception.

In addition to the audience I will include music producers, devisers (who design how to promote singers or their music), sponsors or traders, and even critics and researchers. This final standpoint will show that the situation of people giving significant recognition to 'people' (singers) restrains the diversity of singing technique (music) in contemporary C-pop.

In contemporary C-pop, the paraphernalia surrounding the singers are more fascinating to general listeners than the songs themselves. Singers' hobbies, personal lives, news, even rumours about them, seem to catch the attention of their followers. Such a situation is clearly reflected when a singer appears on the stage, whether with or without musical performance. An example is the singer I mentioned above, Wang Fei (called by some 'The Queen of C-pop Music'); although her singing methods, performing style, and even her style of stage makeup and costume are all recognized as copying overseas performers, her status in the C-pop domain is not affected. What her fans really appreciate is her strong 'individuality and uniqueness' in both her actual life and stage performance. Although they might also stress her pure voice, in point of fact many other singers possess voice colour and dynamics as unique as Wang Fei.

Therefore, the spectator's concern is not specifically with musical factors, but is more in line with the situation of 'people' within musical life. Regarding young pop idol Li Yuchun, the observer Jiang Xu noted that 'since being put into the public domain, most of the questions she answers are not related to her singing; her fans seem to care more about whether she ever wears skirts or saved her hair'[18]. Such a view is often vindicated by postings on online forums, such as 'Whatever she sings, I like it, every song'.[19] When I asked a young girl who had just bought Li's CD in a music store why she liked this singer, her reason was:

> She is cool, unlike other female singers. She shines on the stage. Her performance makes you fix your eyes on her, so you even forget to care about her singing.[20]

4.3.5 Unbalanced Recognition

To the audience, the person who is performing on the stage is the important thing, and

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[18] Jiang Xu (musician), interview, 20-10-2007, Shenyang.

[19] Online music forums include www.baidu.com, www.56.com, www.tudou.com, www.tianya.com and many others.

[20] Ye Luqing, 18 years old, bought three items of Li Yuchun's music for her collection, including a CD and DVD, in the FAB music store. Interview, 14-05-2007, Beijing.

this situation directly induces an unbalanced recognition in the spectators, which is that the performer is more highly recognized than their music. In like manner, the perspectives from musical producers insinuate that what they need and look for must be someone who is out of the ordinary, because they are selling the 'person' to a larger extent than their music.[21] As many insiders have pointed out, recording in China is hardly profitable: performances or other commercial activities remain the main channel for the singers and their companies to make money in the C-pop domain.[22] In other words, selling the music is not fundamental, but how to sell the singer requires many skills and even tricks by the people working in this sphere. Therefore in C-pop, music is an accessory of the performer, as producer and planner Jiang Xiaoyu said:

> Nowadays, the singer is the product; their music is just the business-card. When they go out to expand their business contacts and search for more opportunities, after introducing themselves, they will present their CD, and say: 'Oh, this is my new single, would you like to listen and give me some suggestions?' So, really, now the singer is in fact the product, their music is not, that's just their way showing what he or she does.[23]

The current situation of C-pop is that the 'people' have become central and the music is peripheral. The manipulators of the field do not even try to conceal this condition, as when I talked to the Steve Fock, the vice president of Cheng Tian Entertainment International. When asked why we in China do not try to make a singer like Vitas (the famous Russian pop singer, who is well-known for his vocal range as a countertenor), he replied, 'Music is easy to make, but the right person is difficult to find'.[24]

Normally before a new song is released various advertisements appear, stressing the singer more than their music. As journalist Xu Xing said:

> Even the most famous pop singers also have to accept that this is an era in which the stars need to be acclaimed by fans... the influence of those fans alters the conventional mode of creating a star. The fans are upgraded to being participants

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[21] Producers Jiang Xiaoyu, Wang Xiaojing and Zhou Yaping all mentioned how they chose potential singers and packaged them, in which the most important factor was to see whether they looked special.
[22] Li Jia, Gong Tianwei, Liu yicheng and Qu Dongdong; interview (after a news conference), 25-05-2007, Beijing .
[23] Jiang Xiaoyu, interview, 28-04-2007, Beijing.
[24] Steve Fock, interview, 03-10-2007, Chengdu.

and are dominant in this domain.[25]

The quotation above suggests confusion: is there any close relationship between the music and the listeners? If there is, then the performer seems to play a major role in this. This represents a further development in the relationship between singers and listeners, and it has already become a big issue (giving rise to a fan economy, fan industry, and even professional fans in the current C-pop domain, which I will explore in Part Three). Here, it is another forceful point in support of the claim that the attraction of the music is lessened compared with that of the singer. As one fan claimed, 'we have to buy the CD or their new books if we want to join the idol's news conference, and the so-called "fans' meeting" also requires us to show the receipts from purchasing products they have endorsed.'[26] From this attitude we may perceive that the fans' desire and purpose is to see the stars in person. Buying the recordings has the same function as buying a ticket to see their idols. In other words, in the sphere of C-pop music, the idols' personal image is more important than the sound of the music itself.

However music does not only mean 'sound', but often includes the performance that generates the sound, as Anthony Seeger pointed out:

> Music is much more than just the sounds captured on a tape recorder. Music is an intention to make something called music (or structure similarly to what we call music) as opposed to other kinds of sounds. It is an ability to formulate strings of sounds accepted by members of a given society as music (or whatever they call it). Music is the construction and use of sound-producing instruments. It is the use of the body to produce and accompany the sounds. Music is an emotion that accompanies the production of, the appreciation of, and the participation in a performance. Music is also, of course, the sounds themselves after they are produced. Yet it is intention as well as realization; it is emotion and value as well as structure and form (Seeger 1987: xiv).

Therefore, in order to investigate music, it is necessary to take both musical sound and the entire related modes of human conduct into consideration. However, as researchers, it is also important to consider whether all these component ingredients in music are

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[25] Xu Xing, interview, 11-05-2007, Beijing.
[26] Cheng Jiale, interview (at a new album release news conference), 04-05-2007, Beijing.

balanced or not. At least, as music is chiefly concerned with the sense of hearing, whether the aspect of sound is still maintained as a priority of the music as a whole should be considered, in that it is the fundamental thing related to music intention, realization, emotion, and value as well as its structure and form. In C-pop, the sound of the music itself seems to be relatively disregarded: other elements are heeded much more. This change of musicality ultimately results in prosperity in quantity and poverty in quality.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The range of vocal utilisations studied in Chapter Four further exemplifies the change of C-pop musicality from the perspective of its textual sound. It exposes a shift of the attributes of musicality from an 'emic' position of self discovery to one in which the music-receiver is able to consume exotic vocal sounds and related characteristics. The consequence of the unbalanced position of contemporary C-pop is an increasing emphasis on matters of human conduct related to musical activities rather than on the song itself.

Chapter 5

Backing Musical Code

The main focus in this part is the instrumental music component of C-pop. In studying its features, my aim is to discover more about how people create music in this genre. This part of the writing shows that, with its highly visible foreground (the main vocal melody) and a rather weaker middle-ground and background (supportive structural components such as the rhythm section and instrumental harmony), C-pop songs are constructed in a relatively two-dimensional pattern. This trait of C-pop musicality clarifies how the music-maker's creativity is conditioned into conventional systems of thought. Finally, as a result, this chapter indicates that, musically, C-pop has changed from a focus on liberated individualization to a more regularly structured and formulaic approach.

The musical analysis in this chapter is based on three songs which I have transcribed in a version of condensed full score.[27] C-pop has not yet been studied in this way; indeed, some musicological studies of western pop also lack any attempt to analyse the music within a full score. The songs chosen here were composed, created and produced by mainland musicians and are representative of the three main periods discussed in this thesis, each being a single that gained fame for their performers: 'Nothing to My Name' to represent the 1980s; 'Sister Drum' the 1990s; 'Two Butterflies' the 2000s.

5.1 A WAY OF MAKING AND THINKING ABOUT MUSIC

This chapter gives the band score for each song to show how, due to the way of thinking by musicians when music-making, the instrumentation creates different effects in the music. During fieldwork in China, I found nearly all pop musicians were unable to provide even a condensed score of their own work. To find out how C-pop was differentiated era by era, I decided to transcribe the song examples myself, and an interesting discrepancy emerged.

Since I made the transcriptions chronologically, the first song I chose to

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[27] Condensed full scores in this chapter aim to give the main body of musical instrumentation, including the vocal parts. Some of the detailed expression may be overlooked in the interests of overall clarity.

transcribe was Cui Jian's 'Nothing to My Name'. However, when I had finished transcribing the score and tried to play it back through the score-editing software, the sound was very dissimilar to the recorded version.[28] I checked each voice through the notation bar by bar: the notes were in their right place and with accurate duration. Understandably, software such as Sibelius is only a tool and not able to voice the notation with 'expression'; the music itself contains an expressive individual presentation. With this insight, I transcribed another two songs: 'Sister Drum' from the 1990s and 'Two Butterflies' from the 2000s. 'Two Butterflies' really surprised me, as when I played back the transcription there was little difference between the notation and the song recording.

I suddenly realized that the validity of notation can be a starting point or a path for pop music researchers to look into and evaluate the musical characteristics of each era's music. It does not mean a conventional musicological analysis, gazing at it note by note, chord by chord, though these can also be subsidiary and supplementary techniques to further interpret pop music. Certainly, the three songs I chose are different in genre; 'Nothing to My Name' is rock, 'Sister Drum' is called New Age or *xin minyue*, and 'Two Butterflies' is pop. Leaving aside the second song for now, some western readers may feel it inappropriate to compare 'Nothing to My Name' with 'Two Butterflies', as the western music system has clear categories which would distinguish the former as rock and the latter as pop. As Warner has already pointed out, pop is issued in singles, is artificial, trivial, ephemeral, successive, with an emphasis on recording and technology; rock, on the other hand, is issued in albums, is real, authentic, serious, lasting, progressive, and with an emphasis on performance and musicianship (Warner 2003: 4). However, as I explained in the Introduction, the majority of Chinese audiences take the two songs as belonging to just one category, C-pop. All in all, focusing on the validity of the notation is the approach taken in this chapter for the purpose of outlining the attributes and traits of C-pop at different times.

Music theorist Heinrich Schenker essentially focuses on western classical music, and the musical reductions of Schenkerian analysis are usually arhythmic. Consequently, the more surface aspects of the music are called the foreground, and the background is the holistic structural form which is also called 'fundamental structure'.

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[28] For the purpose of accuracy, I sent my transcription to musician Zhang Yuanren, who is a rock band drummer based in Beijing, to ask him to double-check my transcription. He emailed me back and confirmed that, as a condensed score, there is nothing wrong with the transcription.

In C-pop, many pop songs are composed with melody first and accompaniment later, with the result that melodic cadence is primary and the structured backing music accompaniment is secondary. Therefore, C-pop music displays a colourful foreground, but a rather pale and faint background.

Hence this musicological chapter regards the vocal line as the foreground, since it is the main melody, and the harmony and the rhythm as the background, since they are the supportive skeleton that sustains the deployment of the song's melody. I would like to argue that C-pop generally has a planar rather than a solid or three-dimensional sense, since the foreground is prominent and the background is relatively pale. In other words, the structure and hierarchy are the main aspects I shall look at, but without focusing on the chord progression or single notes, though they will form a complementary focal point.

5.2 FLAT SOUND EFFECT

5.2.1 Harmonic Texture

Traditionally speaking, in Chinese music, melody or tune is the most important part of perception to the Chinese when they create and listen to music. In other words, the Chinese are more sensitive to the tune; and harmony, arriving late in Chinese musical history, is not as integrated and pervasive as in the West (Cui 2006, Tian 1986: 9-13). As scholar Tian Qing pointed out, many native scholars have realized this but still not put it into a detailed academic study, let alone a pop music study. In Tian's view, this is 'the linear thinking of Chinese music', with its joint interpretation of psychology and manner of thought derived from a long history of Chinese regimes and other philosophical aspects of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. On the other hand, religion also played a decisive role in the long history of western music, and the complex musical texture tallies with the complexity, sublimity, holiness and sanctity of the Catholic and Christian religions (Tian 1986: 11).

In terms of the regime, since the start of Chinese civilisation there has never been a democracy to compare with, for example (as the two countries are both very old), that of ancient Greece. In contrast with Europe, a continent comprised of many different small countries, China as a uniform regime has long been dominated by the principle ideology of Chinese potentates. In ancient times Confucianism drew parallels

between musical notes and people or affairs: *Gong* (doh) was deemed a monarch, *Shang* (ray) a liegeman, *Jiao* (me) a civilian, *Zhi* (soh), affairs, and *Yü* (la), subjects (Chinese pentatonic). Within this theory, notes were already being classified as superior and inferior; therefore the different notes were not blended or overlapped in conventional Chinese music. This is the direct reason why harmony was not derived in China (Tian 1986: 9-13). Although this is ancient Chinese musical philosophy, it seems to have been inherited by the Chinese popular music system. As Cui Jian pointed out, Chinese pop and rock music puts much emphasis on the melodic line, so the harmony and rhythm are not as richly textured as in the West.

This conventional music tradition also continued into the popular music genre when C-pop appeared. Thus the musical effect of these commercial pop songs always sounds rather thin; even now, there are not many mainland native-created pop songs using polyphonic music to accompany the singing. For a typical example see the song 'Two Butterflies' below (figure 2-6):

Figure 2-6: 'Two Butterflies' (transcribed by Zhao Yue)

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The projected main melody is harmonized by a diatonic, and for the most part, triadic chord progression, which follows the common principles of European practice in functional tonality. This keeps a holistic sense of tonal hierarchy. The melody is diatonic; the verse is almost entirely pentatonic (in G major). This song, representative of the 2000s, shows a conventional and relatively unchanged Chinese popular ballad style: composed of a catchy tune that is mainly pentatonic, and an accompaniment that follows the notes from the broken chord. Both the drum set and the bass play formulaic musical patterns. Two guitars echo each other as prelude, and the lead guitar stops as the vocal part commences; in other words, the lead guitar is a melody instrument. A synthesiser repeats the main chord circle of I-VI-II-V-I-VI-II-V(I); and inserts I-III-VI-II-I-VI-II-V(I) at the climax. Such an accompaniment functions as an underlay that thickens and underpins the main melody, rather than as enriching and colourful material that is able to adorn and project the melody. This kind of accompaniment has a rather simple and flat musical shape.

Therefore, although this music is tuneful in its foreground hierarchy, the texture of the background is displayed more simply. Musically speaking, it demonstrates the flat sound effect in contemporary C-pop, which lacks a stereo (tri-dimensional) sense. However, songs in the previous two decades showed more diversified features and individuation. The musical accompaniment to both 'Nothing to My Name' from the 1980s and 'Sister Drum' of the 1990s produced a denser sound (see figures 2-7 and 2-8 below).

Figure 2-7: 'Nothing to My Name' (transcribed by Zhao Yue)

zou ke ni que zong shi xiao___ wo yi wu suo_ you___

wo yao gei ni wo de zhui___ qiu, hai you wo de___ zi you,

Con tristezza

Semplice & Voglia

ke ni que zong shi xiao____ wo, yi wu suo__ you

wei he ni zong xiao ge mei_ gou, wei he wo zong yao_ zhui qiu.

Semplice & voalia

The chord progression of 'Nothing to My Name' mirrors a strong confusion and mixed-up feelings about life which are expressed in the lyrics. In this song, the ninth chord is employed very frequently; such unresolved suspensions keep projecting the theme of the song—the 'uncertainty' caused by the situation of 'nothing to my name'. After a short introduction, the verse starts from bar 5 until bar 20, with the repeated chord progression A9—D9—A9; after an interval from bar 21 to 29, the circle of A9—D9—A9 recurs again from bars 30 to 45. There is only one chord, A, throughout the climax of the song from bars 74 to 85, and the circle of Bm—A—D—A continues through the subsequent bars. The final coda from bar 124 is repeated with cheerful guitar plucking and a decrescendo, but the chord still hangs on in an unresolved suspended A. This repeated A implies and emphasises a state which cannot settle the 'uncertainty', and the joyful attitude seems to indicate people's ignorance, happily living without pondering their own life situation.

The texture of 'Nothing to My Name' consists of a polyphonic melody played by flute and *suona*[29] (a Chinese traditional instrument) a few times. Through the two instruments, romanticism and realism are interwoven. The singer sings the harsh social reality of 'the hope' and 'free[dom]' (which has been 'laughed at') to the accompaniment of the gentle and melodious natural timbre of a flute. On the other hand, the beauties of nature, 'the rotating earth' and 'the running water', come with the bold and vigorous sound quality of the *suona*. The flute plays a polyphonic melody between bars 14 and 20 and also bars 38-45: the melodic sound contrasts with the singer's main melody. In the second polyphony played by *suona* from bars 54-61 and bars 100-119, the bold sound tones are sharp and clear, which contrasts with both the main melody and the previous flute passage. As these three timbres construct three melodies along with an unusual chord progression, in 'Nothing to My Name', the main foreground melody is accompanied by a different kind of hierarchy as background music; a stereo sound effect is structured.

From the analysis of the two songs above, I claim that C-pop shifted from a diversified musical tendency in the late 1980s to a featureless one in the 2000s. 'Two Butterflies' seems to have returned to the very old and conventional Chinese ballad style with a tuneful foreground a rather weakened background. Unlike 'Nothing to My

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[29] *Suona*, also known as the Chinese double reed trumpet or Chinese oboe, has a distinctively high-pitched and loud sound, and is frequently used in Chinese traditional outdoor music ensembles. It is often used in traditional wedding and funeral processions in rural areas, especially in the Shandong, Henan and Shanxi areas of China. For further detail about this instrument, please see Liu 2006.

Name', in which the foreground and background contest against each other and are both developed in the music, C-pop songs in the era of 'Two Butterflies' have reverted to a planar style of music.

5.2.2 Rhythmic Features

Traditionally, Chinese music is concerned with the aura (*Qi*, which can also be translated as 'breath', or 'air'), understood as an artistic atmosphere.[30] With such a philosophy, Chinese music stresses receipt and apperception while listening, and consequently requires a superior penetrability of the main melodic theme, since Chinese musicians' attention is always fixed on the tune.[31] In Chinese music, artistic effect is achieved by 'simplicity'; conversely, in the west it is achieved by 'dynamics'. As Liu Chenghua pointed out:

> Of the depth of musical thought, Chinese music and Western music both possess it. The difference is that the depth of western music is mainly displayed through an 'intensity' and Chinese music mostly presented by 'abstruseness.' The intensity and abstruseness are both facets of musical thought, but the contents and effects are very different... the dynamics of western music rely on the strength and full dimension of musical sound. It seeks to move the heart of the listener. Chinese music, on the other hand, does not attempt to provoke such a reaction, it even tries to avoid it, and the texture is not vertically overlapped but horizontally stretched and extended (Liu 1994: 23).

The rhythm of Western pop developed historically with an 'intensive dynamic', the predominant feature of which is an emphasis on the upbeat. On the other hand, in terms of C-pop music, Cui Jian already pointed out that Chinese are habitually focused on melody and not sensitive to harmony and rhythm, as quoted above.

In C-pop, the upbeat is not normally accented; this preserves the conventional musical flavour of C-pop by adhering to a linear style. As one observer, Xiong Ping, commented on the internet, 'Chinese song is just like a streamlet, but

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[30] *Qi* is a long-standing historical concept within traditional Chinese music. Scholars such as Tian Qing and Wang Duo believe the concept of *Qi* also influences the creation of many kinds of Chinese music, including current Chinese pop music. See Fan 2004: 16-21.

[31] When I asked many musicians whom I interviewed during fieldwork, such as Bian Liunian, Li Quan and Yao Yao, how they judged whether a pop song was good or not, they all emphasised one criterion: that the tune must be graceful and elegant (*you mei*) and pleasant to listen to (*dong ting*). This also reveals that Chinese musicians have still has not broken away from conventional thinking when composing pop music.

western songs give you a feeling of a river surging forward'.[32] 'Two Butterflies', with its very upright and conventional rhythmic features, is one example here; however, 'Sister Drum', another song internationally successful in the 1990s, shows a rather vertically solid rhythm feature (see figure 2-8).

Figure 2-8: 'Sister Drum' (transcribed by Zhao Yue)

'Sister Drum' starts with a woman crying out, and the singer performs the whole song in a moderately free rhythm, the singing containing much improvisation. The drum, played throughout the song alongside the vocal line, underlines the theme of the song (the religious meaning of 'sister drum' was given in Part One). The instrumentation and textural design are both simple, but the drum is the main element, projecting the rhythmic dynamic. The drum is played from *p* to *f*, and the rhythm densely arranged. Not only does the drum emphasise the upbeat of each bar, especially the climax from bar 34, but the guitar line also stresses the upbeat very regularly within the song, such as in bars 24-43. Therefore although the instrumentation is deployed in a simple way, the whole structure is built up vertically, based on a sense of stereo sound effect, in which the downbeat and upbeat have both been considered.

5.3 MUSIC-MAKING: FROM LIBERATED TO FORMULAIC

From the manner of music-making the structure of the music, and even certain implicit musical traits, can be discerned. In fact, from the aspect of chord progressions and the musical structure, western popular music studies have already identified the thirty-two-bar form (often shortened as AABA), and consequently categorized 12-bar blues, 16-bar blues and other variations (Covach 2005: 65-76; Middleton 1990: 115-116). In the following, I elaborate on C-pop's musical structure to demonstrate that, although the origin of C-pop is very much one imported from the West, it is in fact, from the angle of composition, rather conventional in a Chinese sense. Although it shows an 'emic' stance from this angle, this does not conflict with the shifted stance of C-pop from 'emic' to 'etic'. As I expounded in the two earlier chapters, the situation in C-pop now is that the perspective of music reception is dominant, with the music-receiver taking the lead.

5.3.1 Music Structure

Although most C-pop songs share a relatively regular and formal format and pattern, which could be paralleled with the pattern of western pop songs (such as the 32-bar form), in fact they are mostly influenced by conventional concepts of Chinese music creation, the most striking being ancient Chinese historical poems. Chinese poems had a very particular syntactic structure, following a formula consisting of four parts: opening, holding, turning and closing (*qi, cheng, zhuan, he*). These then function respectively as introduction, elucidation of the theme, transition to another viewpoint, and summing up. Conventionally, the phrasing of Chinese poems consists of four sentences (opening, holding, turning and closing) or sections which are also constructed and arranged as these four parts. This poetic pattern is retained in the structure of C-pop, and developed in the consciousness of C-pop composers. In the song *Two Butterflies*, the music structure is formed as A (bar 10-17) A' (bar 18-25) B (bar 26-33) B' (bar 34-41), in which A (I-VI-II-V-I-VI-II-V) A' (I-VI-II-V-I-VI-II-I) B (I-III-VI-II-I-VI-II-V) B' (I-III-VI-II-I-VI-II-I). A' is the holding of A, and while B starts a new part as a turning. B' not only holds part B, but also finishes the whole song as a closing and ends with a main chord.

      Such structural attributes provide C-pop with a linear narrative. Many

Chinese music scholars such as Tian Qing have pointed out the characteristic of Chinese traditional music that gives priority to the main melodic line, so that 'Chinese music essentially materializes unique linear musical thoughts' (Tian 1986). Besides, through a long history, most Chinese traditional musical instruments such as *qin*, *zheng*, *erhu*, *suona*, and *sheng* developed with their own distinguishing timbre, unlike western instruments which '[seek] for the pervasion and syncretization of different instruments'. [33] Therefore, Chinese music is not intended to be 'solid' and 'harmonically extended' but aims for a 'transversely linear music language outspread and expanded, in order to produce a fluctuating cadence' (Liu 1994). As a part of Chinese music influenced by a long history of conventional musical thought, C-pop naturally follows and displays a linear musical quality.

Compared with Western pop, which displays a more liberated style, C-pop is mainly arranged in a conventional manner. The majority of mainstream C-pop songs follow such a pattern; the three songs I provide above reflect a change from breakthrough back to convention. The song examples from the 1980s and 1990s are somewhat irregular in their song structure; on the other hand, the one from the 2000s shows the very regular structured style of present-day C-pop, which has returned to the traditional linear and planar form.

5.3.2 From Liberated to Formulaic

My personal experience transcribing the notation also shows how C-pop has changed from the 1980s to the present. As I mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter, for the 1980s and 1990s song examples, it seems possible to provide a notation that can produce a sound effect similar to that of the song recording, though not exactly the same. On the other hand, the song example of the 2000s, 'Two Butterflies', provides a totally different result: the sound effect from the notation is almost identical with the recording. In fact, transcribing 'Two Butterflies' did not take as much time as 'Nothing to My Name' and 'Sister Drum'. Since it is so formulaic, most of the time I was able just to edit four bars, and then copy and paste. The chord progression was even the same: I—VI—II—V throughout most of the song, apart from bars 26-29

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[33] The distinguishing timbre of Chinese traditional musical instruments is also due to the fact that they were originally used for solo performance. For more information about these musical instruments and their history, please see Jian 2004, Liang and Pan 1996.

(I—III—VI—V). The structure, rhythm and harmonic texture are all formulaic. After a little more work, the final sound effect was also accurate.

The situation of transcribing 'Nothing to My Name' and 'Sister Drum' was different. Individually chosen instruments (such as the flute and *suona* in 'Nothing to My Name', and the female chanting voice and *suona* in 'Sister Drum') and liberated harmonic progressions, even the free improvisational singing style, all made the music individualized; and that is what C-pop songs of the 2000s such as 'Two Butterflies' lack. From the aspect of music-making, the three songs over three decades display a fundamental musical change in C-pop, from irregular to regular in musical pattern, from liberated to formulaic in musical structure.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Whatever its period of origin, the music of C-pop places considerable attention on the foreground—the main melody (and this is a historical characteristic of Chinese music generally); on the other hand, the background is relatively weakly structured. Throughout the period, the dynamic rhythmic features of C-pop reflect dual influences from both traditional culture and western music, with the traditional still preponderating over the western. This suggests that those involved in C-pop, both music-makers and spectators, are sensitive to melody or tune but not so attentive to details of harmony and rhythm.

In 'Nothing to My Name' from the 1980s, the song structure is very clearly individual and finely tuned to the song itself. By the time of creation of 'Two Butterflies' in the 2000s, however, C-pop had become industrially mass produced and its music displays formulaic constructions, where the overall form of one song differs little if at all from the next.

Part Three

The Milieus of C-pop

Part Two proposed and discussed a tripartite correlation between music, music-maker and music-receiver, looking at how they interact with each other in pairs and the outcomes of these interactions in the sound of C-Pop over time. In this part I examine the cultural settings of C-pop, again with a focus on change over the period in question. Such a focus reflects the dynamic and fluid nature not only of popular music but also of cultural life in general. As Street comments, 'culture is a verb' (Street 1997: 23), and we should interpret culture as something that is always on the move (Guan 1994: 1-11; Nieto 2002: 11; Williams 1976: 81). Ochs too supports this view, emphasising how individuals and society construct one another through ongoing social interaction within which shared meanings emerge (Ochs and Schieffelin 1983). It is moreover 'dialogic' in nature, as Morgan and Cain noted in their study of language and cultural learning (Morgan and Cain 2000: 18-22). In this part, therefore, I look at how a fluid cultural fabric emerges around C-pop through the ongoing exchanges between music, music-maker and music-receiver, diagrammatized as following:
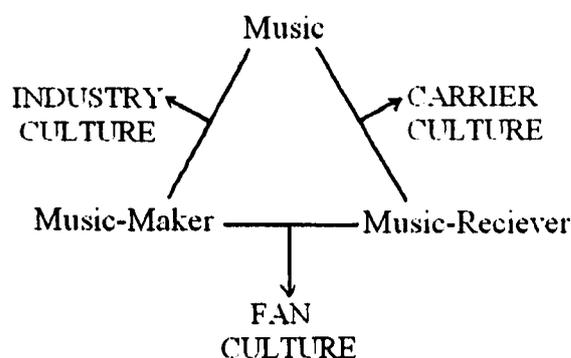
Figure 3: Model of three dependent cultures in C-pop

Each interacting pair in the diagram generates a 'dependent culture' of its own, which I identify as fan culture, carrier culture and industry culture respectively and to which I allocate one chapter apiece in turn.[1] I prefer 'dependent cultures' to the

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[1] Certainly, within the whole process from pop music-making to its dissemination, many aspects are involved, such as studio culture, recording culture, business culture, and the agency of producers and engineers. However, the division of fan culture, carrier culture and industry culture encompasses all these facets; therefore, I use three cultures to cover them all in this part of my writing.

more established term 'subculture.' A subculture refers to a certain group of people who hold common cultural values in a group which is differentiated from the larger culture to which they belong, whether in sociological, anthropological or cultural studies. The most striking feature of a subculture is its relationship with mainstream culture, which can include the possibility that it might turn into a majority culture over time.[2] A dependent culture, meanwhile, is a cultural formation based on a certain relationship that is recognised by all those involved as only part of a wider whole (and not as a distinct taste-based choice set against a mainstream). Thus 'fan culture' cannot be denoted as a subculture of C-pop culture, since it exists only in relation to the actions of industry and carrier culture.

The chapters that follow examine each correlation between these dependent cultures. Since each comes from and reflects a certain interrelation of music and people, they act like a symbol for that particular interrelation. In common usage, a symbol is something that stands for certain things, as discussed within linguistics and later semiotics through philosophical studies, such as Eco's research on language (1984) and Deely's study of semiotics (1990). Numerous writers in music studies too have drawn on semiotic explanations, among them Richard Middleton who points out that, 'there are strong arguments that music inhabits a semiological realm which, on both ontogenetic and phylogenetic levels, has developmental priority over verbal language' (Middleton 1990: 172). Generally, many such popular music studies aim to uncover the symbolic meaning of 'music itself' by interpreting sounds and their immediate socio-cultural emplacement. This part of my study, on the other hand, does not aim to provide semiological interpretations of C-pop songs, but rather to reveal the underlying meanings of different correlations from the wider field of musical activities surrounding the creation and consumption of C-pop.

Hence, Chapter 6 examines the fan culture of C-pop. It demonstrates that the correlation between music-maker and music-receiver may begin as a 'trading relationship' (a bring-and-buy relationship centred on the musical work) but that it typically becomes an 'engaging relationship' within which those on each side strive to participate, draw closer and even win over the other. Within such a relationship, C-pop fans seek to move from an 'invisible' position (behind the stars) to a 'visible' one (beside the stars). This chapter detects the corresponding transformation of the

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[2] For more details on 'subculture' see Gelder 2007; Hebdige 1988; Slobin 2000.

relationship between music-maker and music-receiver, grounded in acts of 'musical consumption', through which fans reposition themselves in relation to music and music-makers.

Chapter 7 sheds light on the carrier culture of C-pop as a whole. This section demonstrates how the relationship between music and music-receiver has varied, from an aural age (relying on transmission media such as radio and cassette) to a visual age (through the medium of MTV and live concerts), and then to an individualized, personal age (enabled by media such as mobile phones, the internet and mass contests). The latest music carriers give the music-receiver a more direct, enhanced facility in receiving, or even making, music individually. In this age, music is no longer only aural or even visual material that places the music-receiver in a passive mode; instead, new media provide the opportunity and a new means for music-receivers to make music themselves. This chapter identifies the transformations of the relationship between music and music-receiver based on these evolving forms of 'music transmission'.

Chapter 8 focuses on shifts in the relationship between music and music-maker, making obvious the evolution of C-pop from a product-centred industry chain to a people-centred 'star industry' chain. This change will be discerned from the perspective of the correlation between music and music-maker, with an emphasis placed on associated changes in 'music production'. These three chapters together reveal why and how musicality has developed over time in C-pop due to the interplay of its cultural milieus.

Chapter 6

Fan Culture

The contents of this chapter show how the relationship between music-maker and music-receiver turned from one based on trade to one founded on engagement, and considers the parallel evolution of fan culture. The role of the fan in C-pop music activities is that of an earner, not just a payer, and a participant rather than merely a consumer. This situation demonstrates the democratic nature of C-pop, which has exerted a long term influence on C-pop musicality. Fans, who once identified primarily with individual songs, now tend to identify with specific singers.

Fan culture evolved in parallel with the interaction and correlation between music-maker and music-receiver. 'Fandom' is not the main focus in this chapter, however, as my intention is not to concentrate on the place or role of the music-receiver.[3] Likewise, although fan culture has lately been shaped rapidly by the idol phenomenon in C-pop, my main task in this part is not to explore the rise of that phenomenon or its associated social and psychological viewpoints. Instead, the main purpose of this chapter is to understand C-pop fan culture through interpreting the characteristic attributes and existing patterns within the C-pop fans' community, and so to probe into people's attention to and 'consumption' of music. Doing so reveals how C-pop music has changed along with the evolution of fan culture from a trading-based relationship to a relationship of engagement.

Previous studies of the issue of idol worship have made an effort to outline the general reasons or outcome from the perspectives of psychology and sociology (Baym 2000; Lewis 1992; Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv and Ben-Horin 1995: 631-650; Yan and Xu 2004: 35-37; Yue and Yan 2006; Song and Jin 2002: 1-7). Even so, such studies are few and short in length. Those in C-pop mostly neglect the power of fans to inspire change on the part of the idol, and so pay too little attention to the correlation between idol and fans (Cheng and Chen 2001: 19-21; Wu and Wu 2003; Hao and Feng 2000: 22-29).

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[3] The term 'fandom' has been discussed with regard to some popular and public social activities, such as football and pop music. Western studies mostly focus on examining the role of fandom in contemporary Western society (and sometimes communities) through discussion of issues such as social class, power, identity, and gender, in order to build an understanding of fandom as a kind of media reception or participatory behaviour (Harris and Alexander 1998; Staiger 2005; Hellekson and Busse 2006; Jenkins 2006). In popular music study, fandom has been studied through perspectives ranging from the cultural economy to interpretations of the reception of certain music, videos and so on; most of them rely on social scientific, psychological or even economic points of view (Lewis 1992).

My study is based on people's interactive behaviours, since these can be seen as a sign of how this cultural sphere is changing and what impact is generated in the wider C-pop culture. It is important to understand the implications of these interactions within popular music culture beyond looking at how the world of fandom is created and how it is experienced by the fan. In addition, there are very few short articles of importance on this subject matter in the field of C-pop study, let alone any study that makes obvious the causality between fan culture and C-pop culture. Therefore, in order to examine in depth the change in the relationship between fans and idols, I first clarify the power of fans.

6.1 THE POWER OF FANS

What kind of attributes do fans show in C-pop culture? What is the role of fans in C-pop? Do fans possess power over their idol?

6.1.1 Fans in Chinese Culture, Fans in C-pop: A Combative Group

Throughout its long history, China has been a country of various musical forms and different schools; in the old days the playgoers were fans of different Chinese traditional dramas and various well-known performers. To take *Yue Opera* (*Yue ju*)[4] as an example, in the first half of the last century in old Shanghai fans showed fanatical preference for their favourite famous performers. At that time, whenever a performance started, there were scenes of fan groups cursing or even fighting with each other, just for the sake of supporting their own beloved performer.

In the twenty-first century, the same scenario frequently occurs in the pop domain. The latest instance is the conflict between the fan groups of the two singers Zhang Liangying and Li Yuchun. Since the two girls became well-known from the Super Female Voice competition, fans have compared the two young singers favouring their own idol. For example in an online survey entitled 'The Satisfaction of The Public Image of Celebrities', Zhang Liangying was placed third and Li Yuchun (who possesses a large number of fans) was only placed at 106. Li's fans became enraged.

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[4] *Yue Ju*, a traditional drama is also referred to as Shaoxing Opera in English language readings. The drama, originally from Zhejiang Province is traceable to the end of the Qing dynasty. For further details please refer to Luo 1999.

Almost at the same time, Li Yuchun was selected as the First Beauty of Sichuan Province in another website activity, and in turn, Zhang Liangying's fans disputed this. They posted topics in chat rooms on different websites and started arguing as follows:

Liang Fen:

'Li Yuchun? There is not even any rumour about her having an affair with anyone... she's a beauty? She's a transvestite, she is Mr. Lady.'

'The First Beauty of Sichuan goes to Li Yuchun? Did they ask us? Does she have a partner? A girl?'

'Li Yuchun is out of date.'

'If you are only comparing those who are beautiful, rather than those who are handsome, how come our Liangying lost?'

'Li Yuchun's face is full of wrinkles.'

'Hmm... this result must be the one that was PAID FOR by those Yu Mi.'

Yu Mi:

'Grandma Zhang Liangying looks so disgusting, is she 24? Looks 34! Makes me feel sick.'

'When Zhang Liangying gives a concert she has to give the tickets to the audience for free, and then perform well on the stage. Why do you dress like a whore? It's really kind of a "sow, when washed, returns to the muck".'

'Oh, I've already vomited, God, I wasted my breakfast, don't let me see Zhang's face.'

'Zhang is just a redneck!'

'Did a Liang Fen die yesterday? God bless her, hope in her next life she doesn't become a Liang Fen again.' [5]

Such arguments are very simple and often take place between the two fan groups. This is not only a simple argument about the idol and her music, it is also a kind of assault and personal abuse. The fans are aggressive towards their idol's rival in an extreme and irrational way, and even implicate the idol's past and their parents. Why fans in C-pop are combative towards each other like this is an interesting question that needs further research.

Although the scholar Yue Xiaodong gave an analysis of the fans'

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[5] http://www.tianya.cn/publicforum/content/funinfo/1/1324604.shtml, access date: 18-12-2008. This was the aggressive argument between the two fan groups in the public forum www.tianya.cn. 'Liang Fen' is the group name of Zhang Liangying's fans, 'Yu Mi' indicates Li Yuchun's fans. I give a detailed explanation of the derivation of these two names in section 6.3.2.

psychological attachment to the idol they worshipped, and listed some of the reasons as the psychological needs of equalization, opposition, admiration, recognition, release and so on (Yue 2007: 239); in fact, Yue Xiaodong neglects another point: the need for ownership. This aspect not only reflects on the role of fans in C-pop, but furthermore can go deep into the issue of the change in the relationship between idol and fans.

6.1.2 The Role of Fans in C-pop

Yue Xiaodong also did research on the change in idols during the evolution of Chinese culture, including political idols, cultural idols and artistic idols, which now also refers to pop idols. However, this study did not touch upon the role and power of C-pop fans, what impact the fans had on C-pop, and the change in the relationship between idols and fans. Obviously, all these factors have an influence on C-pop culture and C-pop's musicality.

Scholar Du Junfei once mentioned, 'In my generation, many of us were supporters of Cui Jian, but we never thought we might play a role in his music career. We were only admirers and advocates. However, nowadays fans possess a very strong 'emic' consciousness, they are even able to be the planner, the pusher or the promoter.'[6] Therefore, we may perceive that the role of fans in C-pop nowadays has become one of a number of driving forces, a motivator. This may explain why fans also behave like defenders of their idols, because to those fans, their idol partly consists of the support of the fans themselves.

> She was our choice (since Li was the winner in the Chinese version of Pop
> Idol—Super Girl), she is our Chun Chun (the nick name the fans give to Li Yuchun).
> We need and we will protect her from all the affronts by all means.[7]

Therefore, we can perceive one message from a claim such that, in Yu Mi's eyes, they own Li Yuchun just as Li Yuchun owns them. This cognition also propels fans to imitate their idol, for the sake of being and looking similar to their idol. As shown in figure 3-1 below, a Yu Mi girl chose the same hairstyle as Li Yuchun. As a journalist friend reported on a website, in 2006 when Li Yuchun was in most favour,

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[6] Du, personal blog, http://blog.sina.com.cn/sunyunxiao for further detail, access date: 04-08-2007.
[7] Zhou Moran, one of Yu Mi, interview, 13-06-2007, Beijing.

the most popular hairstyle for girls was Li Yuchun's style (figure 3-2).

Figure 3-1: *Li Yuchun's poster and one of her fans (picture from Yinsha.com)*

Figure 3-2: *Hairdressing as Li Yuchun: A fan asks the hairdresser to cut the same hairstyle as Li Yuchun (picture from Yinsha.com)*[8]

In Alber Bandura's study of 'imitation' in his psychological interpretation of

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[8] Chen Kaijie: http://zjphoto.yinsha.com/file/200605/2006052509405367.htm, access date: 18-12-2008.

social learning theory, he pointed out that a youth's idol worship can be understood as a kind of 'direct modelling' of the person they highly recognized and identified with (Bandura 1977: 30-31). Therefore, in fact, such imitation from the fans' angle is a psychological and practical behaviour that integrates themselves with their idol. As Bennett argues, pop music is produced and consumed by youth in ways that both construct the social world in which their identities operate and inform their sense of self (Bennett 2000). For the fans, protecting their idol is the same as protecting themselves: the alternative for them would be to doubt their choice (of being his or her fans).

However, when the fans feel an idol needs their support and protection, such a protective consciousness endows fans with a power which becomes a driving force or a motivator to influence the idol. One case is a good example here: at the beginning of 2006, pop band Hua'er (literally meaning 'flower') became involved in a scandal about plagiarizing a song from Japanese pop band 'Puffy'. In order to support Hua'er, the fans stated:

> 'The people (who said Hua'er is plagiarizing) are delirious…'
> 'Hua'er did not plagiarize…'
> 'So what? Even if Hua'er did plagiarize, I still like them… plagiarizing? So what?!'
> 'Oh, plagiarizing is such big matter? How about those who sing the songs cover versions? Is it a big deal?'[9]

With this kind of support, Hua'er did not admit they were plagiarizing, but simply apologized once without mentioning their plagiarism. In the end, authentication by a group of professional musicians showed that this particularly controversial song was plagiarized by Hua'er, but it did not change the fans' reaction at all. Based on the analysis and comparison between the song sung by Hua'er and that sung by Puffy, Chen claimed that from the aspects of mode, structure, chord, style, way of singing, and even number of bars the two versions were surprisingly coincident; comparing the two notations revealed that they were very similar. This was not coincidence, and not imitation, this was just plagiarism (Chen 2006).

However, even with such an authentication, the leading singer Zhang Wei stated, 'Many friends argued with those idiots about this matter. I really thank you very

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[9] http://et.21cn.com/topic/star/flowers/, access date: 13-06-2007.

much.' This was the effect and outcome of the fans' irrational support. It reveals that, when the opinion of fans is being taken as a judgement, they possess the power to confound right and wrong in the C-pop domain. Also, this power of fans influences idols in how to conceive of their music-creating behaviour and how they regard the musicality of the songs they produce.

Therefore, in C-pop, we have to say that fans as a group now exist as a dynamic force in C-pop culture and music as well. Their driving force and motivating role proves and demonstrates the change in the relationship between idols and fans, and their mode of being. The fan groups always compare, compete, even conflict, with each other, in that the role of fans has changed from simple supporters to motivators. Their power has consequently been increased. The next section will explore further how this relationship has changed.

6.2 TRADING RELATIONSHIP: FROM PAYER TO EARNER

The music-receiver in C-pop fan culture has turned from 'payer' into 'earner'. They not only show interest, pay money and give support to the music, but an economy has gradually developed that is able to bring certain benefits to the fans. In this sense, the relationship between music-maker and music-receiver is one of trade.

6.2.1 Fans' Careers in Fan Culture

At a singer's news conference in summer 2007 I sat alone behind a large group of teenagers; they were the fan group of the singer. They looked rather languid; I could see no expectation or excitement in their faces, and they were waiting. Whilst waiting for the conference to start, I overheard a conversation. 'Who is she (the singer)?' 'I don't know...' 'Let me have a look at the poster.' I saw one girl was holding a paper. A member of the conference staff, one of my fieldwork informants, told me she was a girl who would go on to the stage to sing with the singer during the conference, when the singer asked for someone who could sing her song. When the conference started, the mood of the fans suddenly shifted and they appeared active, passionate and sincere. My friend on the staff lowered her voice and said to me, 'If you ask them anything about the singer's best known songs, they will not be able to answer...' This is a very common situation in the C-pop domain nowadays, although undeniably some famous

stars singing good songs may never need to use this trick. However, one thing about contemporary C-pop is revealed: the fans are no longer made up only of genuine admirers, but some who see it as advancing their career. They may not know anything about the person on stage, but they still cheer, squeal and even cry. It is rather professional, and in fact, they are 'professional' fans. As my press journalist informant said:

> These professional fans are mostly the employees of certain entertainment and recording companies. For hiring one professional fan, they pay a standard fee. In addition, if the fans behave very well during the scene, they might get some extra money, ranging from 50 to 100 Yuan, but they need to scream, even be in tears.[10]

Certainly, these professional fans are not real fans in a genuine sense. They are employees of various companies, including television, and in fact, they are one of the components of the music industry, rather than 'authentic' fans. However, because applause is the test of the performer's popularity, when the screaming and cheering for the singer and his or her performance is diluted and adulterated, the relationship between music-maker and music-receiver is not as wholesome and absolute as it used to be.

The photographs taken at Hai Mingwei's live concert in Beijing in 2007 show how heated the performance scene is at a live show (see Figs. 3-3 and 3-4). I communicated with a professional fan, Mr. Wang, via online chat, and he answered my questions about his work, saying 'It is not difficult to live up to such an atmosphere, it is organised.' He continued:

> The key to an integrated fan group is the leader. He or she is responsible for building up a leadership team for the fan group, ranging from finance and promotion to strategy and purchasing. They are designated to assume various roles, some of them wearing the same dress or holding a certain sign so that they can take charge when appearing at the star's public appearance, leading the battle cry for the stars. Some of them preside over forums on different websites that support the singer. The leader may be employed by the singer themselves or their relatives, or the singer's contract company, and it is also possible that he or she is a real fan and not financially dependent on the role.

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[10] Chen Yu, interview, 17-06-2007, Beijing.

Figure 3-3: *Fans at a live concert* (photographed by Zhao Yue, 05-09-2007, Beijing)

Figure 3-4: *A concert where the fan are wearing the same identifier to group themselves* (photographed by Zhao Yue, 05-09-2007, Beijing)

Everything he described can be found in the pictures I present above. For example, the second picture, taken from the back of the audience, shows that the behaviour of the star's fans is organised as a group. The white hat is their identifying sign. Mr Wang told me that if he worked well, the income was rather good, though he would not tell

me how much he could earn every month by being a professional fan.

Therefore the one thing demonstrated by the above depictions is that unlike fans in a traditional sense, who paid to buy music products in order to support the star they admired, the situation is now that being a fan means you can become an earner. Although the professional fans do not entirely occupy the fan culture domain in C-pop, their emergence is affecting the way fan culture relates to the idol; a relationship that used to follow a set pattern.

As mentioned above, so-called professional fans are actually one of the components of the music industry rather than 'authentic' fans. In fact, some mature fan communities of certain famed stars need to pay an annual membership fee, but on the other hand, they can still earn something back in return. For example, the famous Hong Kong star Liu Dehua (Andy Lau) has a mainland fan community that charges membership fees, but in exchange they will organise at least seven grand events where fans have the chance to get close to Andy Lau. In addition they employ five members of staff to work on behalf of the fans. The fan members may be able to win concert tickets or signed CDs, receive birthday cards from the star, and so on. Another example is the official website of rising star Zhang Liangying, which encourages fans to save points to exchange for Zhang Liangying products, the opportunity to meet the star, limited edition T-shirts with the star's logo, photos and so on, all encouraging the fans to work in support of the star.

All in all, when fans work as a community, whether they are 'professional' or 'genuine' fans of the stars, this collectivized behaviour endows the members of fan culture with a sense of career; no matter whether they are paid or un-paid. The most striking aspect of this collectivized 'career' is that fans pay attention to the idol in order to gain attention from the idol. The trading relationship from payer to earner reflects a gradually maturing fan culture in C-pop, although it can be argued that the existence of 'professional' fans has had a rather negative impact on the music's significance. At least, the development of a fans' career means both the stars and the fans benefit (not only financially) from their relationship.

6.2.2 Fans' Economy in Fan culture

The activities within the relationship between music-maker and music-receiver not only gave impetus to the emergence of career fans, but directly created a fans'

economy within fan culture. The following discussion will reveal how the trading relationship of this derivative economy in fan culture substantively interferes with the musical development of C-pop, although ostensibly it results in a state of prosperity.

Career fans emerged as a result of different idol competitions promulgated by television companies. However, this state of fan culture in C-pop has, to a certain extent, impacted on the whole music industry, and it has also placed a premium on deviation from C-pop's normal pattern of existence. The most striking and significant contrivance is the fan economy. Idol competitions are shown to large audiences who vote in order to support their stars. This has given rise to a new form of business, 'voting companies', who handle the technical side of dealing with such large numbers of telephone and text messages. On a voting company's website, one can find different ways to vote - internet voting, text message voting, group messaging voting and so on. Whilst they provide an agency service to help people to vote, they also ensure the data that customers give is confidential, especially the name of the singer supported, which assures all the entertainment correspondents of secret voting. But they do substantially more than this. I telephoned such a company during my field trip in Beijing in 2007, when the Super Boy (Chaoji Nansheng) competition was taking place within the nation. The conversation was as follows:

(Telephone conversation)

Q: 'May I ask, I would like to vote for a singer from Nanjing, how do I do it through your service?'

A: 'How many votes do you want to offer? Our price is one Yuan a message, this is the market price.'

Q: 'Oh... I thought you could offer something cheaper than one Yuan? It is the same if I vote by myself...'

A: 'Oh, don't you know, if you vote more, we can offer you a discount, over 10,000 and I can give you 10% off. Also, if you do it yourself, how many votes can you have in one go? At the most 15 votes. We are using an advanced technique, we can send 10,000 messages in one minute. If you are afraid of being deceived, you can come to my company and see for yourself, how much do you want to vote?'

Q: 'Well, about 5,000'

A: 'What?! Only 5,000? Let me tell you, it won't be enough, is the singer not your relative? Think about the scene last night, one singer got more than 150,000 votes in 15 minutes; can you send that many in such a short time?'

Q: 'Er... why can't I?'

A: 'You... think about it, if the singers rely only on the fans to vote, they won't win the competition. How many relatives can you have? How many friends can you have? How many fans would like to vote? In total it won't be more that a few thousand... the singers who are winning at moment all pull strings to get support, surely, a great economic strength.'

Q: 'Well, do other singers do things like this? I really don't know how many votes I need to give in order to compete with those singers.'

A: 'If you are only thinking of 10,000, I recommend you not to vote, useless! Meaningless! Honestly, it is just like an investment, you pay me, I guarantee the singer you support can win step by step, and if not, we are responsible for that.'

Q: 'Oh, how do you do that? '

A: 'We use a particular type of software, you don't need to worry about it, if you come to my company you will know...'[11]

From the conversation above we can see that nowadays a singer's rise may be fuelled by the fans' economy as well as the fan culture in C-pop, although no one can deny the existence of 'real' fans, since singers must have sufficient initial support in order to reach the competition stage. However, as the informant told me in the telephone conversation above, 'The people who pay lots of money to the voting company are normally either the relatives of the contestants or powerful and rich fans'. Thus, the singer is the product of value for consumers in the newly-emerged fans' economy in C-pop. As Jiang Xiaoyu pointed out during a live chat show on Yahoo China:

> I remember that before, I believed everyone used to like certain stars, but I think we were in song (or music) fandom. For instance, I liked Cui Jian, I liked Luo Dayou, that was because I liked their music, we were fans too. If there was commercial behaviour between a fan and a singer at that time, it would consist of buying the recording, attending the concert, and it was logical. We used our commercial behaviour to support the singer's core value, which was 'music'. Only for the music, we listened to the recordings and concerts. Now fandom is only around the singer, fans consume the singer, EVERYTHING about the singer, even just a cup with the singer's photo on...[12]

We might discern that the core value in C-pop nowadays has turned from the

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[11] Phone call communication with an agent from a voting company, 29-05-2007, Beijing.
[12] Jiang Xiaoyu, 30-03-2007 Beijing, interviewed by Yahoo China. Personally recorded, can also be found at Yahoo China: *Interviews*.

music to the singer, with the singer becoming the fans' consuming passion. One thing which should be noted here is that the sense of the singer's popularity engulfs that of their music, and the shift in core values of appreciation within fan culture, derives from public relations strategies within the culture industries generally and the music industry in particular. Although this is deemed as maintaining 'long-term relationships with consumers' and also defined as 'the promotional culture'(Fairchild 2007: 355-75), relative studies in the field known as 'public relations' have failed to show what qualitative changes have occurred as a result of manipulations by fan culture within the music industry.[13]

In fact, the relationship between music-maker and music-receiver, one of employer and employee, has been reversed, since the employer (singers) is chosen by the employee (fans). The idol phenomenon, and its derivative fan culture and fan economy is only the means by which this situation is activated, but it pushes the C-pop industry as a whole towards this new state. As Zhang Yadong once said, 'To produce music for Li Yuchun is a strange feeling, as she's famous already because she is the winner of an idol competition. For sure, in that sort of programme, she could only sing other people's songs. Now she is already famous, and my music production on her behalf is much expected by the audience before it comes out, even before I write the song.'[14] As a result, music has now become a matter that is considered after a singer's rise to fame.

We might suppose that this employing relationship restricts music production, which might also reflect the primary relationship moving towards 'idol and fan' rather than 'music and fan', although in principle the link between music-maker and music-receiver is the music. In the new fan culture the fans form the linchpin; therefore in the power struggle between music-maker and music-receiver, the latter is the determinant.

6.3 ENGAGING CORRELATION:
FROM CONSUMER TO PARTICIPANT

Contemporary fan culture is not only brought the 'professional' fan groups and fans'

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[13] This is because they talk more about the contradictions between the rhetoric of rebellion and the complicated realities of corporate success (Frank 1997; Negus 1999).

[14] Zhang Yadong, interview, 11-11-2007, Beijing.

economy to C-pop, but has also changed the self-identity of the fans from consumers to participants. In the previous trading relationship, fans had choice; however, when this relationship turned into an engaging relationship that also endowed productivity, fans began to further possess a governing role. In other words, the financial payout bestows music-receivers with a prominent role in which they can determine the star life of the singers, and are also able to alter the operating fashion of the music industry, consequently transferring the relationship between the two into one of engagement. Therefore the following section details how fan groups have become a determinant factor in the C-pop domain due to their newly-rising productivity, and have also accordingly become an important component of the whole music industry chain.

6.3.1 Participation as Productivity

Fiske once claimed that 'popular culture is produced by the people out of the products of the cultural industries: it must be understood, therefore, in terms of productivity, not of reception', and all productivity 'occurs at the interface between the industrially-produced cultural commodity (narrative, music, star, etc.) and the everyday life of the fan' (1992: 38). Fans play a major role in various music activities: they always take part, whether in idol phenomena or the news conferences held to launch new music (as I mentioned before).

Sometimes this is displayed as interactivity, sometimes as fans' voluntary behaviour, and some fans even exceed their duties and interfere in the normal operation of the singer's work. I interviewed a fan whom I met on the street in 2007 when, with a group of her peers, she was promoting their idol to the passers-by. The young girl told me, 'I hope my idol can win over the competition, and as a fan, I wish I could help... so we decided to do what we can, such as leave supportive messages on the website, promote the idol to our friends and relatives or whoever, in the hope they can encourage us by sending messages to vote and so on. Like today, we came onto the street, and even if we can only influence a small number people that's enough, at least we have done something for the people we admire'.

As Fiske pointed out: 'The reverence, even adoration, fans feel for their object of fandom sits surprisingly easily with the contradictory feeling that they also "possess" that object, it is *their* popular cultural capital' (1992: 41). The participation of fans not only occurs in idol phenomena as supporters, but has also pervaded the pop

industry, especially the promotion of its products (whether this product is the music or the singer) because the fans' taste is the criterion for success. As some professional producers have already noticed, 'Sometimes, a powerful fan group even overwhelms our role during music production, they design how to disseminate the singer and the singles, some of them even deprecate us. They even make up a whole series of packaging and promotional materials, and negotiate with us...'.[15] As Tulloch and Moran noted, the pop industry takes seriously letters from fans who are willing to participate in and then influence the production and distribution of its products (1986: 84).

This situation is becoming more and more common in the present-day C-pop domain: singers and their contract companies start considering fans' attention and creativity in order to obtain better interaction. For example, a new activity, in fact a bidding, launched at the beginning of 2008, was named as 'fans' wish for the star' (fensi xingyuan), which is held by *Youth's Weekend Press* (*qingnian zhoumo*). This activity picked up thirteen fan groups, and put the initiative right into the fans' hands, letting them design the star's activities in detail by asking for their ideas. Such a situation also happens in soap opera fandom, since the soap opera fans always feel that they know the characters better and could write better storylines than the scriptwriters (Fiske 1987). Also 'the idea that stars are constructed by their fans and owe their stardom entirely to them', and 'fandom typically lacks the deference to the artist and text that characterizes the bourgeois habitus' (Lewis 1992: 40).

Therefore, the participation of fans determines not only whether the singer is successful or not, but also plays a vital role in the operational mode of the entertainment industry. As an example, Liu Xiaolei the duty CEO from *Ifensi* website (www. Ifensi.com, which is a fans website) once said: 'We found the core value of the fans in the music industry, that is why we founded a website especially for fans... Nowadays the entertainment industry has to consider the fans' needs first, for in the end they are the true leading players.'[16] Another fans' website even has 'No fans, no entertainment industry: overturn the traditional operational mode of the industry' as their main slogan. As a result, the ground and platform of fan culture has become bigger and bigger, stronger and stronger. Besides, the fan economy is also no longer centred just on the idol, but has gradually developed with 'fan-related' products, such

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[15] Wang Jiandong, interview, 14-01-2008, Shenyang.
[16] Liu Xiaolei, interview, 10-05-2007, Beijing.

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as uniform dresses, decorations and various small goods for promotion; different websites have also emerged to serve the fans.

All this is the consequence of the determining power of the fans: more accurately, it is due to the influential and potent productivity of the music-receiver side being detected by the music-makers. Fans used to be the group overlooked by the pop industry, they were just the crowd who passively accepted the music in the market; however fans groups have now developed their own kind of productivity in the pop music industry and have become a sort of career and economy (Fiske 1992: 30-49). Fiske proposed three categories of fans' productivity: semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity, and textual productivity. The first two signify the production of meanings of social identity and of social experience from the semiotic resources of the cultural commodity. In this theory, the semiotic is essentially interior; the enunciative is acquired as a public form when meanings are spoken and also shared amongst fans, and textual productivity is about audiences' reworking through the creation of parodies. However, in C-pop, the productivity of fans is real in a commercial sense since it produces factual commercial benefits; the solid productivity of fan culture makes the music-receiver possess priority status within the C-pop industry chain. The increasing power of this particular group of people is also mirrored in their systematization and institutionalization.

6.3.2 Institutionalized Participation

Interestingly, each group of fans is named with a pronunciation similar to the idol's name. Li Yuchun's fans are called 'yu mi' (meaning 'Yuchun's fans'), the pronunciation of 'yu mi' also sounds like 'sweet corn', so all her fans always dress in yellow and call themselves 'sweet corn' (See figures 3-5 and 3-6). Zhang Liangying's fans are called 'liang fen' (similarly meaning 'Liangying's fans'), which also sounds the same as 'rice noodle'. Zhang's fans therefore normally call themselves 'rice noodles'. To group themselves under different names demonstrates that fans are no longer an anonymous crowd, they are just like the symbols and icons representing each fan group. Such an institutionalization is not only collectivized, but also systematized.

Figure 3-5: *'Yu mi', Li Yuchun's fans*[17]

Figure 3-6: *Li Yuchun with her fans*[18]

Fan communities are normally well-organized and structured, and take themselves seriously. Their self-organized activities have been described as following:

(Zhang Liangying's fans community) founded five functioning sections: the

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[17] Li Yunchun's fans all dress in yellow to indicate their identity as 'yu mi', which is pronounced as 'sweet corn' in Chinese. In the picture, they welcomed Li Yuchun's arrival at Chongqing airport in 2006 (Picture from Huashang Recording Company).
[18] Li Yuchun in the middle with her fans (all dressed in yellow), picture from Sina.com.

dissemination, project planning, finance, organisation and supervision, scene organisation. They plan, discuss, make decisions together; also draft out, establish and recompose the rules for the members, and publicize every regulation. Everything is democratized.[19]

Besides, as a (newly joined) fan from a fan community told me: 'Yes, I consume, but I can promote my idol to others as well. One good thing in such a community is that you can get promotion too; I mean you can become a leader at different levels. When you are not just a normal fan but a functionary or principal, you get more opportunities to produce "side-products".'[20] Fan communities possess an attribute of organizational modality, and also a hierarchical structure resembling a multi-level marketing institution.

6.3.3 Fans as One Component of the Music Industry Chain

The C-pop industry has been much changed in recent years, first by developments in technology, and then by the changes brought about by the newly dominant position of fans. The status of fan culture in C-pop is changing from 'invisible' (behind the stars) to 'visible' (beside the stars). The invisible state determines that the music-receiver stands back as a supporter, and music is the subject supported; in the visible state the music-receiver becomes a claimant, and music is the subject claimed.

The most significant change induced by fan culture is that music becomes an 'all-out' entertainment. Fans do not stand behind the idols and support them by buying their CD, videos or whatever; they come out and stand in front of the person on stage and shout out, 'We are supporting you.' If we say the idols were sustained by the fans in the past, where music was mostly held in appreciation; then now they are encompassed by the fans, where music is principally an expectation.

As John Fiske pointed out, the greatest difference between fans and ordinary audience members can be identified from whether they are behaving 'excessively', and the distinctive feature of fandom is 'discrimination' and 'distinction' between one group and another (Fiske 1992). Thus, we can discern from a fan's declamation, 'I am *someone*'s fan' that the principle attribute of a fans' community is revealed—'fan' is a

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[19] Zhou Zhi, 'Explicating Idol Show' (Jiedu xuanxiu jiemu), *Chinese Youth Press* (Zhongguo Qingnian Bao), 26-08-2005.
[20] Li Peng, interview, 09-05-2007, Beijing.

declaration of self-determination, and fan culture is an incarnation substantiated by this declaration. The fan community in C-pop has been moving towards becoming an institutionalized commune; it empowers fans with more initiative. This is not to say that fan culture will overthrow mainstream cultural creativity, but the modality of fan culture endows fans as music-receivers with the capability of formulating their desires to shape music-making. Therefore in a sense the evolution of fan culture is responsible music being turned into a 'claimed' subject.

6.3.4 Fans as the Target of the Music Industry Chain

During my fieldwork, the words I heard most often when sitting listening to the schemes and ideas of groups of musicians and producers were 'market demand,' 'the taste of the fans' and so on. Fans have become one link in the holistic C-pop industry chain, located as both target and launching point. As the CEO of the *Ifensi* website Wang Jipeng said:

> The function of fans, or we might call them the end consumers, was underrated
> before. The most important thing is the audience's favour, and their reorganization
> and approbation are based on being participant... the function of fans mirrors the
> strength of the grassroots, strong fans support can make an ordinary person became
> a star in a short time. It totally overturns the customary star-shaping formula.[21]

The fans' role as 'end consumer' reflects that the music-receivers take priority within the music-maker's consideration, for they are empowered to characterize and situate the cultural product: in this case, C-pop. The music-receiver therefore is not only the end consumer, but also the initial pointer; when new music is released, 'return to the fans' and 'take a bow to the fans' are the most common sayings from the music-making side. Therefore C-pop is now essentially headed for a democratic mode of production and existence.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This examination of fan culture demonstrates how the relationship between

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[21] Wang Jipeng, interview, 29-07-2007, Beijing.

music-maker and music-receiver has turned from an initial trading-based relationship into a relationship based on engagement, revealing also how the fans' consumption and attention has shifted from music to the present-day 'person'—the stars. The power struggle between music-maker and music-receiver has resulted in the dominance of the latter, with the music-receiver now forming a driving force which even directs C-pop music. This is one of the factors demonstrating that the musicality of C-pop is evolving into a democratic form of mass amusement.

However, it is important to consider the music carriers. Without the new television programmes, Internet and mobile text messaging, it would be difficult for fans to express their choices or even express themselves. These media technologies carry music and musical activities into circulation. They are important elements that have enabled the current situation in the C-pop domain to come into being. Therefore, in the next section, I shall consider the carrier culture in C-pop.

Chapter 7

Carrier Culture

This chapter focuses on carrier culture in the C-pop domain. This culture exhibits the character of 'liquid modernity,' highlighted by Bauman (and mentioned at the beginning of this thesis). Here the contrast is between a 'heavy and solid' state focused on hardware and that of a 'light and liquid' software-based state; one which has no fixed spatial shape or duration (Bauman 2000: 1-15).

The transformation of the predominant means of musical transmission has had a profound effect on the development and evolution of music. Since the 1960s, new waves of music have washed across the popular music domain in China. From the Jazz, country, and folk of the early days to rock and blues, right through to the R&B and hip-hop of the present, different types of music have burst through one by one to receive mass public attention. They have been facilitated by technological change, from radio broadcasts to LP recordings, through cassettes to CDs and DVDs, and by way of karaoke and MTV, to the MP3 player and digital downloads. The role of technology in the making and dissemination of music has been studied by scholars such as Timothy D. Taylor, by looking at the wonder and anxiety that have been provoked by the technological revolution (2001). Others have also examined the influence of changing technology on pop music (Goodwin 2004: 147-172; Frith 1986: 263-279; Manuel 1993; Warner 2003). We can see that the medium of music transmission has undergone a tremendous revolution through continuous technological innovation and development.

In C-pop, as in other genres, the music-receiver's listening mode has been influenced by these changes in the method of conveying music—the music carriers. For the transmission of C-pop, scholar Bao Zhaohui considers CD, DVD, MD, MP3 and so on to be new media and divides them into categories: digital media, for instance CD, DVD and so forth; televisual media, such as MTV and karaoke; and internet media, for example Flash, MP3, electronic music (Bao 2004: 2). Furthermore, in the view of many musicians and producers, media for music circulation can also be seen as the following: print media, audio media, television, broadcasting, the Internet and the mobile phone. Whether the medium stores the music such as a disc, or is the actual playing device, such as a CD player, they are all carriers for the music. This is the

reason I use 'carrier' in this chapter to indicate them all, since they include not only the musical sound carrier such as CDs, but also the music transmitting carriers such as television and carriers of musical culture such as entertainment magazines.

Therefore, it is necessary for C-pop researchers to look at what changes have taken place in music carriers; how pop music has altered as the existing music carriers were transformed; and what differences in C-pop music have been caused by the rise of new music carriers. The answers to these questions will shed light on the nature of the music and music-receiver alike, and the changes in experiencing music which have occurred as a result.

This chapter casts light on the carrier culture of C-pop as a whole, focusing on identifying transformations in the relationship between music and music-receiver. From an aural age with media such as radio, cassette and so on, to a visual age dominated by carriers such as MTV, then, to a self-directed age with MP3, cell phone and internet, the music receiver has tended to become more and more emancipated in terms of musical experience. On the other hand, the music-receivers are increasingly finding themselves bound to a small machine, even though they possess an expanded ability to manipulate the music available on or through that device.

7.1 MOBILE MUSIC RECEIVING, BOUND MUSIC-RECEIVERS

The following account will centre on the music receivers, and demonstrate the fact that music-receiving is now an activity requiring little mobility. It will reveal how music is now accessible to all and how music receivers are able to determine their own choice of listening with great flexibility. In addition, although there is a greater quantity of music, which signifies the expansion of the music's accessibility, it still remains that its musicality has been weakened.

7.1.1 Changeover of Music Accessibility

In the era of the old music carriers, the process by which music reached its audience was time-consuming and complicated; also the relationship between music and people was always patterned. People had to go to a concert to enjoy a performance or go to a shop to select a desired album, and music was not available whenever people needed it. However, the evolution of music carriers has since made many things possible and

attainable.

The DVD is not only a standard disc for storing video content, but also a format for delivering high-fidelity audio content, and its large capacity enables the inclusion of a considerable amount of music. Besides, currently many DVD players support all possible formats, even though the specifications for video and audio requirements vary by global region and different systems (Katz 2004: 177-210; Rumsey 2004: 210). People can monitor DVDs through other supportive features such as menus, multiple audio tracks, optional subtitles, and so on. Therefore, the DVD is 'the best way now, for storing musical work on the verge of an original sound quality... the "live effect" of a DVD makes the concert move into your living room' (Bao 2004: 5). The MP3 is the most popular music medium at this time. In May 2008 I spoke to thirty young people before a concert, to try to find out why more and more young people choose MP3. Their answers show the key reasons for this change are related to considerations of both finance and convenience: most music is free to download in China, and the Internet is the first channel used by singers and companies to release the majority of new songs. Mobile phones also support the MP3 format, which makes the music constantly to hand.

The format of new music carriers expands the role of music receivers, from 'receiver' to one of 'controller' as well, because the music receivers now hold both the means and the power of governing. Therefore, music receiving now becomes independent and autonomous. The Internet and mobile phones further stimulate and propel this 'independence' and 'autonomy'. Feng Bo runs a high-tech investment company in Beijing mainly producing mobile phone websites for the pop stars; during a meeting with him at a news conference, he stated the presumably inevitable fact that the mobile phone will gradually become the main entertainment tool for people.[22] In fieldwork, much evidence was found to lend support to his words. For example, at the same conference, I listened to the host in conversation with some key guests who were also in the entertainment industry - music producers, or others involved in the media. The common topic between them was always the development of new technology for music.

However, from DVD to MP3, from Internet to mobile, we need to consider what essential changes have happened to the relationship between music and its

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[22] Feng Bo, interview, 03-04-2007, Beijing.

receivers with these technical alterations. A concert can be moved into the home, with good quality sound and image equipment; a music archive can be stored in the pocket when people have an MP3 player; musicians can compose their own music and make it public with music software on the Internet; and mobile phones even make every enjoyment available in just a small hand device. The availability of enhanced music carriers means there is a 'shortened' or even 'zero' distance between the music and its receiver. On DVD equipment, the relationship between music and receiver can be one of appreciation (enjoying a virtual concert), but also one of entertainment (for those who amuse themselves with karaoke).[23] On the Internet, there can be a trading relationship between music and its receiver (for those buying music), a producing relationship (for those making and publishing music through the Internet),[24] but it can also be an interacting relationship (for those listening, downloading and leaving feedback). The relationship between music and receivers is unrestricted, and with a highly self-governing and autonomous audience, the relationship displays a sort of 'random' nature.

After scrutinizing the relationship between music and receivers, we notice a shortened distance between the two and the emancipated relationship between them. Any ethnomusicologists who attach importance to people's behaviour might be interested in the further question of what qualitative alteration might have been stimulated in people's behaviour along with such an emancipated relationship between the music and its receivers.

7.1.2 Quality as Musicality

The shortened distance between music and its receivers has resulted in a greater public platform for music circulation. Besides, the transformation of music carriers has brought more accessories to the music, and 'music itself' no longer means solely 'musical sound'. The visual media bring attention to image in music, the print media and internet media become a hotbed for gossip about the stars' personal life and so on.[25] Music is expanding, and is no longer an audio art, but a visual art as well.

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[23] For studies of karaoke in China, please refer to Zhou and Tarocco 2007, also Mitsui and Hosokawa 1998.
[24] Internet publications are a major issue in mainland China today. Western scholars also offer insightful studies on its technological, economical and political aspects, for example see Hughes and Wacker 2003.
[25] For C-pop, many major websites and print media such as Yahoo, Sina, MSN and 163 play an important role in increasing the exposure of singers.

However, under this weight, the musical principle has shrunk. Therefore, by giving various views from scholars, music critics, singers, producers and fans, the following account mainly focuses on the complementary relationship between the music-receivers' attention and C-pop's musicality.

Nowadays, different elements within music attract and hold people's attention, and this situation can be observed from producers' concerns when searching for new singers. For instance, when I spent some months observing the entire process of how Liu Shanshan (a new singer) released her first single, I asked why this female singer was considered promising and why she was the chosen one to be promoted. Jiang Xiaoyu, her producer and project planner made the following remarks:

> When I met her for the first time, I felt her smile was sweet. A 'beauty', she may not be. And you know, there is a 'Korean wave' in China now, young people are fascinated by Korean films, music, fashion and whatever. In fact when you look at Liu Shanshan, her eyes and her facial features, she looks like a Korean girl. China is big, you can find many talented singers, but as producers, we have to pick up someone who possesses market value... Her first single was written by me. In this song, she will sing together with a famous Korean singer, and the lyrics are half Korean too. MTV is also telling a story about the friendship between a Chinese girl and a Korean girl. We design it this way to capture the audiences' attention.[26]

Therefore, in the music-maker's view, the music-receiver's attention is considered more important than the musical work itself. To take another example, going to a concert is commonly referred to as 'seeing a concert'. Again the performance (i.e. the 'show') is more important than the music itself. So for C-pop, 'singing' is now secondary to 'showing'. As scholar Bao Zhaohui said:

> The live concert of the present-day is different from the 1980s. The singers at that time always dressed in a simple suit... the staging was simple too, and they won success by their voice, by their singing. Now, 'listening' is not the most important thing, most fans go to concert to 'watch', they focus on a stars' face, hairstyle, costumes and the dancing group. Additionally, the stage setting, lasers and the crush of spectators, are all the excitement they want while watching... fans go to concerts rather than listen to music at home, mainly because they want to 'see' the performance, especially the star's 'charismatic presence.' That is why singers now

[26] Jiang Xiaoyu, interview, 26-05-2007, Beijing.

need to be pretty or cool, in order to become an idol (Bao 2004: 51-2).

In response to such a scholarly rational view given by Bao Zhaohui, I had a conversation with Chen Qili, a fan who I met in a live concert during my fieldwork in Beijing. From her comments, notice what draws fans to go to a live concert:

> Why do I like going to live concerts? The atmosphere is good, you know, the scene is hot, and you can see the singer him or herself... I know, the singers' live performance cannot compare with the one on the CD, but the purpose for me of going to the live concert is to see the performance, not only to listen to the music. If I only want to listen, I will close my eyes and listen. I can certainly stay at home or watch the concert online, but to go to the concert is to satisfy both my eyes and ears; it's not the same... Why? If I come to the concert, I can be part of the concert...can't you see all the audience members singing along with the singer? Because the audience is being stirred up, we are aroused by the on-stage performance; the visual stimulation is more direct than the listening experience.[27]

This section does not intend to focus on decoding a performer's body language, stage performance or performing behaviour, but to consider what kind of relationship these elements have and how they impact on the music. From the observers' view as given above, we can see that music is becoming multi-layered. When people take an interest in music, their attention is distracted by those 'accessories'. If we look at music as a whole, then it is now expanding (since the main component of music making is not musical sound anymore), but the core (the musical sound itself) remains unchanged. Therefore, the weightiness of this integrated music really exposes the musical core. As singer Zheng Zhihua claimed regarding the current state of C-pop:

> The singers and producers think only of how to package, how to spin the tale of the singers, how to sensationalize the news about the singers and their albums; without thinking of the musical essence at all. 'Music' is just a dummy. Last year, I went to Broadway for Mariah Carey's concert with my daughter and wife. She sang for two hours and didn't change her costume all through the concert. The only thing she was showing off was her singing. Can you find such a concert now in China? No. All we can see is the lasers, the fire, and the singers hanging in midair. Is it a concert? It is a

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[27] Chen Qili, a fan at the Liu Dehua's Concert, interview, 02-11-2007, Beijing.

circus. The audiences are loud about it, kick up a row, they shout and keep shouting, they just want to feel high.[28]

Although the fact that the consumption of visual symbols (different images that exist within todays pop music) almost becomes an indispensable part of people's musical life, the development of this visual culture is not able to turn music culture into another socio-cultural symbol. Despite some scholars already suggesting we need to consider the visual as well as sound in musical performance (Davidson 1993: 103-113), and some of them providing research on the impact of video on popular music and arguing how popular music has been increasingly influenced by its visual economy (Banks 1996, Mundy 1999), the question of what 'pop music' really becomes has remained. Indeed, the extra components which inflate musical works, mainly the enjoyable visual images and visual symbols within music, have been given importance by many scholars from different disciplines; even thirty years ago the American sociologist Daniel Bell alleged that modern culture was becoming a visual culture rather than a print culture (Bell 1976). However, the question which needs to be determined within popular music study is the following: what is the authentic role of C-pop for the audience, now it is integrated with various new musical carriers?

Music receivers have different reasons for listening to music. The fans of a particular star might pay attention to the star as a person; on the other hand, the fans of musical equipment may give importance to the musical sound quality that comes from certain devices. About these fans, one music critic, Li Wan, who is also a well known scholar, pointed out:

> What the groupies are chasing is the star; what the hi-fi stereo fans are looking for is the equipment. One is for the sake of a legend made up by good looking and spurious packaging; the other is in the interest of the performance characteristics of stereo kit. To them, music is only the tool that can deliver a young person's dream, or the sound (Li 1997: 232).

Music therefore, becomes a carrier that delivers people's desires, although it in turn is transmitted by media carriers. From the aspect of music aesthetics, music is a medium that delivers certain connotations in its own unique way; however, the point here is

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[28] Television interview with Zheng Zhihua, CCTV 3, 15-11-2008, Beijing.

that the things people demand from this tool, the 'music', is not musically demanding. Thus, music functions as a carrier, to carry music-receivers' various dreams and interests, and the music itself becomes secondary.

Furthermore, the role of music is even in a 'passive disposition' when it is compared with other media carriers. As Pang Long, a top singer in the C-pop domain said:

> I am a music professional. I was a professional singer before and I still am now. Yes, my first well-known song was popularised through the Internet, so people call me an 'Internet singer'. And also because many Internet singers are amateur, therefore you assume that I am too? I am a singer, why do they need to label me as an 'Internet singer'? The Internet is just a path for singers; you cannot classify a singer just because of the way that their music has come to public attention, this is an unreasonable reason.[29]

Pang Long's complaint reveals how the media determines the positioning of music. One of my interviewees, Zhang Yiyi, a teacher from the Beijing Contemporary Music Academy, voiced her confusion about the seeming passivity of the current C-pop scene: 'I really don't understand why Chinese popular music is always in a situation of "being eaten" by other media: music in film is called "film music", music that is released on the Internet is called "Internet music." When can music be strong enough to be independent?' The image of 'being eaten' illustrates C-pop's true role, or its identity: it is still not an individual subject. In the present-day macro-environment of C-pop, it has sadly degraded into an 'object' of 'some others'—a dependent of other media paths.

All in all, the mode of music reception in today's C-pop domain reveals a situation where music receiving is mobile and music-receivers are bound. The elucidation below shows an inseparable link between this state and the evolution of the music carrier.

7.2 THE EVOLUTION OF THE MUSIC CARRIER

The following account will centre on the evolution of the music carrier, to highlight the widespread accessibility of the current C-pop scene. This is due to the carrier

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[29] Gao Yue, 'Pang Long: I am Professional Singer, not an Internet Singer' (Pang Long: wo shi zhuanye geshou). *Dalian News (Dalian ribao)*, 02-03-2008.

culture of C-pop having moved away from the 'heavy and solid' (hardware-based) and towards a 'light and liquid' (software-based) state.

7.2.1 Music Carriers

Conventional carriers for music transmission may reasonably be divided into two kinds: print and recording. The print carrier mainly documents the scores and/or related contents of music. In music transmission, this kind of carrier can only function as a subsidiary record of the musical sound, in that the literature and musical symbols do no more than note down the musical piece, musical activities, contents, engaged people, emotion and so on. In terms of musical sound itself, print cannot present music and memorize the exact sound; it excludes the unique auditory character and the instantaneity of musical sound. Therefore, in this chapter, my main concern about music is actually with regards to musical sound, and the 'music carrier' refers primarily to recordings that have mainly been produced and consumed in mainland China. This is because it is the carrier that really conveys the musical sound to the audience and which also by its own renewal influences music development.

The power of music in everyday life and its place as a constitutive feature of human agency is widely recognized (DeNora 2000). The devices that play different formats of music are becoming ever smaller and more convenient: music therefore is becoming more 'mobile'. When cassettes were the dominant form of carrier, Manuel claimed that in some countries, including China, cassettes enabled the dissemination of certain musical genres that were formally discouraged or banned by governments (Manuel 1993: 33-34). Connell and Gibson also noted that cassettes gave local performers an avenue of expression in these countries (Connell and Gibson 2003: 59). In the CD and MD era, music can be played at will not only in personal space, but also in many public spaces: in the shop, supermarket, taxi, train, plane, hospital, or hotel. This is due to the aural culture, such as music, benefiting from the development of media, becoming preservable. From cassette, to CD, to DVD, the capacity of these carriers for preserving music is expanding. The advantage of the newer music carriers is reflected on by this remark made by an ordinary music fan who is also a collector of LPs:

Nowadays, most young people know little about the LP, because these vinyl

phonograph records only possess a small memory. Also they are large and get dusty easily, and are difficult to preserve. They gradually declined in popularity after the cassette came to people's daily musical life at the end of the 1970s. After the 1990s, the spread of CDs was the death-blow to LP records; and now they are not even being produced. Surely, CDs can take the place of LPs or the cassette thereafter because the CD brings the sound quality almost to perfection. Furthermore, with a cassette, you have to rewind it in order to listen to the music track you want.[30]

This remark not only demonstrates the transition of the music carrier in the C-pop domain (from LP to cassette to CD), but also reveals people's demands of the music carrier, not only reflecting on the change that the carrier brings to the music receivers, but also mirroring the existing properties of music and music-receivers. As well as the need for a simple, portable device with larger memory and so on, we can see that the audience wants to have the power of control. The pattern of pop music which exists today is one of unrestrained experience of music and practical command of music receiving. This situation pushes the music to a liquid status whilst the music receivers remain immobile.

From around 2000, the MP3 became the common audio format for consumer audio storage because of its simplicity and also because music in this form could be obtained for free. As a new music carrier, the MP3 was not only a handy device, but as a music format it also boosted the wide dissemination of music through the Internet. The Internet thus became another important carrier of music. As two of my informants claim:

> You know what? I can just sit at home, and post a song on a certain website or even forum. If some people click on it, I get points from the website; and if people download it, I get even more points. And I can accumulate the points to do something else on that website, such as buy things or play games. All these things I can do without even moving, just keep my fingers clicking on the keyboard of my computer.

> I use my computer to make my own MP3s. I am not a musician, not a professional. Even though I just sing some pop star's song, why not record my own voice? And then I can upload my songs to the Internet, maybe to a public forum, or maybe my own blog, then my friends can also share my singing. I am not expecting people to

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[30] Cheng Yi, interview, 20-06-2007, Beijing.

praise my singing, it's just fun, and it's good to share fun with others. The Internet enables all this.[31]

The two statements above show that the MP3 format and the Internet mutually support each other. They not only collectively boost the dissemination of pop music via the Internet, but also support the democratization of C-pop, which is one of the points I shall explore later in this chapter. What we can see here is that the music carrier is becoming easier and more convenient for users, but the spread of music becomes more emancipated, and to the music-receiver, the choice of music is truly self-directed.

7.2.2 Towards Light and Liquid

The recent evolution of music carriers brings a most noticeable and palpable change to music transmission: a major reduction in the cost of music diffusion. This is reflected in two ways, both in the cost of disseminating music products, and in the cost to music-receivers of obtaining music. In addition, this situation results in the disappearance of the solid-state music carriers such as CDs and DVDs; in the C-pop domain the music carrier has now entered a light and liquid state.

Minimizing the Cost of Music Dissemination The growth of neo-digital and Internet music has impacted on the traditional recording market. A survey in 2008 showed the decreasing volume of sales of music recordings. The critic Wang Jiangzeng stated 'The sales volume of recorded music dropped 15% this year'. Responding to this statement, a spokesman for the sales department of Shanghai Recording Company Yu Jianyao said 'In fact, to say 15% is to put it mildly; and conscientiously speaking, the sales volume of pop recordings has not dropped less than 40%' (Liu and Xing 2008).

The most influential music chart for C-pop, Yinyue Fengyun Bang, declared that album publication had decreased by one third every year since 2004.[32] By 2008, the market outlook was even more bleak and worrying. The younger generation was gradually moving away from conventional recordings such as CDs. Li Hanhan, a staff member at the Beijing Jingwen Recording Company, told me that:

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[31] Jiang Mudong (upper paragraph) and Zhang Xinyi (lower paragraph), interview, 02-04-2008, Beijing.
[32] Yan Zi, manager from Niaoren Entertainment, interview, 31-05-2007, Beijing.

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Now, there are very few recording publications. But you can compare this with songs such as 'Perfume with Poison' (Xiangshui youdu), 'Ten Thousand Reasons' (Yiwan ge liyou) and 'Autumn Never Return' (Qiutian buhuilai) which made a fortune due to the high rate of downloading and clicking on the Internet. For example, 'Ten Thousand Reasons' had over 17,000,000 downloads. Even for the hot new idol Li Yuchun, her single 'Happy Winter' (Dongtian kuaile) has sold a few hundred thousand and already been seen as enviable. However, this pales into insignificance compared with downloads of this song and ringtone on the Internet which reached over ten million. And let me tell you another thing, in any entertainment company which is engaged with music marketing, there are many more staff in online music product departments than those working in conventional music product making. Therefore, you can see which one has the priority in importance. The reason for this is so the company can achieve the most fame and financial return for a reasonable investment, as compared with the investment in traditional recordings.[33]

Therefore, the new carriers such as the popular MP3 music format and the Internet maximize the profit for the music-maker and reduce costs at the same time.

Disappearance of Solid Recordings From my interviews with many C-pop industry insiders including musicians, critics and producers, I found the question of the disappearance of CDs and DVDs often cropped up. Producer Zhang Yi explained some of the choices on releasing new singles or new albums:

Singers always release their albums, but recently, some singers have started declaring that they are not releasing solid recordings any more, but will choose the Internet or some other means to promote their new songs. This may be a strategy, because some of the recording companies have chosen to cooperate with other businesses, to sell CDs or DVDs with their products; the recordings may be just like giftware. In fact, this is a worldwide trend; many singers are choosing to release their new songs online now.[34]

Another insider from the recording industry, Zhu Qiaoqiao, who works in the Publishing Department of Da Xiongxing Company, further clarified the situation:

We decided not to publish CDs on the mainland because of the market depression.

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[33] Li Hanhan, interview, 19-09-2008, Beijing.
[34] Zhang Yi, a journalist from *Beijing Daily*, interview, 06-05-2007, Beijing.

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It's not that we were worried about the market, it was the reality. Nowadays, it will be a really good result if the sales volume of a mainland singer can reach 200,000. Its impossible now for those top singers to reach a sales volume of millions like before. Other secondary singers may only be able to sell 50,000-80,000; some of them can only reach 20,000. The situation for new singers is even worse, if they can't get good promotion, their single's sales volume may not even reach a few thousand. We really can't make money out of recordings, so most companies now turn their attention to the business of performances in order to make profit.[35]

In fact, CDs and DVDs have already given place to the Internet or mobile phone, as Zhao Xin, a member of staff from Taihe Maitian, told me: 'The profit from music productions now mainly comes from mobile phone and Internet, and it increases year by year. On the other hand, less than a third of the profit is from recordings, and this is getting less and less.'[36] The solid-state recordings are fading away; but it does not mean that the CD and DVD as music carriers will completely die out. Singer Huang Qiwen and CD and DVD trader Li Dong both believe that, although the music carrier has entered a new age now and the solid-state recordings are less numerous, their function as music carriers will not completely disappear. In the future, CDs and DVDs may become collectable items for hardcore fans, therefore the recording industry may concentrate on only a few top singers. Besides this, some other functional recordings may also continue to be released, such as foetus education music.[37]

All in all, the music carriers have changed from hardware based transmission to transmission based on software, comparatively light and liquid in state. However, the following paragraphs will show that, although the solid-state recordings have declined due to the rapid growth and popularisation of the light and liquid music carriers (such as the Internet and mobile phone), music-receivers are benefiting from this situation since the cost of obtaining music has decreased.

Minimizing the Cost of Music Reception The development of music carriers also enables the music-receiver to obtain the desired music easily and at a decreased cost. In urban China today (where most C-pop consumers are located), the music-receiver can just sit at home with a computer and, by a simple click or two on

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[35] Zhu Qiaoqiao, interview, 18-06-2007, Beijing.

[36] Zhao Xin, interview, 19-06-2007, Beijing.

[37] A considerable number of C-pop insiders hold such an opinion, including Huang Qiwen and Li Dong, whom I interviewed in Beijing, 31-05-2007.

the mouse, they can easily find their favourite music.[38]

In order to show how a present-day C-pop receiver listens to the music they like and why, I did a little experiment during my fieldwork. In Tianjin during the C-pop Billboard Award Presentation Ceremony, I was lucky enough to be given a backstage staff pass since one of my friends was the organiser of the whole event. This meant I could walk in and out of the back and front-stage areas. When the audience started coming in, I stood in front of the second entrance where the audience were waiting to go into the concert, and I told them that I was a member of staff who was doing a short survey. As they saw my 'staff', my request was accepted. I asked two questions to 30 people (one by one, recording their responses, since they were queuing and waiting to get in and I wanted to choose the most simple way of doing this short survey in order to get the best response possible). One question was 'How do you listen to music, to a CD or online?' The other one was 'Why?' Surprisingly, all of them told me they used MP3 players (because they are small, convenient, with massive capacity and they could download music from Internet for free then store it in this little device); and 22 interviewees said they also chose online listening when they used the Internet at work or at home (because they could create their own music lists and only download those songs they wanted to keep). 17 of them told me they sometimes used their mobile phone to listen to music as well (not very often, but they would be keen to use their mobile phones if they possessed good quality music reproduction). 14 of them said they also sometimes listened to CDs, but they were only for occasional musical enjoyment, and in fact, they preferred to buy blank CDs or DVDs and burn the songs they liked if they wanted to keep the music somewhere permanent.

The 30 interviewees were aged between 16 and 35 and they certainly typified the majority of today's C-pop consumers. Their way of listening to music reflected the demand from the music-receiver for a lower cost of music; additionally, the lower cost also indicated the cost in time. The new carriers satisfied the customers' personal tastes and need for music. As the result from 30 interviewees shows, the smart systems of the new carriers provide the possibility of gratifying listeners' comprehensive requests and even supplying them further. Once a user types in a song or even a certain artist they like, the system will recommend other choices that are

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[38] One tenth of Chinese citizens are currently net citizens, in which only 0.4% are from rural areas. Of the 172 million net citizens in China, 70% are less than 30 years old and almost half of these are students. Unpublished data from Zhang Jiezheng, an information researcher; interview, 22-03-2008, Beijing.

musically similar, that the user can listen to and save if they like. Listeners create their own listening lists, making them as long as they wish. Most of the listening websites offer automated music recommendations and a personalised radio creation service.

Besides, one click can bring a series of services. Many customers know or use these websites to buy music and send it to their friends as a gift or sign of good wishes. Once you click on a particular song and start to listen, much related information is also given, including the lyrics, the album information, the star's information, or news or rumours about them. In addition, the musical enjoyment can be copied and shared: from just one download, the customer can share their favourite music by copying it to an MP3 player, mobile phone or another computer, via cable or Bluetooth or email.

Thus, the key trait of the new type of carrier is clear: what the new music carrier is focused on is not the music alone, but it delves into the personal needs of the customers. The music-maker's effort results in maximizing the spread of the music and also facilitating the music-receiver gaining more but acting less. So the next question which arises is, in this music transmitting circumstance, what is the condition of the music? And for the music-receivers, what changes take place in their experience of music, caused by the unceasing development of the music carrier? In the following, I shall look in depth at the way music is experienced and received according to the nature of the music carrier, by considering the interaction between music and its receivers. This will further clarify the liquid trait of music from the aspect of music-experience.

7.3 EMANCIPATED MUSIC EXPERIENCE

From the early times of radio, to television, up to the Internet and mobile phone nowadays, the way music receivers experience music has been gradually becoming less and less restricted. The following comments will illustrate the differences between various music carriers in terms of musical experience:

> Listen to music? Oh, there are many ways for enjoying music nowadays. I
> remember maybe fifteen years ago, when I was a university student, radio was the
> most popular way to listen to music. But radio has an unavoidable uncertainty:
> sometimes you couldn't find one song which was your type; to us, the content was

too passive, we had no choice, you also had to cope with a bad signal and listen to those undesirable advertisements. And television was a bit the same, you know..."[39]

Gradually, some well-heeled mates got walkmans, yes... listen to music while you are walking. But you know, the tapes got stuck sometimes, and also carrying a few cassettes just took up too much space in your bag... CD player thereafter, yes, I had one which I asked one of my friends to bring over from Japan. Surely, it did give me much enjoyment, but just like the tape, you could hardly find one CD that contained all the music tracks you like.[40]

Now it is different, you can find whatever music you like on the Internet, download those you like, burn them on to a CD or save them as MP3, then you can listen to your favourite music at anytime, anywhere you want. And nowadays advanced mobile phones are most handy, everything is all in one.[41]

The above extracts are taken from an online conversation with Zhang Kai, a 33-year-old clerk who is also a music enthusiast. The words not only reveal the development of music sound carriers but also the development of music transmission; and reflect how music is gradually moving towards a status free from constraints of time and space. In the first place, the option of experiencing music moved from dependence (passive listening to public channels such as radio and television) towards independence (as with the personal CD player and MP3); and secondly, the state of experiencing music has moved from the restricted (having to remain within a certain space, such as when watching television) towards the free (you can experience the music anywhere you wish using MP3 or even cell phone). It further supports Zygmunt Bauman's statement, from the perspective of music reception. Bauman maintained that we are now witnessing changes 'from heavy to light', 'from solid to liquid' and 'from hardware-based to software-based' - his view of liquid modernity. The attribute of 'fluidity' (no fixed spatial shape or duration) also occurs in C-pop. C-pop, or contemporary universal pop music, is also in a 'fluid' state in present liquid modernity due to its emancipated quality and to it being released from constraints of time and space. As a music researcher, the question needs to be considered: what qualitative impact or change has been, is, or will be, caused by this fluidity?

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[39] Yang Fanzhi, music teacher, interview, 29-05-2007, Beijing.
[40] Wu Guoshu, music teacher, interview, 29-05-2007, Beijing.
[41] Shi Qionghui, music student, interview, 29-05-2007, Beijing.

7.3.1 The Emancipation of Music Value

The emancipation of the manner in which music is experienced has caused a detachment from the value people attach to music. From C-pop's progression through from the 1980s until now, people have always held certain musical values, whether influenced by official propaganda or by traditional values. However, along with the evolution of music carriers, the information about music which people encounter has increased greatly and become more and more free. Moreover, the unrestricted manner of music experience enables music receivers to discover and assess new music by themselves without any influence from external factors (such as official commentary from the press). The Internet even provides an open platform for everyone's musical creation, as shown in the first part of this dissertation, with no limitations due to age, occupation, level of education, musical background and so on. Under such circumstances, many *slobber songs* appeared (*kou shui ge* in Chinese, a term which emerged in later years to indicate the simplicity of this kind of music and its quality of being open for everybody to understand); and because of their rather vulgar and demotic character, many critics and commentators have argued that this was a corruption of the true nature of music.

> Nowadays, many Chinese pop songs are too low. Some composers or singers just want to pander to the low tastes of petty bourgeois listeners, such as this well-known song 'Perfume with Poison' (Xiangshui youdu). Look at what this woman sang about: 'I can smell the perfume from your body, but it's my nose which has made a mistake; I should not smell HER beauty, just wipe my tears away and be your pillow-mate.' We should think about doing something with Chinese pop music in order to induce or guide listeners to rise above vulgar interests. This low taste will pollute our popular music. People now just have no idea about what is good music or what is bad, and what we should listen to...

This was quoted from an oral presentation given by You Jingbo, a 29-year-old teacher of 'popular music history', at a conference on popular music education in Sichuan Conservatory of Music in the autumn of 2007. Although he condemned the contents of the song, and the vice-chairman of the Chinese Music and Literature Institute also marked this song as 'failed' as its contents may be suitable for adults but not for children or teenagers (Sun 2007), many audiences still make rather

positive comments about this song. One audience member even wrote: 'Don't talk about the MUSICAL value or so-called artistic value with me, who cares? I only know this song is about a women's helplessness and man's nature of being fickle. And the tune is nice, and the singer sings well; anyway, I always pick this song to sing in karaoke.' Certainly, the perception of musical value varies from person to person, but it is not the aim to discuss here the immense issue of whether musical value should be determined by professionals or non-professionals. We can see that music-receivers do not consider or evaluate musical value; the appeal for them does not lie in appreciating the value of the music. To the audience, the music's value lies in its social value, in emotion and amusement. Here, I shall not discuss whether artistic value or social value is the true value of music, or whether maybe both together can be justly considered of musical value; the current situation is that for most people musical value lies in emotional and social appeal. The fact that the manner of experiencing music has altered, becoming more emancipated with the evolution of the music carrier has enabled this appeal to find expression.

Although we are not talking about musical value directly, this term still brings us to ponder the influence of the present situation in C-pop on the music itself, because the trait of 'liquidity' of music induced by emancipation of the manner of musical experience can be also demonstrated from the aspect of music making.

7.3.2 Grassroots Music Making

This part focuses on the emancipation of music-making, which has been opened up to everyone who has Internet access, even at grassroots level. Although this chapter is centred on the relationship between music and music-receivers, the following explanation will not only show how music-receivers are turning into music-makers but also demonstrate the emancipation of music making as consequence. Besides making obvious the emancipation of musical experience, the final conclusion will also make clear one situation: that the open access to music-making induces the propensity of music itself to become democratized.

From the mid-1980s to the present, tremendous changes have taken place in C-pop. Many scholars, musicians, and critics lament the decline of C-pop music from the aspect of the music itself, the artistic value of music, but the fact is from a marketing point of view the C-pop domain is undeniably getting more and more

prosperous. It is just as singer Meng Yao said:

> Nowadays, Chinese pop music domain appears to be in such prosperity, but it is just
> at face value. The number of singers is increasing; new singers come to people's
> attention every day, their work as well. But music actually is in a woeful state, good
> musical works are miserably few.[42]

This situation has been agreed by most of the C-pop industry insiders, and the question we have to ask here is, since C-pop showed such vigorous development and musical diversity from its creation in the mid 1980s, why, twenty years later, has the path of C-pop become narrower and narrower? Even with plenty of newly-joined and talented music makers? A recent television programme on CCTV[43] talked about the creativity of C-pop music in later years (1996-2006) not flourishing like that of ten years previously (1986-1996. This programme regarded 1996 as the watershed; as the decade before produced different music forms such as *xibeifeng*, campus *minyao*, and rock). Famed singer Liu Huan said:

> Compared with the previous decade, the creation of music is not very active. The
> music latterly just fails to show the creative ability, collectively. One reason is due to
> piracy, and one positive thing is that we can perceive the advance of technological
> music production due to the development of media.

> The musical contribution of the last decade's productions... however, such as in the
> case of *xibeifeng*, was not related to the making of recordings or the whole recording
> industry. This musical phenomenon was not centred on recording, nor on the singer,
> but on the composers; it was the composer's desire to make something 'really
> Chinese'. In mainland pop, *xibeifeng* was an outcome that derived from musicians'
> exploration of Chinese folk music ...[44]

This reveals two facts: although music carriers or those media technology do have an important influence on music diffusion, the impact on the advance of musicality (or musical value) is immaterial and insignificant. And besides, musical success is determined by the purpose for which the music was created. In other words,

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[42] Meng Yao, interview, 17-04-2007, Beijing.
[43] CCTV Chanel 10, a series called *20 Years of Chinese Pop*.
[44] Liu Huan, interviewed on *20 Years of Chinese Pop*. The interview can also be found online at
http://www.cctv.com/program/rw/topic/culture/C15576/02/, access date: 02-11-2008.

whether certain music can musically succeed is very much related to what (marketing, singers, or composers) is thought to be at the heart of its creation.

C-pop has therefore gone from 'ten years of creating music' (musically) to 'ten years of making music' (technically). The innovation of music carriers can be deemed as the key cause for the latter situation, because it is how the creation of music in the C-pop domain was been made available to the grassroots, and as a consequence the music itself essentially went to the grassroots also. As I explained in the section on Internet music in Part One, the Internet as a new music carrier offers equal opportunities and the same platform for people from different backgrounds, either professional or amateur, to demonstrate their activity in music creation. People uploaded their cover versions of previously popular songs or those newly self-composed, which normally earned much attention from the music-receivers who conventionally may only have paid attention to music recordings. Music-makers became diversified, and whether their purpose was for fun or for self promotion to achieve recognition, one common factor was they all engaged in a grassroots level of music production and accordingly the music was mostly not at a skilled or professional level. However, this might be the main reason for their rapid popularization, since in the music many listeners could find tunes that struck a chord with their own sense of identity. (The later situation, where the Internet became a promotional channel for professional singers, was due to their recognition that they could not and should not disregard the time- and space-free traits of the Internet.)

As I mentioned, the 'commonness' and 'everyman quality' of the songs called *slobber songs* was regarded as significant by certain music producers, such as Zhou Yaping, a famous musician and also a leading music producer. He even referred to such music as *foodstuff songs* (*Liangshi gequ*). He said:

> Now the doorway into music is rather low and everyone can do musical things, I propose a concept of 'foodstuff songs' because music now is just like daily rice, it may not be spicy and tasty, but it is like the daily supply for people's normal needs. And this is the present marketing strategy of our company. Those so-called artistic musicians try to argue with me, they know nothing and have no idea about what people need. I am a musician [in fact, Zhou was a professional classical musician in his early music career], I am their senior in this respect. Thirty years ago when they were just children I worked on Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, that kind of thing. Many influential singers who are now in Chinese popular music history were promoted by

me. Don't argue with me, I have seen the road ahead for Chinese pop. They always try to label themselves and uphold their status as 'musician', but nowadays, no one can stop MP3 or Internet, it doesn't matter how much they preach CD's quality of musical sound.[45]

From this, given by one of the major forces in the C-pop field, together with the other pronouncements further above, we can discern the authentic property of contemporary C-pop from the aspect of the music carrier. The innovation of music carriers has brought the emancipation of musical experience, which is revealed in the liquid trait of music in the current time; the direct corollary is C-pop's leaning towards grassroots creation, which results in the birth of the grassroots propensity of music itself. Many C-pop industry insiders have pointed out the decline of music and lowering of people's taste; however, they have not considered the development of music carriers, which is one of the significant facts which has in essence caused the inclination of music towards the grassroots.

If the above explains the 'whoever' of the music-makers, then the following will further make obvious the fluidity of the current music situation induced by the emancipation of the manner of music experience: 'whatever' becomes the motif of the musical works, in which we can see a growing bud of individuation in C-pop music.

7.3.3 The Growth of Individuation

The grassroots propensity of C-pop creation brings up the consciousness of self and the consequent growth of 'individuation'; and due to the gradually opened platform of the new music carriers, musical works are practically enabled whatever their motive and subject. This individuation is not only reflected in the music itself, but is also mirrored in the public space for C-pop.

The innovation in music carriers has theoretically allowed everyone to access music making without considering their musical background, and this release of identity has provided a strong impetus to loose the 'professionality' and 'occupationality' of the music itself, since people can use any motif as the subject of the music. Notable examples of this are songs that have recently emerged through the Internet such as 'Wife, Wife, I Love You' (Laopo, laopo, wo ai ni), the corresponding

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[45] Zhou Yaping, interview, 20-06-2007, Beijing.

one 'Hubby, Hubby, I Love You' (Laogong, laogong, wo ai ni), and 'Mouse Loves Rice' (Laoshu ai dami), that I used as example in first part of my thesis. No matter how the professionals sneer at these songs, nor how we consider their 'grassroots' origin to demonstrate the demotic nature of current pop music, the fact here is that the development of music carriers has provided a platform for the discourse of 'self'.

Carriers such as the Internet have been an incentive for people to put their private voices into the public arena without having to consider the quality of the music: the 'public' space consequently becomes a 'personal' stage or place for display. This situation brings real individuation for C-pop since it has individualized the public space, in that it enables the 'individual' to be promoted as 'public.'

I remember one particular time when I had a drink with a group of people, including the newly rising singer Liu Shanshan. She consulted her producer about what she should do next (since her song had just been released, her news conference had taken place, and supposedly she and her producer had temporarily done all they were supposed to). Her producer said: 'Well, you can take some photos at home, or in your bathroom, with your collar pulled down or whatever pose you want to make, which looks seductive. Of course, you don't need to really expose any part of your body, and the photos should look casual and just like a candid snapshot. Then our staff can upload the photos to the Internet, and also make up a title something like "Candid Snapshot of Liu Shanshan in Bathroom" and so on. Just something to capture the audiences' attention.'

Although singers themselves are more willing to focus on their own music, their companies on the other hand are assigning more importance to their market value and their fame; for such a purpose, they want to heighten the visibility of the singers, whether this is through positive or acceptably negative publicity. This particular occasion during my fieldwork enabled a deeper understanding of Bauman's statement:

> It is no more true that the 'public' is set on colonizing the 'private'. The opposite is
> the case: it is the private that colonizes the public space, squeezing out and chasing
> away everything which cannot be fully, without residue, expressed in the vernacular
> of private concerns, worries and pursuits... For the individual, public space is not
> much more than a giant screen on which private worries are projected without
> ceasing to be private or acquiring new collective qualities in the course of
> magnification: public space is where public confession of private secrets and
> intimacies is made (Bauman 2000: 39-40).

However, the 'publicizing' of private secrets caused by the openness of the music carriers offers a good opportunity to many individual voices of 'the nobody'. Since Xue Cun's 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' and Dao Lang's 'The First Snow of 2002' became hits at the beginning of the new millennium, more and more professional and amateur musicians choose the Internet as the arena for them to show their own musical works. Xiang Xiang, Pang Long, Yang Chengang, Hu Yanglin and many other singers all emerged as a result of the Internet. The subjects of the songs which enabled these singers to gain fame were varied: pig, mouse, perfume, or even wolf; positive or negative; high-minded or low-minded... Most importantly, the netizens were free to choose whichever songs they liked, and to produce Flash animations and thus make their own individual music videos, which could then also be uploaded to the public arena (Internet). For example, at present, one can find at least ten Flash music video versions of the song 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng', and also more than twenty cover or spoof versions of this song.

Today's music carriers propel individuation in the C-pop domain. Every individual who uses the Internet is able to change, make up or even create C-pop songs using whatever musical or social elements they like. From the themes to the style of music, we can see the C-pop songs of the 21st century are more individualized; the individuation of C-pop is growing. The new music carriers provide a platform and possibility for every music enthusiast. And music-receivers also perform as engagers; this situation further enables and impels the individualization of C-pop music. As Bauman claimed:

> ... 'individualization' consists of transforming human 'identity' from a 'given' into a 'task' and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (also the side-effects) for their performance. In other words, it consists in the establishment of a *de jure* autonomy (whether or not the *de facto* autonomy has been established as well). As this happens, human beings are no more 'born into' their identities (Bauman 2000: 31-2).

This disintegration of identity also invades the circle of musicianship, since anyone can be part of this circle, one which has broken down the previous pattern of the relationship between audience and musician (which will be the key issue I will clarify in my next part of writing, where I will conclude and make clear that C-pop

industrial culture is based on the relationship between music and music makers). But overall, if the openness of the music carriers is detrimental to musical quality (as many professional musicians have complained about, as referred to throughout this chapter), at least this release of the carriers inspires people, if they wish, to change their role from passive receivers to engagers, and this is a precondition of the individuation of the music itself. We might believe that, although the present situation of C-pop is chaotic, it is still promisingly and positively the commencement of a tangible and concrete individuation of C-pop.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The development of a new carrier culture has brought C-pop music into a state of liquidity (from the aspect of musical experience becoming emancipated) and music receivers into a bound state where they must carry around their own means of receiving music. The emancipation of musical values, of musicianship (the emancipation of the means for music making impels grassroots music making) and of content (which to certain extent also stimulates the flourishing of individuation) all demonstrate unrestrained aspects of the contemporary C-pop experience. This situation has resulted in a wider choice of musical styles and performers; however, the quality of the music is sadly weakened.

Although many in C-pop now have the means to increasingly individualise their musical creativity, the music has in fact failed to flourish, due to the distraction of the music-receivers' core attention and ongoing alterations of musical modes of production. This will be the key issue of next chapter, where I examine the industrial culture based on the relationship between music and music makers.

Chapter 8

Industrial Culture

Fan culture is located in the interaction between music-makers and music-receivers, and carrier culture concerns how music is transmitted. Now the mode of musical production itself and the forces acting on it require further investigation. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the creative activities of pop music-makers within the industrial culture of C-pop. It demonstrates that the state of C-pop music industrial culture actually results from the 'power struggle' between the audience and musicians—between those holding a mass concept and those holding an elite concept.

Alan P. Merriam's mode of 'culture and music' is a resourceful and essential scheme for many ethnomusicological studies, in which 'human behaviour' is the force linking the two principles (music and culture); it performs as a bridge that enables a researcher to explain one principle by reference to the other. Focusing on musical composition and production, this chapter elucidates different conducts in order to clarify the traits of C-pop's industrial culture.

8.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF IDENTITY

Identity lies at the heart of current debate in cultural studies and social theory. It is a complex and fluid sociological and psychological area of study. Berger stresses the humanistic affinity of sociology with history and philosophy, and states that identity is a 'socially bestowed, socially sustained and socially transformed' social psychology (Berger 1963: 33). In other words, 'identity' is a term that reveals social value and people's mode of living; it is a result of socialization and also of change on the basis of social flux.

Within studies of multiculturalism, Charles Taylor notes that there are two levels of recognition in people's identity: one is self-recognition, and the other is recognition from others (Taylor 1994: 72-73). In fact, social psychologist George Herbert Mead had already pointed out the influence of 'significant others' when he analyzed the formation of identity half a century ago (Mead 1934: xxii). In the field of music, in terms of 'people' (i.e, musicians' identity), arguments and targets often rest on issues such as region, nationality, occupation, professional or amateur status,

educational background and style. Some music researchers and scholars have questioned whether certain distinctive identities have defined the social and cultural world of modern societies, or have given certain new identification patterns to the newly-emerged individual (Hall and Gay 1996).

With regard to music itself, the issue of 'identity' has always been defined as mapping out the geographical traits of the music, in which many scholars define quality, place, spatial character, race, age or even gender and sexuality from socio-cultural perspectives (Bennett 2000; Longhurst 1995; Manuel 1998; Whiteley, Bennett and Hawkins 2004). Besides, identity is also a major issue within ethnomusicological studies (Nettl 2005; Stokes 1994). These studies examine the influence of culture, economics, politics and technology on the changing structure and geographies of music at local and global levels. Still, one thing is clear in these studies: most of the assumptions in such discussions are about the necessary flow from social to musical identity (Frith 1996: 108-127).

'Identity' in previous music studies, therefore, seems akin to 'trait' or 'individuality' or 'character' or something similar. However, while pondering 'identity' as the modality of music, there is also a necessity to wonder about the changing state of 'identity', both the identity of the music and the musicians in C-pop. That is the aim of this chapter. From examination of the situation of both musicians and music, the following will disclose the true state and fundamental nature of the term 'identity' in the context and discourse of current C-pop. Kobena Mercer pointed out the words of 'the crisis of identity' (Mercer 1994: 7), which 'concerned the fact that something which was once taken for granted and assumed to be "fixed, coherent and stable" has been called into doubt and become loaded with uncertainties' (Negus 1996: 99). Essentially, the concern with 'identity' within the area of pop music study is mostly based on the consideration of the colour, gender and/or the nationality of music (Negus 1996: 99-135). Exploring the underlying identity within the indigenous macro-cultural context is also an issue which has captured much attention within the Western academic world, as seen in the proliferation of non-Western music studies.[46] Differing from those above, my view in the context of C-pop will extract and explain its vague identity from the relative behaviours that surround pop music production. That is, to explore 'identity' from the behavioural attributes of both 'self' and 'others,' is a

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[46] For a typical example see Howard's work on Korean music (Howard 2006).

comprehensive and objective way to reflect the changes in C-pop music and musicians' recognition of identity.

8.2 THE FADING IDENTITY OF THE 'MUSICIAN'

The actual status of musicians in the C-pop domain was mentioned several times in the previous chapters, in terms of how the musician (singer) has become a product in the pop industry, the accessibility of music production to 'whoever' and so on. These situations will also have an effect on musicians' sense of identity. The following will be centred on assessing the state of the musician's identity by means of their musical compositions.

8.2.1 Composing Music or Building Music Up?

Although this section is about musical composition, my focus is not on music technology, even though certain technological terms need to be mentioned here as the pop industry is strongly based on technology. Instead, while demonstrating how C-pop is often built up from different musical elements, I ponder primarily the question of a musician's identity as musician or technician, further dwelling on the fading state of the former identity.

The pop musicians I met during my fieldwork claimed that they mostly composed by playing, rather than writing. And the situation has developed further. Many computer programs for music production facilitate composition, since these programs offer recording, production and mixing of sounds in order to make music for distribution on CDs or the Internet. So that it seems that in the present era few, if any, pop musicians create music by writing music. The facility of different musical software is not only convenient for recording studios but also works as a rather professional digital audio workstation for individuals. Logic Pro, Cubase, Pro Tools, Cakewalk and so on, are the names most familiar to these pop musicians. The musicians I was in touch with during my fieldwork trips, no matter whether their musical background was classical, national or pop, all possessed computer-based work stations in their studios.

To take an example, the views some musicians gave about the music programme Logic Pro on an Internet forum clearly revealed how the musicians'

identity had faded somewhat (These I have summarised but the musicians have all been contacted individually to authenticate their identities):

Open musicianship entry——'Even if you are not a trained musician, Logic can also enable you to express yourself in an understandable manner. I never took music training lessons, but by dint of the 'smart composition tool', I can record every musical inspiration. 'Logic', just like its name, you can finish a whole piece of work in the programme.' (Singer-songwriter: Jiang Nan)

Building up music——'Logic offers the most straightforward and easy creative conditions and settings for music. I can 'construct' how I imagine the music to be by using Logic.' (Composer: Xu Danyang)

Half man-made——'Once you know how to handle it, you will really appreciate it since it is able to 'match' your musical thinking and improvisational inventing.' (Producer: Qi Jun)

Professional sounds——'If you have Logic, then it is the same as possessing a well-contained sound recording studio. The 'instrument' part is fabulous, for example, you can set up a drum set in EXS24; besides the sound quality is unbeatable too. It is cool, everything just concentrated in one.' (Singer-songwriter: Zheng Xiao)

Manipulation——'It gives me a very professional sound managing platform, and sure, it also brings me a lot of fun, that's very important to me. I can create mixing sound and set up surrounding sound-loops, experience the ES1 synthesiser, operate Bitcrusher. You know, to manoeuvre everything in one space just makes me feel so good.' (Musician and composer: Hu Lijia)

Professional outcomes——' Just by using my laptop, I can produce recording-like music... it is agile and stable, it can even create a concert effect.' (DJ and music producer: Wang Jiacheng)

The views and comments above bring us to an understanding that present-day music is achieved through a smart constructing system, not by composing: it is built up in a technical manner, not in a musical manner. From an 'open entry' point, through musical 'building' the practice may only be half musical; instrumentalists are not

necessarily needed, and all the creation is manipulated as a manufacturing output, yet the final product is still a professional outcome. This series of peculiarities in music creation reveals the character of the pop musician is moving towards being an assembler of musical parts or pieces, and gradually moving away from being an accumulator of music.

Although the role of engineer has always been under-rated, the role of the 'musician' in fact has become that of 'sound engineer' or 'technician' rather than 'composer', when music making becomes something that can be built up part-by-part. This has turned into a hotly contested issue within contemporary music, computer music and pop music studies (Cascone 2003: 101-104).

Within the traditional music domain, the existence of this changing role for musicians will imply a new group of musicians - technical musicians, since such a kind of music composition can only be an auxiliary means for creating works of music. However, in the pop domain, this is not the case: it is almost a necessary technique for music-makers to master certain technology, and these do not form a sub-group of musicians. In other words, in the pop domain, the technician or sound engineer constructs the musicianship; or to put it another way around, the pop musician is a combination of musician and technician. This subsequently displays the nature or property of pop music: a coalition of music and technology, which is a causal factor in the fading state of the musicians' identity (that as musicians used to be) in the C-pop context.

8.2.2 Performers in Plural Identities: The Attention Economy of the Music Industry

In the current C-pop domain, versatility for performers is paramount. Singers act on the screen, in film or soaps; film stars are also falling over one another to release their singles or albums. Such a situation may not be what those pop stars claim as 'a necessity of self-development.' In fact, some clues can be gleaned from certain insiders' views, which show the underlying significance of this state for the performers - that is, the necessity of being someone with plural identities. One particular passage from my interview with Zhou Yaping, the chairman of Niao Ren, is of importance here:

> Those singers, of course, I will promote them from different aspects to let them get more opportunities in the public's line of sight. It's ordinary for every singer or other performers in the current day; they have to strive for 'exposure rate'. The more you expose yourself, the more benefit you get; then the spectators will not forget you. And you know, those extra performing identities or commercial identities are still related to their own profession, whether being MC [master of ceremonies] or giving endorsement to commercial advertising, singers can promote their music to the audience during different public activities. Of course, it's also a way of making money for the company and themselves, it's also for survival.[47]

The passages above give two important pieces of information: one is the necessity of capturing the spectators' attention, and the other is the economic purpose behind it all. The singer's plural identities can aptly be regarded as a consequence of the 'attention economy' since it is a path to advertise, to gain benefit. Since Herbert Simon pointed out, more than thirty years ago, that 'what information consumes, is the attention of its recipients' (Simon 1971: 40-41), the term 'attention economics' has been adopted into business strategy (Davenport and Beck 2002: 49-55). Though it initially applied to information study, this term is now mainly used in connection with the problem of getting consumers to consume advertising (Adler and Firestone 1997), and it also touches upon almost all media creations including novels, films, and software (Beller 2006). However, although the pop music industry is one which is much connected with information (as nowadays the Internet has become one of the main venues for pop) and business and trade (for its commodity trait); it has failed to be considered as an industry that belongs to the attention economy, even though the music economy has been a key issue within music.

It can be seen that the singers' plural identities are there for the sake of attracting the spectator's attention as a means of advertising. 'Zou Xiu' (literally 'show'), endorsment, and being guests or professional actors, all these identities assist the music industry to 'gain the holy grail of the spectator's attention' by making an 'image distribution', rather than play as a gatekeeper for music production by giving the quality control to the 'music distribution'. Such traits of the performer's identity can be deemed as the outcomes of the methods of promotion and sales, in which the attention economy plays a key role within the music business; as Gerd stated '[The] Attention Economy... where the 'longtail' rules and where many business that

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[47] Zhou Yaping, interview, 20-06-2007, Beijing.

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have—and keep—people's attention stand[s] to prosper dramatically'.[48] In the music business, this attention economy leads to the versatile identity of performers; but it leads to a dilemma: in order to strive for the spectators' attention, the singers or the composers struggle between 'music distribution' and 'image distribution' since, with the latter, pictures can be shown to audiences without delay in order to make an instant and striking impression.

The essential nature of the C-pop industry these days is therefore the power struggle between the two distributing directions. From the music-makers' (performers or producers) points of view, this power struggle can be visibly discerned, and whichever side is currently tipping the balance is likewise revealed. As Zhou Yaping states, 'We are making popular music and without considering the listeners we cannot succeed. Art and audience, which one can bring us a real benefit and promising market? It is needless to say.'[49] And the singer Gao Fei claimed: 'I am an actress, but have also released a new single; I am in this domain, and all these things are integrated in this industry. I need to do as much as I can to make myself recognizable.'[50]

8.3 DESTABILIZED IDENTITY OF MUSIC

Conventional ethnomusicological study normally interprets musical behaviour from its reasons-before, how-meanwhile and results-after, which is certainly all-inclusive. However, the key point popular music researchers focus on is what the musical behaviour eventually turns on, the determinant that verifies the attributes of the music itself. In the following, I shall give a few cases of musical behaviour, to expose how the centre of musical behaviour in C-pop has changed since the mid-1980s, and then go further to reflect on the power struggle between music and people by looking at the key links in the industrial chain.

8.3.1 Mimicked Music in Facsimile Recordings (*ba daizi*)

'*Ba daizi*' is a 1980s term that would be familiar to any pop music-makers who have experienced the growth of C-pop. It signifies making music by mimicking the original

[48] Gerd 2006, 'The Attention Economy and the Music Business'
http://digital-lifestyles.info/2006/07/28/the-attention-economy-and-the-music-business/, access date: 27-09-2007.
[49] Zhou Yaping, interview, 20-06-2007, Beijing.
[50] Gao Fei, interview, 17-06-2007, Beijing.

soundtrack from Western, Hong Kong or Taiwanese music recordings, not only to learn how their musicians made music, but also to sell replicas. Song Yang, one of the renowned old-time C-pop musicians, who was also one of the earliest musicians involved in mimicking music, recalled:

> The lyrics and the melody were ready-made; almost all came from European, American and Japanese pop songs. The only demand was trying to mimic to perfection. Since we could go to the sound studio and the pay was good too, the field of 'ba daizi' drew in all the top pop musicians in that time. Once, we went to a recording studio, and were just about to leave after making the recording, when the recording director asked me to listen to one particular young fellow's voice, and said that guy could sing quite well. Later, that guy started singing his own songs and is still producing hits even now, his name is Cui Jian.[51]

Such 'ba daizi' musical behaviour formed the general pop music situation in the mid-1980s; and as many pop musicians have pointed out, this was the chief path for them to learn and master the techniques of composing pop music. Though it was only copying, the significance here is that this music behaviour was centred on music. All the musicians' purpose was focused on how those Westerners composed music, how they organised the musical texture, how they employed their voices, and so on.

8.3.2 Finding a Voice (zhao sheng)

When 'ba daizi' became more and more pervasive and prevalent in C-pop, musicians started thinking over how to express 'selfhood'. Then the phrase 'the conduct of finding one's own voice' emerged. Chinese rock and xibeifeng were the consequences of this conduct. The composer's concept can be clearly seen from the originator, Chen Zhe's intentions:

> After a few years of simulating music, we were already aware of a need for our own voice, a voice that was from our earth... personally, [composing xibeifeng] because I was inspired by the north-western region when I went there. I hoped I could provide a contrast to broaden the mainstream popular music of the time, in order to diversify the pop scene. For many years, our pop music had been too simplified, I wanted to

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[51] Song Yang interviewed by Wang Jin, http://news.163.com/10/0427/10/6594FI5S000146BD.html, access date: 02-03-2006.

explore C-pop from its cultural background to discover some practical Chinese elements (Jia 2007).

Chen Zhe's concept reflected the general tendency in C-pop production at that time, as Jin Zhaojun averred during a broadcast interview in connection with the same situation: 'From that time, alongside unceasingly simulating music, more and more singers and composers realized that it was time to walk their own path. After that, Chinese popular music entered the phase of "finding a voice".'[52]

From both Chen Zhe's composing intention and Jin Zhaojun's summary, 'finding a voice' was an ideological conduct, a derivative behaviour from C-pop musicians' 'unified' production, and 'music' not only remained but also became a more consolidated centre.

8.3.3 Concept of Idol

Eagerness for 'selfhood' not only aroused musicians to find their own voice, but also propelled the idea and consciousness of 'idol'. Although Cui Jian's rock and other *xibeifeng* performers made themselves into 'stars', the real concept of 'idol-making' actually came later, when the concept of 'selfhood' became increasingly strong, in which the initiative and artificiality of the singers deepened the hold of idol culture. This has been symbolized by the designing and packaging of the singers.

Su Yue, one of the most prestigious producers in the C-pop domain was the first person to bring the concept of 'packaging' a singer to mainland China and a witness of C-pop's evolution, told of the special manner of setting up an 'idol':

> I went to Japan for study at the end of 1987. I felt pop music was different to other music from the aspect of producing it, but we were all exploring. I systematically studied music marketing, and gradually I got to know that we were too aimless and haphazard. After I came back from Japan in 1990, I founded my own recording company, running it with all I had learnt in Japan. To be honest, the concept of middlemen and planning were all brought back by me... from then on, we started using the contract system, signing contracts with singers, and making and packaging them. Take for example, the singer Huang Gexuan; we designed him as a 'melancholy prince' in our initial plan. You know his songs, all full of sadness. All

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[52] http://ent.163.com/ent_2003/editor/music/haver/040311/040311_228160(1).html, access date: 14-12-2006.

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the promotional material we gave to the media also emphasised the particular period when he encountered miserable experiences. Certainly, we wouldn't release those media reports that he earned 8000 Yuan each month [in the early period of the 1990s] (Guo 2006).

'Packaging' became the new standard within C-pop in the 1990s, when singers such as Yang Yuying, Mao Ning, Lin Yilun and so many others came into public view. Singers became the real product, and music production was surrendered to the market. In the first decade of the 21st century, different idol phenomena pushed the concept of the 'idol' yet further into the public consciousness. The C-pop industry therefore shifted its centre from music to people.

8.3.4 Music Industry towards Idol Industry

As many C-pop industry insiders have pointed out, (also referred to in the chapter on Fan Culture), nowadays the C-pop industry revolves around the idols, and the different methods of music-making in different stages shown above also reflect and demonstrate how this situation has gradually taken place. If the C-pop industry was previously an industry producing music, it has now become an idol industry that has reallocated singers as the essential product. As Su Yue pointed out, 'In the 1980s, we could make some money from recordings, but now, it is not possible; the fans do not go only for music any more'.[53]

'Idol industry chain' is also a phrase which has frequently been used by C-pop makers during my fieldwork. Unlike the music industry chain of the previous era, the idol industry chain is taking on importance as the singer adds value to the actual product. In this new mode of running music production, it is not the music which carries the profit and prestige to the singers, but their fame allows the distribution and sale of their music, which can also generate mounting profits. Although some industry insiders will say that the industry chain has no fixed explanation and components, since every link changes with time or the transformation of society and technology, old or new constituents are all subject to the constraints of production and publication. Therefore, the chief issue in my work here is not to find what the pop music industry consists of, but to identify the key link in the whole chain,

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[53] Guo Yanbing, 'Interviewing Su Yue' (Su Yue fangtan) in *New Beijing News*, 27-07-2006.

since that will be the true illustrative crux for interpreting popular music.

8.3.5 The Key to the Pop Industry: Musician or Music?

The consideration of the industrial chain here is not aiming to explain the C-pop industry from a business angle, but to explore further the core of popular music from the conduct of music production. Many scholars have systematically argued that capital corporations have turned popular music into a commercial commodity within the whole industry (Horkheimer, Adorno, Noerr and Jephcott 1979; Chapple and Garofalo 1977). Although Simon Frith once discussed the industrialization of music as a thing which 'Cannot be understood as something which happens to music, since it describes a process in which music itself is made—a process, that is, which fuses (and confuses) capital, technical and musical argument' (Frith 2007: 94), music is still a direct consequence of its industrialization. In fact, as Frith once pointed: 'Twentieth-century popular music means the twentieth-century popular record; not the record of something (a song? a singer? a performance?) which exists independently of the music industry, but a form of communication which determines what songs, singers and performances are and can be' (Frith 1998: 12). This is not the case with C-pop. Different C-pop voices in Part One give a converse response to Frith's claim, since they collectively reveal that Chinese popular music respectively means the 'record of a song (or possibly a genre)' in the decade before 1996 and the 'record of a singer' in the ten years after, in which the former was very much determined by compositional concepts, and the latter was more subject to the singer's market value.

In addition, the case of C-pop also answers Keith Negus's question about Frith's certainty in saying 'this seems to imply that there is no "popular music" anywhere in the world in the twentieth century that is "outside" of the process of industrialized record production' (Negus 1996: 54). At least, for the period of the ten years before 1996 when C-pop blossomed, quite a few songs and genres were massively popularised when the industry of record production had not even been formed in mainland China. As Zhang Jianrong, who is 43 years old told me:

> When I was young and the first time I heard Cui Jian's 'Nothing to My Name', I
> · was fascinated by his rock music. That was the age of Cui Jian, that was the age of
> his 'Nothing to My Name'. And by that time, there were many cassettes of his most

popular songs, but like me, many of my friends and classmates often bought one particular cassette just for one favourite song. And once we got the cassette, we listened to that song again and again. But now, the reason young people buy an album seems quite different. My young colleagues, if they are Li Yuchun's fans, buy Li's album maybe just for the poster or whatever. For Li's music? I really doubt it. Li Yuchun's music, gosh, sorry, I can't appreciate her singing.[54]

To give a further view from a C-pop industry insider, producer Jiang Xiaoyu pointed out: 'Today's recordings, such as CDs, in fact just act as a singer's business card, to label their identity as singers. Whoever they need to get in touch with, they can present their CD as way of introducing themselves… There are more and more singers, but not that many songs can be remembered or are even worthy of being remembered.'[55] Combined with the different voices in Part One, we can perceive that the changing key link (from music itself to singers) in the C-pop industrial chain is a fundamental factor that impels the destabilized identity of C-pop music. In that, the purpose of production behaviour in music making in the C-pop domain has shifted from being music-centred to singer-centred. Thus, verification of whether the pop musicians (more accurately speaking, the singers) or music play the key role in the pop industry can help to construe and infer what the core character of pop music is and how it has changed.

Clearly, the different modes of musical behaviour above elucidate changes in C-pop's central point of production. Even though the alteration of the core focus from music to singers is very likely based on the conceptual change, what this alteration really reflects is the essence of popular music, its liquidity. This liquid concept has caused liquid musical outcomes, and this liquidity endows the music with a fluid identity, since the musical substrata subsequently failed to be fixed and stable.

Attention must be given to the striking situation that the relationship between music and music-maker is not the 'historical' one, in which music brings profit and prestige to the musicians, but a situation in which the fame surrounding celebrities brings the possibility of sales of their music. Recording quality is no longer more of an imperative than the quantity of record sales. To compare this with classical music, the difference between classical and pop music might be one of the listener's attention, recognition and appreciation. People remember classical musicians due to their

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[54] Zhang Jianrong, interview, 03-06-2007, Beijing.
[55] Jiang Xiaoyu, interview, 13-11-2007, Beijing.

masterpieces, but, on the other hand, people remember the music in the pop domain mostly because of the aura of the pop celebrity.

Therefore, this situation can be perceived from the change in the C-pop industry chain: the genuine identity of C-pop music is to be a means to enable pop musicians to succeed in achieving prestige and fame. Music is not the ultimate aim of the musician and of the industry, but only a means to an end.

8.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on various music-making behaviours related to music production within the C-pop industry. The method of composition noted demonstrates a fading interest among musicians in projecting an individual musical identity, and the manner of music-making (production) further destabilizes any such musical identity. Different power struggles reflected through different behaviours can be perceived here: between music and technology, music distribution and personal image distribution, composition and the market, the music industry chain and the idol industry chain, and so forth. Therefore, in the context of C-pop, key evidence for the identity of the music is provided by the power struggle between music and people, and also by the struggle between the mass concept and the elite concept. Creating music of an authentic, individual distinctiveness is not the C-pop musicians' final and absolute aim, but only that of producing a conduit that enables them to achieve prestige and fame.

Conclusion

I began my research by wondering what musicality C-pop music actually possesses, what changes have taken place within it since 1985, and why these changes have occurred. In addressing these questions, my study of C-pop from 1985 to the present day has not only explained its shifting musicality, it has also proposed a new perspective for the wider study of popular music. In the paragraphs that follow, I reflect on the primary results of my study.

This thesis began by outlining a series of the most influential musical phenomena that were found in China between 1985 and 2010. The account showed how the soundscape of C-pop in particular developed over the two decades in question. It revealed that this was a noteworthy phase of musical development, during which there was a gradual conceptual shift in contemporary Chinese popular musical culture. C-pop developed from diversified musical creation (music-oriented) to diversified music production (industry-oriented). Initially C-pop music was full of a sense of vocation, but later it was filled with sensory pleasure. What happened was that the music-maker's attention shifted from striving to contribute to debates about democracy, national identity and social reform, to attempting to supply aural and visual enjoyment to the mass of music-receivers. Thus musicality, the state and the way of being C-pop music, changed, as a result of the change from being created in a music-maker-centric to a music-receiver-centric system.

After depicting the overall pattern of C-pop during the period in question and describing the changes that took place, my writing moved on to the question of how C-pop changed textually. This was done by breaking up textual sound and analysing it in detail from the perspectives of language, singing and the instrumentation of the backing music. This not only uncovered the textual traits and patterns typical of C-pop, but also reinforced the picture of changing musicality from music-maker-centric (MMC) to music-receiver-centric (MRC). The study of the linguistic aspect of C-pop revealed that music-makers shifted from a 'host perspective' (which can also be described as an 'emic' position) to a 'guest perspective' (a contrasting 'etic' stance). The study of the range of vocal utilisations further exemplified the shift of the attributes of musicality from an emic position of self discovery to one in which the music-receiver was able to consume exotic vocal sounds and related characteristics.

This finding showed the unbalanced position of contemporary C-pop as there has been an increasing emphasis on matters of human conduct related to musical activities rather than on the song itself. The rather musicological analysis of the backing musical patterns showed that C-pop tends to have a planar rather than solid and three-dimensional quality, from the aspects of harmonic texture, rhythm and structure. Those involved in C-pop, both music-makers and spectators, are sensitive to melody and tune, but not so attentive to details of harmony and rhythm. In addition, from the perspective of musical production this writing also demonstrated that C-pop's musical creation experienced a shift from a liberated individualization to a formulaic construction.[1] This situation further demonstrated the shift in the relationship and interaction between music maker and music receiver, which similarly underwent a transformation as the musicality of C-pop changed from being music-maker-centric to music-reciever-centric.

To answer the key research question of why C-pop music changed from being created in a music-maker-centric system to music-reciever-centric system, this thesis argued that the transformations in fan culture, carrier culture and industry culture were determining factors.

In the examination of fan culture, I investigated the role and power of C-pop fans, what impact the fans had on C-pop, the change in the relationship between idols and fans, and their mode of being. The instance of two group of fans' aggressive behaviour to each other in defence of their own idol (including assault and personal abuse in an extreme and irrational way, even implicating the idol's past and their parents), revealed the combative attribute of fans in C-pop culture. To open a dialogue with both western and native scholars who are also studying fan culture but from a more psychological and sociological perspective, showing an understanding of fandom as a form of media reception or participatory behaviour (Harris and Alexander 1998: 92-95; Staiger 2005: 95-114; Hellekson and Busse 2006: 264; Jenkins 2006: 37-60) or as the psychological needs of equalization, opposition, admiration, recognition, release and so on (Yue 2007: 239); my critical ethnomusicological observation informed by my cross-space stance disclosed that fan's behaviour in contemporary C-pop was due to consciousness of ownership. Interviews with many people from different

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[1] For example, in the 1980s, the structure of a song such as 'Nothing to My Name' was very clearly individual and finely tuned to the song itself. By the time of creation of 'Two Butterflies' in the 2000s, C-pop had become industrially mass produced and its music displayed formulaic constructions.

background provided the clue that made obvious the consciousness of ownership by fans, as they claimed the stars were their choice, and that they were the driving force that accomplished the stars' rise to fame.

Besides, this sense of ownership drove fans and singers into a relationship based on engagement. As the professional fan groups emerged, fans in the C-pop sphere possessed a very strong 'emic' consciousness, they were even able to be the planner, the pusher or the promoter. Therefore, they were not only supporters, but also motivators. In this new age, both the stars and the fans benefited (not only financially) from their relationship. The music-receiver in C-pop turned from 'payer' into 'earner', and was now a participant rather than merely a consumer. They paid money and gave support to the music, but were also able to bring benefits to themselves. Indeed, once fans were able to have a career of being a fan, the characteristic attributes and existing patterns within the C-pop fans' community changed. The systematization and institutionalization of fan groups strengthened their power since they give C-pop an influential and potent productivity as they demanded what C-pop should be and what music-makers should do. During fieldwork, reasons such as 'market demand' and 'the aesthetics of the fans' were always given by informants who were music producers. Obviously, the fans' role as 'end consumer' took priority within the music-maker's consideration. All in all, the evidence from the elucidation of fan culture in this thesis demonstrated the determining power of the fans and the strong bottom-up current in contemporary C-pop, which has again exerted a long-term influence on C-pop and contributed to the change from music-maker-centric to music-reciever-centric musicality.

From the aspect of carrier culture, by taking Zygmant Bauman's interpretation of modernity as cross reference, this thesis pointed out the transformation of carrier culture from a 'heavy and solid' state to a 'light and liquid' one, concurrently with continuous technological innovation and development. In this writing, musical sound carriers such as CDs, music transmission carriers such as television, and carriers of musical culture such as entertainment magazines were all taken into consideration. This research showed evidence that, together with the C-pop carriers' transformation, music became a means for music-receivers to contribute their individual voices to the public arena. For instance the Internet, as a music carrier, offered equal opportunities and the same platform for people from different classifications, either professional or amateur, and as a result it offered a good

opportunity to many individual voices of lay people to express themselves musically. Furthermore, I argued that the emancipated accessibility of music offered a highly self-governing and autonomous format for experiencing music in C-pop, and expanded the role of music receivers from merely 'receiver' to one of 'controller' as well, due to the minimized cost of music dissemination and music reception. For example Xue Cun's song 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' has has been recreated more than twenty times as cover or spoof versions by music-receivers (now acting as music-makers).

Western scholars investigated how the music medium changed both C-pop culture and people's ideology (Baranovitch 2003; Jones 2001; de Kloet 2010) and native scholars showed interest in how the means of music transmission developed since the 1980s (Bao 2004; Wang 2009). However, without considering the intrinsic quality of C-pop from a converse angle, the question remained of what changes occurred in terms of C-pop's way of being musical in parallel with the transformation of the music media. As a cross-space ethnomusicology researcher, I conducted various interviews with scholars, music critics, singers, producers and fans, and assessed them from dual perspectives—native and overseas. My research discovered that the emancipation of music accessibility also subsequently induced the emancipation of musical value that is now held by Chinese society. Some important music producers such as Zhou Yaping declared his supportive stance to this situation, and even gave the name *foodstuff songs* (*liangshi gequ*) to the music that was unprofessionally made by amateurs but later on achieved great popularity. It not only indicated the important status of this kind of music in thewhole C-pop domain, but also told of the broken criterion for judging music.

Therefore, the study of C-pop carrier culture disclosed the new situation in C-pop: 'whoever' became the requirement of being a music maker, and as a result, 'whatever' became the motif of the musical works produced by them. The music receiver was no longer in passive mode, and as a result grassroots music making started to flourish, thus the music receiver's central status in C-pop became obvious.

The examination of the C-pop industry's culture gave evidence of musicians' fading identity, from scrutinizing three aspects: that music-makers' creative activities changed in that they build up music now rather than compose it; that C-pop musicians displayed plural identities which aimed to maximise social fame from music-receivers within the attention economy; finally, looking at musical behaviour, I exposed how the

centre of musical behaviour in C-pop changed since the mid-1980s, and then demonstrated how the transformation within the C-pop industry culture actually further encouraged C-pop musicality to turn into a MRC state.

The recognition of identity can be self-recognition and also recognition from others (Taylor 1994: 72-73), and my cross-space stance indeed benefited the results of this study. To begin with, my overseas experience caused me to wonder about the way of music making in C-pop, which native researchers had not even drawn their attention to. From the conversations with the C-pop music makers I met during fieldwork, one thing was clear; that they mostly played to compose rather than wrote, and the situation now goes even further. Besides, no matter whether their musical background was classical, national or pop, the C-pop makers all worked as sound engineers. In other words, in the pop domain, the technician or sound engineer constructs musicianship; or to put it more accurately, the pop musician is a combination of musician and technician or sound engineer. Thus the method of music making is assembling rather than composing.

My native background and C-pop experience enabled me take some historical musical behaviour (in terms of music-making) into consideration, such as 'mimicked music in facsimile recordings' (*ba daizi*) and 'find a voice' (*zhao sheng*), which made obvious the C-pop maker's compositional concept lying behind such music-making behaviours. Together with interview and documented data, such elucidation explained that Chinese rock and *xibeifeng* were the consequences of pursuing notions of 'selfhood'. However, the later 'idol concept' and its related music-making behaviours turned this 'selfhood' into a practice of the attention economy. In the idol industry age, the attention economy led to the versatile identity of performers; on the other hand, in order to strive for the spectators' attention, the singers or the composers struggled between 'music distribution' and 'image distribution'. Based on the evidence of interviews with different C-pop performers, their plural identities were further confirmed. As I explained in my writing, singers claimed that they needed to act in different social roles in order to be 'recognized' by the music-receivers, whether this related to their music or was even totally irrelevant. Indeed the situation, just as my producer informant Jiang Xiaoyu noted, was that in the contemporary C-pop domain, the singer replaced music as the central product, and their music just acted as their business card, to label their identity as singers; which was a way of introducing themselves. As a result, C-pop turned into a

music-reciever-centric state.

Another key finding was the nature and timing of the turning point in connection with the change in C-pop's musicality. In 1996 there was a downturn in the Chinese popular music industry, including both Chinese rock (based in Beijing) and Southern pop (based in Guangzhou). Many musicians and producers who were based in Guangzhou moved up to Beijing, and Beijing became the new base of the C-pop industry. The fertile combination of Beijing's rich and solid cultural art milieu and the marketing concepts introduced by Southern pop producers caused C-pop to expand rapidly and industrialize. C-pop moved towards a relatively formalized marketing production era since then, and the concept of packaging singers entered professional practice for marketing purposes. Five years later, around 2001, C-pop's new music-reciver-centric musicality was securely formed, as demonstrated by the tremendous prevalence of Dao Lang and Xue Cun's Internet music, and of the 12 Girls' Band (as a representative of *xin minyue* music).

The Application of Critical Ethnomusicology in this Thesis

In the Introduction, I stated that critical ethnomusicology is in fact also a conventional ethnomusicology, but one with a positioned attitude—similar to critical ethnography. With core standards of interpretation of data, methodology and analysis that an ethnomusicologist ought to achieve, it is also a form of self-reflective knowledge which aims to expand autonomy and reduce domination. It still consists of an elucidation of the concepts of 'people' 'musical sound' and 'culture', and focuses on socio-cultural aspects of people's music making-receiving behaviours in a local context. My growth and research background provides me with both experience-near and experience-distant perspectives. As a cross-space researcher, I tend to seek an outsider's viewpoint to challenge my own intrinsic cultural understanding. Therefore, my experience-near point of view allowed me look at C-pop and describe what it was from a native angle, and my experience-distant enabled me ask critically what it could be from an external view. My research will elicit different responses from western and Chinese scholars, as can be shown by the following with four examples.

Firstly, westerners' interviews with Cui Jian gave a heavily political interpretation of Cui's music, however, from a cultural insider's perspective, the connotations of his music were not as political as western scholars believe. Cui once

stated that his songs were endowed with too many implications, as I explained in the Chinese Rock section in Chapter One. Without positioning myself as a critical cross-space researcher, I may not even have considered Cui's early claims made to western scholars from a cultural insider's angle.

Secondly, in Nimrod Baranovitch's book *China's New Voices* (2003), the author presented mainland female singer Chen Ming. Baranovitch described her album persona as one that 'exists only to attract the male listener and provide him with erotic fantasies' (2003: 165), commenting also on the singer's physical attractiveness and presumed appeal to men. Yet, from my perspective as an insider to C-pop during the 1990s when Chen Ming built up her fame, I would say that she was widely regarded by Chinese audiences as a not especially good-looking singer who had achieved success by means of her good vocal technique. It was her singing, not her looks, that attracted listeners, and indeed the listeners were mostly female when Chen was at her most successful. A researcher strongly grounded in the culture in question can avoid mistakes like this, recognising that the marketing imagery may in fact have been designed to work against the already established identity of a singer, and so generating a rounder and more accurate picture of the overall data as a whole. This may be particularly important in a field like popular music where singers and songs quickly rise and fall, and the visiting researcher may struggle to gain a full perspective once those musicians and songs are no longer at the forefront.

Thirdly, compared with the native researcher, my overseas background also benefited my study, as I illustrated with the case of Xue Cun, who could tell me his true motive when composing 'Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng' (Dongbei ren doushi huoleifeng) because he believed my research outcomes would not be accessible to mainland Chinese. However, as I interviewed Xue Cun face to face, he does know that I am Chinese too, so we might ponder that, if he told me something because I will write my thesis in English, then he must also realize I might write some articles in Chinese as well. But also I was one of the few native Chinese to take his song seriously, by realizing its true motive and profound implication, which was deemed funny and laughable by most Chinese audiences as explained in Chapter One. So I obtained this information from Xue essentially because he wanted me - as an overseas researcher - to recognize his song as a kind of 'issue'.

Fourthly, since 2001 native scholars have often been prevented from examining C-pop as the sexual and erotic content of song lyrics were considered to be

of low standard. My overseas researcher's view enabled me to focus on both language usage in C-pop and musical analysis, which had not been done at all by native researchers. My analysis demonstrated that C-pop had experienced a shift from a liberated individualization to a formulaic construction, as stated earlier. Therefore, the musical analysis in my study was indeed a critical practice that added to native researchers' knowledge about C-pop.

> There are also intrinsic rewards that derive from critical thinking. The excitement of reworking concepts and creating new ways of seeing culture provides some scholars with sufficient justification to pursue this perspective despite the barriers to acceptance of their ideas... [another reason] for engaging in critical research lies in its emancipatory potential to free us from existing forms of cultural domination (Thomas 1993: 68-69).

In reflecting on my own research, I see that developing a critical perspective was important to me all along. This came home to me when, in 2009, I listened to a paper given by a Chinese researcher on Chinese pop music; to protect this person's identity, I call him Wang. The presentation was about *xibeifeng* music (see Chapter One). When Wang's presentation was over, I asked why Chinese take folk material from the Shanbei region in their presentation of Chinese roots. Wang replied: 'I interviewed the composer, he said so'. I tried to change my way of asking the same question, but Wang's answer remained the same: the composer said so. This experience led me to reflect, what am I taking uncritically in my own research? It is true that acknowledging the claims of the interviewee is very important, but critical thinking enables and demands more from the researcher than simply accepting such information at face value.[2] In my view, the study of Chinese popular music will move on to a new level when researchers are more willing to critically interrogate their sources.

All in all, the productive use of such opportunities, in my experience, really benefits from the critical perspectives of being a cross-space researcher; one who grew up as a native but who has spent much time overseas. As a native researcher, one has a good chance to recognise authentic cultural suggestions during an interview, to decode an interviewee's stance and to confidently spot unspoken implications that may be disguised or ambiguous to a foreign interviewer. Data itself has 'localization' as well,

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[2] Further examples of this kind occur in Li 2006: 25-30, Gao 2005: 4-5.

and sometimes an insider is best placed to fully and intuitively catch why the data comes out as it does. Moreover, the native researcher (or a researcher who is a popular music practitioner), can sometimes blend in more easily in situations where interviewing would be overly intrusive. Here, one's linguistic, cultural or musical fluency can allow much data to be gathered through observation with less disruption to the flow of events. On the other hand, with my overseas study background, I can then assess that data from differing perspectives and with critical thinking.

Any researcher, native or overseas, knows how it is sometimes difficult to get 'true' information from interviewee rather than 'proper' information, my study here proves that a cross-space researcher can get both, and also inspect and verify both. Such a native researcher needs to acquire a pair of outsider's critical eyes and an outsider's way of thinking, rather than just physically study abroad but still retain a native perspective when examining the home music culture. There is still much work to do in relation to the documentation of C-pop and associated musical phenomena, and it is crucial that the data recorded about these is strong, well rounded and reliable. This thesis demonstrates that critical ethnomusicology is an effective way to generate strong data, and effectively create an ethnomusicological study of native music culture from an outsider's critical angle.

From Popular to Pop

The shift in Chinese from the term *tongsu yinyue* to *liuxing yinyue* reflected the changing state of C-pop. Both these terms indicate the same kind of music in mainland China, as mentioned in the Introduction: the former literally indicates the popular mass music of the 1980s, and the latter points much more directly at the industrialized pop music occurring within a professional marketing operational system since the 1990s. From this perspective, C-pop accomplished a shift from 'popular' to 'pop' similar to that encountered elsewhere and in the West as well. Gammond's writing can be taken as support here, when he clarifies his sense in which 'popular music' is not the same as 'pop':

> While the use of the word 'popular' in relation to the lighter forms of music goes
> back to the mid-nineteenth century, the abbreviation 'pop' was not in general use as
> a generic term until the 1950s when it was adopted as the umbrella name for a

special kind of musical product aimed at the teenage market (Gammond 1991: 457).

However, when we look more deeply into the claim that 'popular music is not the same as pop', a viewpoint held by many scholars, C-pop provides a case study that allows us to approach the two terms from another perspective: 'musicality'. In C-pop there was a change of musicality from a music-maker-centric (MMC) system to a music-receiver-centric (MRC) system; this shift tallied with the changed naming of C-pop in different periods: from *tongsu yinyue*—popular or mass music, to *liuxing yinyue*—industrialized pop music. From a critical perspective, the MMC state of musicality in C-pop in the 1980s and 1990s was actually well-balanced—balanced between music-makers' compositional aspirations and the appeal of the resulting music to music-receivers. The key, as I see it, is that the former took a leading role in sustaining such a balance. This tallies with Allen's perspective, which is that popular music is typically used as a generic term to indicate the music of all ages that appeals to popular tastes (Allen 2004). On the other hand, the MRC-based situation obtaining in the new century has seen the music-receivers' desires taking the leading role, with music-makers, producers and others in the pop music industry making these their only priority. It also corresponds with Gammond's statement above that pop is the 'umbrella name for a special kind of musical product aimed at the teenage market' (Gammond 1991: 457). If nothing else, this suggests scope for future research to look more squarely at the generational aspects of this shift from popular to pop music in the Chinese context.

C-pop: Spiritual Pollution versus Emotional Solution

...[In terms of 1980s C-pop], the PRC government called for the nation to fight against Gang-Tai [Hong Kong and Taiwan] pop's 'evil influences,' representing it as an emasculated "illness that was inherited from the 1930s" and labelling it as 'spiritual pollution' and 'the sounds of a subjugated nation.' (Moskowitz 2010: 103)[3]

...[In the well-known song 'Perfume with Poison' (Xiangshui youdu) in 2007], look at what this female singer sings: 'I can smell the perfume from your body, but it's my nose which has made a mistake; I should not smell HER beauty, just wipe my

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[3] Such a statement has been documented by other scholars, such as Baranovitch 2003: 15-6; Jones 2001: 73-74; Gold 1993: 907-925.

tears away and be your pillow-mate.' We should think about doing something with Chinese pop music in order to induce or guide listeners to rise above such vulgar interests. This low taste interest will pollute our popular music; people now just have no idea about what is good music or what is bad, and what we should listen to...[4]

...In a sense the question of whether the music is 'good' or not is irrelevant. The most important question here, and one that is far too infrequently asked, is why the music is so revered by the largest population in the world. In this framework the question is not, therefore, 'why are they getting it wrong' but, rather, 'what are we missing here?' (Moskowitz 2010: 115)

C-pop has seemingly been labelled as spiritual pollution all the way through its evolution; from the beginning of the Shanghai jazz era in the 1930s,[5] and then again when it re-emerged in the mainland in the early 1980s,[6] and even now in the present.[7] However, all this official propaganda and academic disapproval over these different eras seems to have been unable to inspire a change of content within this 'pollution'. According to certain native Chinese scholars, even in the present day, there is no room in C-pop for songs such as 'Perfume with Poison'. Yet the situation is that such music stays exuberantly alive; the song 'Perfume with Poison' had the highest sales volume during 2007, and possessed a very high selection rate in karaoke.[8] All the examples, data, and discussions mentioned in this writing demonstrate that, whether in the 1980s, 1990s or 2000s, C-pop is essentially a path whereby ordinary people can express their earnest emotions, appeal to society and raise social concerns. That scholars and politicians still locate this with reference to 'spiritual pollution' shows how important it is to publish more research on C-pop based on actual discussions with those involved. Only then can their motivations and decisions come into true perspective.[9] Writing about 1980s Chinese popular music, Jones claimed: 'Chinese popular music is less a mere adjunct to leisure than a battlefield on which ideological struggle is waged' (1992: 3). My writing follows C-pop up to late 2010, and shows that currently C-pop is no

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[4] This is from an oral presentation given by You Jingbo, a 29-year-old teacher of 'popular music history', at a conference on popular music education at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music in the autumn of 2007.
[5] Jones 2001: 73-74.
[6] Baranovitch 2003: 15.
[7] Sun Zhong 2007, http://read.anhuinews.com/system/2007/04/20/001719708.shtml, access date: 29-08-2008.
[8] For details, please refer to http://hzdaily.hangzhou.com.cn/dskb/html/2007-10/31/content_377429.htm, access date: 31-07-2009. It shows this song to be widely recognized and accepted by audiences.
[9] I am glad to see Moskowitz arrive at this same perspective in his newly published study of Taiwanese listeners to Mandarin popular music (2010: 52-68).

longer a significant battlefield for political struggle; conversely, it is increasingly a space for reflection on the significant issues in the life and values of ordinary people.

Appendix 1: Musicians

12 Girl's Band 十二女子乐坊

Ai Jing 艾敬

Chang Kuan 常宽

Chen Ming 陈明

Cheng Lin 程琳

Cui Jian 崔健

Dao Lang 刀郎

Ding Wenjun 丁文骏

Dou Wei 窦唯

Hai Mingwei 海鸣威

He Yong 何勇

Hu Yanglin 胡杨林

Hua'er Yuedui 花儿乐队

Lao Lang 老狼

Li Chunbo 李春波

Li Yuchun 李宇春

Lin Yilun 林依轮

Liu Dehua 刘德华 (also known as Andy Lau)

Liu Huan 刘欢

Luo Dayou 罗大佑

Mao Ning 毛宁

Pan Leizhi 潘雷至

Pan Yueyun 潘越云

Pu Shu 朴树

Qi Yu 齐豫

Su Yue 苏越

Tengger 腾格尔

Tu Honggang 屠洪纲

Wang Fei 王菲 (also known as Faye Wong)

Wang Rong 王蓉

Xiang Xiang 香香

Xie Chengqiang 解承强

Xiong Rulin 熊汝霖

Xue Cun 雪村

Yang Chengang 杨臣刚

Yang Yuying 杨钰莹

Zhang Chu 张楚

Zhang Liangying 张靓颖

Zhang Xinzhe 张信哲

Zhu Zheqin 朱哲琴 (also known as Dadawa)

Appendix 2: Songs

A Letter to Home　一封家书

Autumn Never Return　秋天不回来

Befooling Sphere　愚乐圈

Billows as of Old　涛声依旧

Chinese Gongfu　中国功夫

Crescent Moon　弯弯的月亮

Cynicism　玩世不恭

Da Lian Train Station　大连站

Don't Want To Say I Am A Chicken　我不想说我是鸡

Every Manchurian is a Living Lei Feng　东北人都是活雷锋

Great China　大中国

Happy Winter　快乐冬天

How Are You My Big Brother　大哥你好吗

Hubby, Hubby, I Love You　老公老公我爱你

Lilac　丁香花

Loess Plateau　黄土高坡

Love Within Wind Smile Within Water　风含情水含笑

Loyally Dedicate My Life to my Country　精忠报国

Mouse Loves Rice　老鼠爱大米

My Desk-mate　同桌的你

My Loving China, I Love You　亲爱的中国，我爱你

Nothing to My Name　一无所有

Olive Trees　橄榄树

One Red Cloth　一块红布

Perfume with Poison　香水有毒

Promissory 98　相约 1998

Rock on the Long March　长征路上的摇滚

Sister Drum　阿姐鼓

Sister Go Boldly Forward 妹妹你大胆的往前走
Song of Pig 猪之歌

Ten Thousand Reasons 一千个理由

The Birch Hurst 白桦林

The Country Road 乡间的小路

The Dissipater Returns 浪子归

The First Snow of 2002 2002 年的第一场雪

The Gangsterdom is Not the Special Local Product of Northeast 东北盛产不是黑社会

The Mongolian 蒙古人

The Sun is Red, The Chairman Mao is the Dearest 太阳最红，毛主席最亲

Two Butterflies 两只蝴蝶

Wife, Wife, I love You 老婆老婆我爱你

Xibeifeng 西北风
Xintianyou 信天游

Yanfen Street 艳粉街

Yellow Earth Plateau 黄土高坡

Appendix 3: Other Terms

ba daizi　扒带子

chaoji nansheng　超级男声

chaoji nusheng　超级女声

chengshi minyao　城市民谣

cui hua　翠花

di su　低俗

diyu fengqing　地域风情

dongtian kuaile　冬天快乐

erhu　二胡

fensi xingyuan　粉丝星愿

gong　宫

han　汉

han shaogong　韩少功

henan ren zenme le　河南人怎么了

he xuntian　何训田

honggaoliang　红高粱

houhai　后海

ifensi　粉丝网

jiao　角

kou shui ge　口水歌

lao jing　老井

lei feng　雷锋

liang fen　凉粉

liangshi gequ　粮食歌曲

liuxing yinyue　流行音乐

matouqin　马头琴

minge　民歌

minyao　民谣

niaoren 鸟人

qi cheng zhuan he 起承转合

qin 琴

qingdao laobaozi 青岛老巴子

qingnian zhoumo 青年周末

quan zi 圈子

shang 商

shaanbei 陕北

shan'ge 山歌

sheng 笙

si ge xiandaihua 四个现代化

su 俗

su wenhua 俗文化

suan cai 酸菜

suona 唢呐

taihe maitian 太合麦田

Taiwan *minyao* 台湾民谣

tongsu yinyue 通俗音乐

wangluo gequ 网络歌曲

wangluo geshou 网络歌手

xiang Lei Feng tongzhi xuexi 向雷锋同志学习

xiao diao 小调

xiaoyuan minyao 校园民谣

xibeifeng 西北风

xin minyue 新民乐

xintianyou 信天游

xun gen 寻根

yan'an 延安

yangge 秧歌

yinyue fengyun bang 音乐风云榜

Discography

A Duo

    2007   'Mr. Honey', in *Treasure (Bao zang)*. ISRC: 9787883013402.

Cheng Lin

    2002   'Xintianyou', in *20 Years Greatest Hits of Cheng Lin (Cheng Lin 20 nian gequ jingxuan)*. ISRC: 6906338006827.

Cui Jian

    1997   'Nothing to My Name' (Yiwu suoyou), in *The Rock on the New Long March (Xin changzheng lushang de yaogun)*. ISRC: 9787884982905.

Lao Lang

    1997   'My Desk-mate' (Tongzhuo de ni), in *Long for Human World (Lianlian Fengchen)*. ISRC: 9787799424231.

Li Chunbo

    2005   'A Letter to Home' (Yifeng jiashu), in *The Greatest Hits of Li Chunbo (Li Chunbo yinyue jingxuan)*. ISRC: 9787799913872.

Pang Long

    2004   'Two Butterflies' (Liangzhi Hudie), in *Two Butterflies (Liangzhi Hudie)*. ISRC: CN-A50-04-586-00/A.J6.

Pu Shu

    2000   'The Birch Hurst' (Bai hu lin), in *Go to 2000 (Wo qu 2000)*. ISRC: 9787799424552.

Wang Rong

    2005   'I am Sorry', in *Much Love (Duo ai)*. ISRC: 9787880830019.

Yang Chengang

2004   'Mouse Loves Rice' (Laoshu ai dami), in *Mouse Loves Rice (Laoshu ai dami)*. ISRC: 9787885799915.

Ye Fan

2002   'My Loving China, I Love You' (Qinai de zhongguo, wo ai ni), in *China, I Love You the Most (Zuiai ni, zhongguo)*. ISRC: CN-F28-02-318-00/A.J6.

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Contents of CD

	Duration
1. Two Butterflies	4'17"
2. Nothing to My Name	5'32"
3. Sister Drum	5'49"
Total time	15'38"