

MORALITY IN MUSIC:
CENSORSHIP OF CHINESE POP SONGS

Julia Zeijlemaker

Leiden University

1286579

j.zeijlemaker@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Supervisor:

Prof.dr. M. van Crevel

Professor of Chinese Language and Literature at Leiden University

m.van.crevel@hum.leidenuniv.nl

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Introduction

In 1978, Deng Xiaoping opened China's borders to the world, allowing the country to participate in the world economy. This challenged the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to make a balance between the state's openness and state control (Mackinnon 2007). With the introduction of the internet in 1994, the CCP had no other option than to allow it into China, in order to become a player in the international economy.

Still, over the years, the Chinese government has increasingly monitored and blocked internet content as deemed necessary, for example by putting up the so-called Great Firewall (Mackinnon 2007). In 2003, China's Ministry of Culture published the 'Interim Regulations on the Administration of Internet Culture' (互联网文化管理暂行规定), which is a list of rules concerning all cultural products on the internet, including music.¹ The list was last revised in 2011.

On August 10th, 2015, the Ministry of Culture used article 16 on the Interim Regulations on the Administration of Internet Culture to censor a total of 120 Chinese songs from the internet. The ministry labeled the 120 songs as blacklisted (黑单),² because their content was seen as 'endangering social morality' (危害社会公德), according to article 16.

A key point of censorship and morality in music in China is that the Chinese government's rules and regulations for what is considered moral and immoral in music are phrased in very generic terms, leaving room for interpretation. That leaves us with the question, can the blacklisting of the 120 songs be meaningfully related to these rules and regulations?

Research question

My research question is:

- What does government censorship of popular music, especially hip-hop, tell us about the nature and the role of morality in the theory and practice of internet regulations in present-day China?

¹ http://www.gov.cn/flfg/2011-03/21/content_1828568.htm

² http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-08/10/content_2910755.htm

This can be subdivided into the following questions:

- What are some of the distinguishing features of government censorship of popular music, especially hip-hop, in present-day China?
 - The above discussion will include a comparative element in which I will consider how the circumstances in China compares with the circumstances in the Netherlands.
- What does this tell us about the theory and practice of China's internet regulations?
- What does this tell us about the nature and the role of morality in the relevant discourse in China?

Scholarship to date

Music in modern China

Music and the modern Chinese state were linked through the course of history according to scholars including Baranovitch (2003), Mittler (1997), de Kloet (2010), Fung (2008), Ho & Law (2012) and Perris (1983). In the 1980s Perris (1983) described music as one of China's most important propaganda tools of that time. Mittler (1997) shared this view, as well as Baranovitch (2003). Baranovitch describes the relationship between music and state as more complex than just the government vs. the market. The Chinese government insists on playing an active and dominant role on what is moral and what is not. Music that is not 'in accordance with the standard' is considered immoral. Tong (2011) agrees with this statement and states that the traditional moral obligation of the state to the well-being of the people has provided the foundation for the regime legitimacy in China. This extends to its involvement with the arts.

Ho and Law (2004) describe the Chinese music scene as being in a struggle. The Chinese government needs music to 'articulate a sense of corporate identity around traditional values, while being responsive to the demands of the modern world' (Ho and Law 2004: 16). However, ever since the exposure of China to foreign pop music, the government has faced great difficulty to satisfy the musical needs of the Chinese youth. Fung (2007) describes the Chinese music industry as fundamentally changed after the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976): 'From a passive propaganda machine which abhorred popular music and impeded any influx of libertarian values associated with its dissemination, to an active, flexible state to absorb, distort and even mold the popular music of the times to co-opt the people and public culture'

(Fung 2007: 435). Nevertheless, he also argues that the political continues to trump the economic in government policy and that music production driven by financial gain alone is destined for failure. In another article, Fung (2016), he argues that the music industry in China is used by the state for nation branding. Fung however states that because of the state's intense interference, music as a creative industry is at a standstill. The Chinese audience would rather consume illegal music from overseas.

Censorship

After Miklos Haraszti, Barmé (1999) calls censorship in China 'a velvet prison', where censorship is a partnership between state and artists. Self-censorship is the major form of ideological control. De Kloet (2008) disagrees with the image of the velvet prison, and states that the relationship between state and artists in China is not a case of full compliance nor full opposition. De Kloet also writes that the regulations of censorship in China are intentionally ambiguous, to give the state tools to 'censor anyone at any time for just about anything' (2008: 183). According to Fung (2008), to fine-tune popular music the state exercises power through political censorship, because popular culture plays a critical role in the political formation of the state. Hockx (2018) distinguishes two kinds of censorship: moral censorship and political censorship. Moral censorship is 'based on a general sense (or perceived social consensus) about what is right or wrong, safe or harmful' (2018: 1). Political censorship is 'inspired much more explicitly by the desire to curb opposition to a particular regime or ideology' (2018: 1). Hockx argues that these two types of censorship often overlap in China, making morality a political matter.

Methodology

Below, I will set a theoretical framework for studying music and censorship of cultural production and especially of popular music in China. Subsequently, I performed a discourse analysis on five songs taken from the blacklist of 120 songs. This provides an opportunity to do an in-depth examination of not only their lyrics, but also their video clips, artist, general context and the music itself. I will translate the lyrics into English and include the original Chinese lyrics in the appendix.

The selection I will study in depth, will consist of songs that would normally not be considered too offensive by a Western listener of hip-hop music. I will assess this from what I summarize here as my peer group experience; I am aware that this entails some (normative)

generalization but I believe it constitutes a valid and workable point of departure, which I can back up with reference to published receptions of hip-hop in Western media.

Discourse analysis is a research method to examine human communication through language (above the level of the sentence) and other means: in this case, music and video clips. Therefore, this research method is suitable since I primarily approach music as a form of communication in this study.

Finally, I will use the outcome of the discourse analysis to answer the research question.

Chapter 1: A Short History of Music and Censorship in Contemporary Mainland China

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the role of music and censorship in China. First, I will go through the history of modern China's music and music's status in political and social terms. I will pay special attention to hip-hop music, since most of the banned songs I will be examining are of the hip-hop genre. By examining this history, I aim to answer how politics and music in China are connected. As a foundation of this chapter I will mostly refer to the work of Baranovitch's *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender and Politics* (2003), since this work provides a good insight into the political and social levels of Chinese popular music through the 20th century. For more recent developments that have occurred since the publication of *China's New Voices*, I will refer to other literature if necessary. This chapter will provide us with a foundation for the upcoming chapters.

1.1 The Republican Era: 1912-1949

The beginning of the 20th century was a period in which China was increasingly confronted with the substantial effects of the Western (European) world on Chinese society. Western influences were seen in fashion, politics, education and also in music. During this time, Western influenced music called *liuxing* (流行 'popular') or *shidaiqu* (时代曲 'music of this era') started to develop and was consumed in nightclubs and dancehalls (Baranovitch 2003: 11). After 1931, when Japan had invaded Manchuria, *liuxing* songs were regarded as leftist and decadent and even 'yellow', meaning pornographic (*Ibid*: 14). This view eventually led to the disappearance of *liuxing* music from the mainland after 1949, when the CCP founded the People's Republic of China (*Ibid*: 15).

1.2 The Mao Era: 1949-1976

When Mao (毛泽东) came to power as leader of the CCP, he had very clear ideas about the position of art in society, famously expressed in his 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art': "Literature and art are subordinate to politics, and yet in turn exert enormous influence on it" (McDougall 1980: 75). During this period, music was supposed to propagate and represent the ideology of the Communist party and should be produced for 'the ignorant

masses' (Mittler 1997: 48). Since 'liberal' influences were feared by the CCP, all forms of western music were strictly forbidden and music production was low.

1.3 The Reform Era: 1980s

After Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) came to power in the late 1970s. He initiated several reforms for China, the biggest reform being the 'open door policy'. This policy opened China's borders to the outside world, flooding the country with new foreign products, including popular music from the areas of Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as music from Western countries (Baranovitch 2003: 10). Although government control was looser than during the revolutionary period, this kind of foreign music was still not supported by the government.

However, the firm grip on music of the government was also a lot harder to maintain than before. Foreign music from the West was illegally spread in the mainland through cassettes and later on CDs called '*dakou*' or 'cut-out' (*ibid*). These were CDs that were supposed to be destroyed by the country of origin because of low quality of the product, but instead were sent to China because of lower disposal costs. In order to prevent them from being illegally sold, the CDs were given a cut, leaving out a small part of the edge of the CDs. However, since a CD in a CD player is played from the center to the outside, a big part of the CD could still be listened to (de Kloet 2010: 20). So, instead of being destroyed, most of the music was re-distributed on China's black market, introducing the Chinese masses to western music (Cockrill and Liu 2012: 265).

Combined with the rise of electronic music systems in China, this new music had a democratizing effect, by giving the Chinese people power to choose their own kind of music (Baranovitch 2003: 13). The tapes introduced the Chinese youth to a new awareness of the outside world and new values (*ibid*).

1.3.1 The Reappearance of *Liuxing*: Gangtai Music

Before the introduction of *dakou*, the first foreign music that was introduced to post-Mao China was Gangtai-music. The name Gangtai is a combination of the neighboring Chinese areas of Xiang-gang (Hong Kong) and Tai-wan. Among scholars it is agreed that Gangtai songs descended from the *liuxing* songs, the Western influenced music that spread into China during the 1920s and 1930s (Baranovitch 2003: 11). The message of the Gangtai songs was very different from the songs of the previous period (*Ibid*). Instead of singing about love for

China or Chairman Mao, Gangtai performers were singing slow and sweet songs about romantic love. Romantic love was a subject in music that had almost disappeared completely after 1949, since romantic love and individualistic emotions were considered ‘bourgeois’ and not in line with the collective and political ideals of the Chinese government (*Ibid*).

Even though Gangtai music was disapproved by the officials, it became very popular among the Chinese people because of several reasons. The novelty and content of the Gangtai songs was something the Chinese public was craving after years of suppression and control on the area of cultural production (Gold 1993: 913). Another reason Gangtai was so easily accepted by the Chinese, was the fact that even though the songs were foreign, they were still performed in the Chinese language (Gold 1993: 913).

It took the government nearly ten years to officially recognize *liuxing* music in 1986 (Baranovitch 2003:18). In order to be able to communicate with the young people of China, the government felt obligated to accept the genre.

1.3.2 The Answer to Gangtai music: Xibeifeng

Gangtai songs were very sweet and slow with a very polished style of singing. In 1986 a new style of music called Xibeifeng (西北风 ‘northwest wind’) emerged, which was a musical reaction to these sweet Gangtai songs (Baranovitch 2003: 19). The music had the characteristics of Northwest folksongs (mainly Northern Shaanxi province), combined with a heavy beat. The vocals were very strong and loud, almost like screaming (*Ibid*). Xibeifeng songs were typically Chinese, but at the same time very modern, representing a new era of creativity in Chinese culture (*Ibid*: 20).

While Gangtai songs were mostly about the feelings of the individual, Xibeifeng artists sang about a longing for a collective identity and resistance against the feeling that the government defined them to be someone they were not (Baranovitch 2003: 21). A lot of young Chinese people had feelings like these and they were in conflict with themselves because of the changes between the old and new China. Xibeifeng was a way to release that tension according to Baranovitch (2003: 25). Baranovitch writes that the sentiments shared in Xibeifeng songs reflected and “shaped the intense public and cultural political negation that was taking place on the mainland during the 1980s” (*Ibid*). These sentiments came to a climax during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, where Chinese students protested on the Tiananmen Square for democracy and freedom of speech. The violent suppression of the

protesters at Tiananmen was the start of a drastic transformation in popular music, resulting in the disappearance of the ideals and criticism in XibEIFeng songs (Baranovitch 2003: 26-27).

1.3.3 Chinese Rock

In the late 1980s, Chinese rock music started to emerge in Beijing. The biggest influence of China's introduction to rock music were growing numbers of foreign students residing in the capital (Huang 2001: 3). The first Chinese rock bands were mostly set up by foreigners and also included foreign musicians (Baranovitch 2003: 31).

Cui Jian (崔健) was the Chinese rock star that introduced the wider Chinese public to rock music. He embodied individualism and rebellion and grasped the essence of Western rock (Baranovitch 2003: 31). By writing and performing his own songs with lyrics about his personal experiences, he was challenging the official's policy on music. Cui became a voice for the young intellectuals who grew up to be very cynical with regard to communism and traditional China under the western influences that penetrated China. Therefore, it was not surprising that after the success Cui Jian had with its first appearance during a *tongsu*-concert in 1986, rock music was banned from television by the Chinese government (*Ibid*: 33).

Notably, rock music played a role in the 1989 Tiananmen protest movement. The protesting students could express their feelings of disapproval through Cui Jian's songs and saw rock stars as agents of change. Although rock music, just like XibEIFeng, was not the source of the beginning of the Tiananmen movement, the songs very clearly reflected the longing of young people to finally be able to speak their mind.

The crackdown on the Tiananmen movement and the silencing of rock musicians marked a change in how the government handled critical voices and individualization since 1978. After the introduction of the open-door policy, the government loosened its tight grip on its ideologies. During the 1980s, it is noticeable that popular music and social change were intertwined. However, after the 1990s the Chinese state regained its control.

1.4 The Rise of Commercial Music: the 1990s

1.4.1 Music for Relaxation

By the end of the 1980s, rock music was banned from national television and performances were restricted. As a result, the music genre slowly began to lose its appeal among the youth. While music in the 1980s aimed to stir people up and get them to take action, music in the 1990s was all about relaxation and comfort (轻松 *qingsong*). The decline of rock music

reflected the switch from cultural idealism to materialism. Popular music of the 1990s mostly consisted of sweet, non-political but commercial music (*Ibid*). Gangtai music was thriving, as the genre fit very well within the theme of relaxation.

1.4.2 Music on national television

Officials were aware that solely using official propaganda was not easily accepted by the people anymore and they knew how popular music could influence people's thoughts and behavior (Baranovitch 2013: 195). Therefore, in 1993, the Chinese Music Television channel was established: "The Music Television has to carry on and develop China's traditional culture and reflect the deep love of the people towards homeland and life" (*Ibid*: 194). Although the main goal of this 'Chinese MTV' was to spread the ideologies of the state, the state knew that the music had to be enjoyable, or else people would satisfy their musical needs elsewhere. Therefore, the channel broadcasted a wide array of music, some very political, others subtler or without any message. Chinese Music Television also functioned as a national unifier, emphasizing this by broadcasting only songs that were sung in the official national language of Mandarin. No songs in Cantonese or other regional languages were broadcasted, since this could have spurred on regionalism (*Ibid*: 201-202).

Since the government controlled all media and now also most of the large-scale concerts, it was important for all artists to have a good relationship with cultural officials. As a result, the few rock artists that were left had to let go of their distinctive style of rock and become more commercial in order to survive in the industry (*Ibid*:45).

1.5 The 21st Century: Music and the Internet

1.5.1 The Internet in China

Since the introduction of the internet in China in 1994 and its widespread use starting around 2000, its number of users has shown exponential growth. Before the internet, government control of music via official channels was much easier, since television, radio and concert halls were all state owned. With the rise of the internet it became a lot harder to control influences that were not in line with party ideals. In order to prevent that 'alternative and liberal' values could infiltrate society, filtering the internet's content had become a day job for the government since the internet's introduction (Liu 2011: 38).

The Chinese internet control regime is regarded as one of the most sophisticated in the world, with a combination of legislations, interventions and sanctions in order to encourage

self-censorship (Liu 2011: 38). Big foreign social media sites and search engines such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Google are all blocked by the notorious ‘Great Firewall’ (Liu 2011: 38). However, Chinese netizens are not just helpless victims of government censorship. Chinese netizens have found creative solutions to remain under the radar of government officials. The complexity of Chinese characters has proven useful to bypass the filters. For example: using commas between characters, using romanization, or using characters with similar pronunciation have been ways to remain under the radar of the cyber police (Liu 2011: 40).

Another way for netizens to get past the Great Firewall is by the use of a VPN (Virtual Private Network), which allows the user to get access to websites that are blocked in China. The government has a list of approved VPN providers that allow big companies, for example banks, to get past the firewall in order to do business. Still, there are also a lot of unauthorized VPN services that could be used by common netizens. However, at the beginning of 2018, the government announced that it will put even more effort in banning unauthorized VPN services, since it is illegal to get around the Great Firewall to gain access to foreign sites.³

Completely shutting out foreign sites has proven to be difficult for China, since they cannot be controlled directly. Therefore, the government is fostering national social media and search engines like Baidu, QQ, and Youku in order to offer the people platforms that can be more easily controlled (*Ibid*). This tight control of the Chinese internet reflects that from the very beginning, the Chinese internet has been regarded as a force for China’s national economic development, rather than a democratic platform for Chinese netizens (Liu 2011: 41).

1.5.2 Hip-hop Music Finds its Way to China

At the beginning of the new century, a Taiwanese student with the stage name MC Hotdog (热狗) released his first album which contained the song ‘Let Me Rap’ (让我 rap). Most of the scholars that examined China’s hip-hop scene regard the release of this album as the arrival of ‘authentic’ hip-hop in China (Xiao 2017: 196). Chinese hip-hop did not start as an underground movement, unlike its American predecessor. Hip-hop originated from the streets of the Bronx with the ideology of ‘Keeping it real’, which makes an authenticity claim. The authenticity of hip-hop is ingrained with the struggles of the lives of African-Americans and

³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-vpns/businesses-consumers-uncertain-ahead-of-china-vpn-ban-idUSKBN1H612F>

hip-hop music is argued to have a quintessentially ‘black’ sound (de Kloet 2010: 69). However, with the growth of hip-hop globally, the culture slowly started to entangle from this origin and proved that it could be molded into something else in other countries. In its beginning stage, Chinese hip-hop embraced the American fads for the most part, while leaving out the racial dynamics of Western hip-hop (Xiao 2017: 202). The media and state used hip-hop culture as a means to connect with the Chinese youth. For example, in 2004, the government invited hip-hop star Jay Chou (周杰倫) to perform on the CCTV New Year Gala in order to draw in a younger audience (Xiao 2017: 202).

One of the most interesting parts of Chinese hip-hop culture and music has been rap: “a musical form that makes use of rhyme, rhythmic speech, and street vernacular, which is recited or loosely chanted over a musical soundtrack”. (Keyes 2002:1). Rap music emerged on the streets of black neighborhoods in America and became a way for young black people to express their frustrations with society and their hopes for the future through music. Rap is often associated with the glorification of crime and violence (Kubrin 2005: 360). According to some scholars, the structure of Chinese languages, especially the official language Mandarin, made it more difficult to use for rap music. Xiao (2017: 210) writes that Mandarin is a tonal and monosyllabic language and unlike English, every word receives the same amount of stress and therefore resulted in awkward attempts to create compelling rhythms. He also writes that it seemed that early rappers didn’t feel comfortable to do an entire song in rap style. However, the Mandarin language certainly did not stop Chinese hip-hop artists from rapping.

The internet made it much easier for musicians to produce music outside of the authority of mainstream pop and this challenged the traditional one-way media with its limitations of national language and identity. (Xiao 2017: 210). The open sphere of the internet also meant that it was possible to produce rap in local dialects, which were more suitable for creating an appealing rhythm. Rappers now had interaction with an enormous virtual audience and started to change into the voice of critique on China’s social problems. However, this does not mean that Chinese hip-hop artists could express everything they want on the internet. In February 2009, for instance, the Chinese government shut down thousands of websites that contained “large amounts of low and vulgar content that violates the social morality and damages the physical and mental health of youth” (Xiao 2017: 224). This campaign also shut down a lot of websites that were used by rappers to spread their music, and artists had to become more creative to speak their mind.

In 2017, hip-hop in China was at the peak of its popularity, mostly due to the new popular online series ‘The Rap of China’ (中国有嘻哈). The show involved a Chinese rap competition with three celebrity producers, who would train and guide the competitors. The show had a major impact on Chinese society and accumulated 1.3 billion⁴ streams in little over a month. It was credited for bringing hip-hop to the mainstream.⁵

However, in January 2018, the Chinese government banned the two winners of the show, rapper PG One (王昊) and GAI (周延), from appearing on television because their music’s content and appearance was contradicting ‘Communist Party moral values’.⁶ Shortly after, the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT) applied a broadcasting ban on all performers who were part of ‘hip-hop culture’. The Chinese news organization Sina quotes four rules by Gao Changli (高长力), director of the SAPPRFT regarding this ban:

1. Absolutely do not use actors whose heart and morality are not aligned with the party and whose morality is not noble
 2. Absolutely do not use actors who are tasteless, vulgar and obscene
 3. Absolutely do not use actors whose ideological level is low and have no class
 4. Absolutely do not use actors with stains, scandals and problematic moral integrity
-
1. 对党离心离德、品德不高尚的演员坚决不用
 2. 低俗，恶俗、媚俗的演员坚决不用
 3. 思想境界、格调不高的演员坚决不用
 4. 有污点有绯闻、有道德问题的演员坚决不用⁷

Several media attributed this move of the SAPPRFT to the Chinese authorities’ concerns with western influence and ‘black’ culture. Still, since the rules regarding this ban are rather vague, it is hard to prove whether this is the case. Also, the ‘ban on hip-hop’ doesn’t mean that rappers are totally vanished from public broadcasting. For example, the Higher Brothers (海尔兄弟) produced rap songs with titles like ‘Made in China’ and ‘WeChat’. These songs are set

⁴ Number of individual streams, not based on individual viewers.

⁵ <http://news.163.com/17/0915/13/CUCKUH4D00018AOR.html>

⁶ <http://ent.163.com/18/0118/14/D8EL11J000038FO9.html>

⁷ <http://ent.sina.com.cn/tv/zy/2018-01-19/doc-ifyquptv7935320.shtml>

against an enticing beat, while promoting subtle nationalism. This leaves the government with nothing to complain about.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed a short history of music in modern China and how it developed in a changing political and social landscape. When we look into Chinese music through the course of modern history, it becomes clear that music and politics always have been closely connected in China. Popular music has been a reflection of the changing ideologies of the state, and it has been used to promote these ideologies. We can also see that censorship by the government has always been present in Chinese music. The intensity of government control on music has varied from rather loose to very tight, present day being the latter. The more China's government fears 'bad influences' through music on the behavior of its people, the tighter the control will probably be.

We now have a background of how the government regards music and why it treats it like it does: Music is a way for the government to connect to the Chinese people but at the same time it could potentially undermine the government's control. Therefore, the government always keeps a close watch on music through censorship. With this in mind, in the next chapter I examined a selection of five songs from China's blacklist of 2015 and interpreted why the government may have banned these songs.

Chapter 2: The Banned Songs

Introduction

In this chapter I will take a closer look at the blacklisted songs of 2015. I selected five songs of the list, in order to perform an in-depth discourse analysis on the lyrics,⁸ video clips, artists, general context and the music itself. I will also include some comments that Chinese viewers (who probably gained access with the use of a VPN) left on the video clips. From my own perspective I reasoned why the Chinese government may have banned the songs. I selected the following songs:

‘I Love Taiwanese Girls’ (我爱台妹) - by MC Hotdog (热狗) feat. A-Yue

‘They’ (他们) – by Li Zhi (李志)

‘Beijing Evening News’ (北京晚报) - by Yin Sanr (阴三儿)

‘Suicide Diary’ (自殺日記)- by New Street Combination (新街口组合)

‘University Self-Study Room’ (大学生自习室) – by Hao Yu (郝雨)

There are various reasons for this particular selection. I chose to include three songs by artists that had multiple of their songs on the blacklist, and therefore I deemed these songs worthy of some further investigation. The other two songs are by artists with only one song on the blacklist, but which, in my point of view, had interesting lyrics and/or context.

All five songs normally would not be considered too shocking by a Western listener of popular music. I have assessed this from my own experience: A Dutch woman born in the 1990s who is deeply familiar with the Western (especially Dutch) hip-hop scene and popular music. I am aware that due to my background, I am prone to generalize on the subject, but for the scope of this thesis, my perspective can be a valuable starting point. Since I am most familiar with Dutch hip-hop music I can back up my experience with reference to published receptions of hip-hop in the Dutch media.

2.1 ‘I Love Taiwanese Girls’

The song ‘I Love Taiwanese Girls’, is written by the so-called Godfather of hip-hop (嘻哈教父):⁹ MC Hotdog. Yao Zhongren (姚中仁, the rapper’s official Chinese name) was born in

⁸ See Appendix for complete lyrics in Chinese.

⁹ <https://baike.baidu.com/item/MC%20Hotdog>

Taipei, 1978. As a college student in 1996, Yao started rapping and publishing his self-made CDs on several hip-hop related websites, where he caught the attention of other internet rappers.¹⁰ In 1999, his home-made music went viral and even spread to the music market in mainland China. In 2000, he signed with the Taiwanese music label Magic Stone and produced 4 EPs in the following year.¹¹ It was in 2006 that he released his first full album titled ‘Wake Up’, including the song ‘I Love Taiwanese Girls’. For this album he won the award of Best Mandarin Album Award at the 18th Golden Melody Awards, an honor awarded by the Taiwanese Ministry of Culture. However, he was not allowed to perform on the Award Ceremony, since the songs on the album contained swear-words.¹² MC Hotdog has a total of eight songs on the blacklist.

The video-clip of the song is rather basic.¹³ All the shots are filmed in a studio with a plain grey background. We can see MC Hotdog in a suit and with a big watch, throwing around money. He also poses in front of a big jeep with champagne bottles in his hands, wearing a typical American hip-hop outfit: a baggy sports jersey.¹⁴ All this flaunting with money and expensive items seem to implicate that MC Hotdog lives a very luxurious lifestyle. Another notable aspect of the clip is the presence of a lot of scantily dressed women, posing on motorcycles or dancing in front of the rapper. Without listening to the lyrics yet, the song seems very sexually suggestive. The clip feels very similar to American hip-hop videos of the early 2000s, focusing primarily on money and sex.

Although the clip feels very hip-hop, the music sounds more like a mixture of genres. MC Hotdog raps all the couplets and singer A-Yue (張震嶽) sings the chorus. Hotdog’s style of rapping feels very ‘Old-Skool’, the original style of rapping that emerged around 1979. ‘Old-Skool’ rapping is known for its simplicity and in the present day is considered a bit unadventurous and outdated (Forman and Neal 2004: 61). The simple style of rapping could be due to the fact that MC Hotdog was one of the firsts to rap in Mandarin and therefore was still exploring how to use the language for rapping. The music itself on the other hand doesn’t give me a hip-hop vibe. The melody line is very simple, just bass and guitar, with a lighthearted and basic ‘pop’ sound. The beat is provided by a drum set, only consisting of a plain kick and snare. This beat is very different from American hip-hop beats, which have a much more prominent low and hard bass drum. Also, American hip-hop music rarely makes

¹⁰ <https://baike.baidu.com/item/MC%20Hotdog>

¹¹ <https://baike.baidu.com/item/MC%20Hotdog>

¹² <https://baike.baidu.com/item/MC%20Hotdog>

¹³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ8mn5fS5_M

¹⁴ <https://www.complex.com/sports/2017/09/iconic-sports-jersey-moments-in-rap-videos/>

use of 'real' instruments, but rather makes use of drum computers and samples (Schloss 2004: 69). Overall, the song feels like an innocent happy pop song trying to be hip-hop, which is not surprising due to the fact that hip-hop was still mostly an unexplored territory in China at that time.

When we look into the lyrics¹⁵ of the songs, a couple of sentences stand out. The song indeed contains a lot of sexual references:

"If I could spend a night with you, no matter how much the baby formula will cost,
I'll definitely pay it for you- but it's not that I like to show off.
Please sprinkle a little bit of dreamy perfume,
and change your shoes to the sexiest high heels.
Among the crowd, you are the most dazzling."

"I just don't believe you still have virginal hymens, they were all penetrated by idiots."

"If you get pregnant I'll take you to Shun Feng Maternity Clinic."

"Strip of your clothes, throw away your bra."

These lyrics are quite explicit and do not leave much to the imagination. MC Hotdog openly raps that he wants to have sex with Taiwanese girls, and even says that he will pay for the costs if the girl happens to get pregnant from him. I can imagine that these lyrics did not get much appreciation from the Chinese government. In Western hip-hop, the sexualization of women is very common and contested (Forman and Neal 2004: 241).

Even though the song is very sexual, I think the main reason why the Chinese officials did not like the song, is possibly because of the position Taiwan gets in the song. It starts with lyrics like these:

"I love Taiwanese chicks; Taiwanese chicks love me.
What's Lin Zhi Ling to me? [a Taiwanese celebrity]

"I love Taiwanese chicks; Taiwanese chicks love me.
What's Hou Pei Shen to me?" [a Taiwanese journalist]

¹⁵ See Appendix I.

“As for girls with a Taiwanese flair, my adrenaline lights up a red light without contemplation.”

“I like the accent of Taiwanese girls.”

So, in these lyrics we can see that MC Hotdog want to express that he really likes Taiwanese girls. Expressing a preference for Taiwan and Taiwanese girls is probably a very sensitive point in China because of the ‘One China’ idea. This idea means that according to the Chinese government, the Taiwanese people are in fact Chinese and that the island of Taiwan is an integral part of China. However, a lot of Taiwanese nationalist reject the idea that Taiwan and China are one country and that they must be ruled by a single government (Wang 2000: 161). With this in mind I think that the crucial lyric in this song could be the following:

“I don't love Chinese ladies, I love Taiwanese girls- may they live long!”

With this lyric, MC Hotdog insinuates that Taiwanese girls and Chinese girls are actually not the same and therefore also insinuates that China is in fact not one and the same country. Therefore, it seems like this song was not only the subject of moral censorship but also of political censorship.

When looking into the comment section of the videoclip, a lot of the Chinese viewers mention the ban and their opinions on it vary. Some people indeed think that the last-mentioned sentence could be the reason for the ban:

“0:14 是這句才被大陸禁? 應該是。”

“Is the sentence on 0:14 banned by the mainland? It could be.”

Others seem to be more convinced that the ban got caused by the vulgar context of the song:

“其实关于大陆对这首歌的态度不用过度解读，真的只是有侮辱性词汇才 ban 掉而已。”

“You don't need over-analyze China's attitude towards the song, it's really just the vulgar vocabulary that got it banned.”

“感觉是后面的把衣服都掀起来，把奶罩都丢上来。”

“I feel like it’s because of the ‘strip of your clothes, throw away your bra’ at the end.”

2.2 ‘They’

This sensitive issue of Taiwan is also present in the song ‘They’, by artist Li Zhi (李志). Li Zhi is a singer-songwriter from the Chinese province Jiangsu. In the Baidu encyclopedia¹⁶ his voice is described as ‘not beautiful but hoarse, and yet still adoring’ and is compared to a medieval minstrel making fun of trivial things.¹⁷ Online, he is praised by netizens for his realism and expressing the feelings of the Chinese working class.¹⁸

The song does not seem to have an official video-clip, but there are some videos of live performances of the songs.¹⁹ When looking at the performances, one of the first things I noticed was that Li Zhi looks very ordinary, not at all like a popular musician. He simply performs in jeans, a plain t-shirt and trainers. He supports his singing by playing the guitar, which is also the only instrument of this song. Li’s guitar skills seem to be very basic, since he only uses a very simple strumming technique and a small number of chords. For me, this gives the song a bit of an amateurish vibe and this is not something you would expect from a quite popular artist. This probably explains why Li is compared to a minstrel, whose message is probably more important than his musical skills. This was one of the reasons for examining the song more thoroughly. By just listening to the melody, ‘They’ comes across as a happy, non-threatening song. The audience seems to know the song by heart, and during the song they all sing along. This makes me curious about the content of the lyrics.

The following lyrics²⁰ of the song stand out to me:

“Comrade Sun Yat-sen, Dr. Mao Ruizhi, A-bian has nothing to do.
They point to the left, they point to the right.”

“Eyes closed and just accept it, eyes open and just put up with it, our lives are so wonderful.”

¹⁶ China's largest online encyclopedia by users, similar to Wikipedia.

¹⁷ <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%9D%8E%E5%BF%97/130401?fi=aladdin>

¹⁸ <https://baike.baidu.com/tashuo/browse/content?id=e5a23826838b610f7bac37e8&lemmaId=&fromLemmaModule=pcBottom>

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOHpIDVVYxo>

²⁰ See Appendix II.

In the first sentence Li names three people. The first one is Sun Yat-sen (孫中山), the founder of the Republic of China. In Taiwan, Sun Yat-sen is still considered the “Father of the nation”. (Bergère and Lloyd 2000 : 2) The second name is Mao Ruizhi (毛潤之), which is the courtesy name²¹ of Mao Zedong (毛澤東), the founding father of the People’s Republic of China. The third is A-Bian (阿扁), which is a nickname for one of Taiwan’s presidents and leader of the Democratic Progressive Party, Chen Sui-Bian (陳水扁).²² Though it is hard to say anything specific about this, it is possible that Chinese officials were not pleased with ‘the original founder of modern China’ being mentioned next to Mao Zedong, and Mao Zedong next to Chen Shui-bian. The rest of the song seems indeed to critique ‘they’ (他們), which I think stands for the leaders of China, being responsible for the inequality in China.

“Some people are weeping, some people are singing, some are wealthy since birth.
Some people are struggling, some people live in fantasy, some people didn’t have anything to eat in their life.”

“They point to the left, they point to the right, they bought aphrodisiacs.
We cannot talk, we cannot do, our lives are so wonderful.”

What Li seems to suggest is that the people at the top of the society can do everything they want and tell other people what to do. Especially the sentence ‘our lives are so wonderful’, combined with the simple happy melody of the songs, suddenly give the song a more ironic feel. So, to me, it feels like this song hasn’t got any explicit immoral lyrics, but probably brought up a sensitive political topic, which might have caused censorship. The fact that Li is known as a voice for the working class, probably made the song even more sensitive for censorship.

Commenters on the live performance on Youtube also discuss Li Zhi’s irony and realism as a potential reason the song got banned:

“李志歌多数以讽刺和高级黑为主题。”

“Li Zhi mostly uses satire and dark humor as themes.”

²¹ A name bestowed upon one at adulthood in addition to one's given name.

²² <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%99%88%E6%B0%B4%E6%89%81?fromtitle=%E9%98%BF%E6%89%581&fromid=11172755>

“歌曲內容很普通、很現實、很真實。”

“The content of the song is very common, very real and very true.”

What I also found interesting to see in the comments was the feeling that the ban actually made song more popular and gave it an extra layer of irony:

“终于红了”

“It’s finally popular.”

“这首歌在现在听起来更讽刺了。”

“The song sounds even more ironic now.”

“越禁越要听啊。不错。”

“The more they ban, the more I want to listen. Not bad.”

By trying to erase the song, the government actually put it in a spotlight and gave the song a deeper meaning. Even though the song was already quite popular before the ban, it is possible the ban made the song even more appealing for certain listeners.

2.3 ‘Beijing Evening News’

In the song ‘Beijing Evening News’, by the group Yin Sanr (阴三儿), we also see a very harsh description of Chinese society, focused on the nightlife in Beijing. The group consists of three rappers from Beijing, a city in which they are considered the most famous and popular in the underground hip-hop scene. The group started working together in 2007 and is described as ‘three recalcitrant and wild youths.’²³ Yin Sanr has seventeen songs on the blacklist, the most of all the artists on the list. In an interview with *The Guardian* one of the members explains that booking gigs since the ban became has become nearly impossible. Their censorship got to the point that once they finally booked a show in 2012, the members got arrested by the

²³ <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%98%B4%E4%B8%89%E5%84%BF/6269104?fr=aladdin>

police, under the pretense of cannabis use. The members quickly realized that drugs were not the actual reason for their detention:

“The police said they had been watching us for a long time and that the only reason they didn’t detain us was because we hadn’t played shows until then.”²⁴

This story illustrates the dangerous position the band holds in China’s cultural life.

Since the song does not have a video-clip, I watched a live performance of the song online.²⁵ The location of the performance seems to be in a dark, underground hip-hop club. Because of the way they dress, the rappers have a very western vibe: baggy clothing, beanies, caps and one of them even has dreadlocks. On the stage there is imagery of Bob Marley and the people on stage are drinking and smoking during the performance, which is often seen within hip-hop culture. The audience really seems to be engaging with the performance.

Whereas ‘I Love Taiwanese Girls’ still felt like it was ‘trying’ to be hip-hop, ‘Beijing Evening News’ already feels a lot more like authentic hip-hop. Considering this song is from 2008, it does feel a bit outdated compared to American hip-hop songs of that time but it does contain typical hip-hop elements like scratching, sampling and a mellow beat from a drum machine. The music gives off a very relaxed and fun vibe. However, the laid-back instrumentals are in contrast with the members vocals. The rapping has a very organic flow and the rappers don not seem to feel restricted by using Mandarin for their rap. The way the members rap feels violent, they really ‘spit’ their words with a very thick Beijing accent.

The lyrics²⁶ describe the nightlife in the city of Beijing. Just like in the song by MC Hotdog, we see a lot of references towards sex:

“Beijing Evening News.

There are people advertising that they want to get married and all that kind of stuff,

That’s just arrogance and they just want to fuck.”

“Everyone goes out in the weekends to get something,

Low prices and local prostitutes.”

²⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/05/chinas-hip-hop-stars-feel-the-heat-of-xi-jinpings-battle-to-control-culture>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCOb4OA70BE>

²⁶ See Appendix III.

What I personally found interesting was the word 操 ‘fuck’, which is Chinese slang and a frequently used swear word, heavy expletive.

There are also lyrics about drugs use:

“Some people drink, some take drugs.”

“Some get forced to take a urine test. [for drugs]”

And then there are also lyrics that criticize problems in Chinese society, like corruption and lack of welfare:

“Red, white and blue car lights,
light up the whole street.
But they just pretend they don’t see what’s going on.”

“You have to take medicine when you are sick.
But medicines are too expensive and there’s no public healthcare.”

"Some sleep under subway underpasses, others eat out on government expenses."

Yin Sanr seems to express that while some people are so poor they barely get by, Chinese officials turn a blind eye to these problems and just enjoy their comfortable lifestyle. This expression seems similar to the song of Li Zhi. Therefore, I assume, it could be possible that in addition to the main issue with the lyrics about sex and drugs, this critique on Chinese officials and the harshness of the song could also play a part in this ban. This is what a lot of YouTube commenters also point out:

“这个说唱，里面喝酒泡妞的形容一共才几句话，他们也没有讽刺北京的夜生活，主要骂的是官猿腐败，高额医疗，低效体制教育和贫困问题。”

“This rap has some lyrics about alcohol and girls. They don’t satire the nightlife of Beijing, they mostly scold the corruption of officials, the high costs of medical treatment, the bad educational system and poverty.”

“描述现实，揭露问题，这才是有责任心的嘻哈。”

“Describing reality and exposing problems, that is the duty of hip-hop.”

“文化部封歌的主要原因就是揭露社会了。”

“Exposing society is the main reason the song got banned by the Ministry of Culture.”

2.4 ‘Suicide Diary’

As the name already suggests, the song ‘Suicide Diary’, by New Street Combination (新街口组合), deals with the sensitive topics of suicide and depression. New Street Combination is a hip-hop collaboration between the two artists MC Han (张晗) and Song (宋之锴), established in 2007. Since 2007 the group released ten albums that were very well received by the Chinese public. According to their Baidu page, the artists are considered to be ‘hip-hop pioneers’ and ‘the backbone of Mandarin hip-hop’.²⁷ In order to expand Chinese hip-hop, the group even mentors young hip-hop artists to help them become successful artists themselves.

The videoclip of ‘Suicide Diary’ is very simple.²⁸ The setting of the video is what seems to be an underground bunker and the overall vibe is very dark. Han is dressed in typical baggy hip-hop clothing, but his shirt is covered in ‘blood’ and he holds a (fake) gun that he points to his head. There is also imagery of a teddy bear covered in ‘blood’. The song is set to a mellow beat and a simple base line. Besides that, the melody is provided by a piano, which gives the song a very melancholic and sad vibe. Out of the five songs I selected, the instrumentals of this one felt the most ‘Western’ to me. The song came out in 2013 and compared to ‘Beijing Evening News’ of 2008, the song feels a lot more like contemporary hip-hop already. Han raps the entire song in a very angry and more generally emotional manner. Even without lyrics you can feel that the subject of the song is very sensitive and heavy. It is also interesting that the chorus is sang by a woman, using only English lyrics. This also contributes to the more international feeling of the song.

The lyrics²⁹ of the song are grim and very explicit. The artist expresses a desire to end life because he cannot deal with it anymore. He describes very detailed how he would commit suicide:

²⁷ <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%96%B0%E8%A1%97%E5%8F%A3%E7%BB%84%E5%90%88/6564884?fi=aladdin>

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0Zs4hglVXY>

²⁹ See Appendix IV.

“One day, I tried to use a blade.

I wanted to make a thorough break with this damn life.”

“I think if there was a gun at the time.

I would definitely have aimed it at my temple.”

“I long to experience cutting my carotid artery.”

“I’d like to have a permanent sleep by using tranquilizers.”

Not only are ways of suicide described, but also the reason why someone would like to take his own life:

“I would rather understand how to die.

I don’t want to understand the complexity and cruelty of this society.”

These lyrics express a critical voice against Chinese society. So, on the one hand this song has a ‘moral’ problem, since it ‘glorifies’ suicide and could be considered dangerous for younger listeners. This is topic that a lot of people would probably agree on. On the other hand, it is also possible that at the same time some political issue is at work here, because the song criticizes the harshness of Chinese society. Since New Street Combination has a total of eight songs on the blacklist, it is imaginable that the artists songs were already under the censor’s microscope and therefore subject of both moral and political censorship.

Among Youtube commenters, there is a lot of disunity about the ban of ‘Suicide Diary’. Compared to the other songs, there a quite a lot of people who actually agree that the Chinese government did right by banning the song, because they feel it promotes suicide:

“怎么能提倡自杀呢，应该禁止。”

“How can you promote suicide, this should be banned.”

“觉得，有些歌曲，文化部禁一下还是好的，像这种宣扬自杀的，还是禁的好。”

“I think there are some songs that should be banned by the Ministry of Culture. It seems like it promotes suicide, they did good banning it.”

It seems like for many people this song indeed has a big moral issue, and therefore the ban feels justified to them.

2.5 ‘University Self-Study Room’

The last song I will discuss feels a bit like the odd one out and therefore sparked my interest. Unlike the other songs, ‘University Self-Study Room’ is not by a professional artist, or someone who desired to be an artist at all. In 2003, the writer of the song, Hao Yu (郝雨), was a University student at Harbin Engineering University. According to his Baidu page, Hao used to listen to artists like Cui Jian and Eminem and was inspired to write his own songs for fun in his free time.³⁰ He spread his songs, which were about life at university, among some friends. One of his friends attended Jilin University, where he posted Hao’s song ‘University Self-Study Room’ on the electronic bulletin board of the university. Since the content of the songs resonated with the young students, a lot of them started to share the song. Within no time the song spread from Jilin to universities all over China and it was even picked up by radio stations.³¹ Many Chinese students started to make their own videoclips and parodies of the song, making the song one of the big internet-hypes of 2003. After graduation, Hao Yu did not pursue a further musical career, but instead started working as a deputy secretary of the Youth League of the CCP.³²

The song’s videoclip is a very simple animation,³³ and in addition to that, also a lot of parody videos of the song can be found online. Most of the parodies are filmed at universities, where students act out the lyrics.³⁴ The song itself sounds a bit amateurish. The beat is very basic and is just repeating the same two measures. You can clearly hear that the song was recorded with very simple equipment, since the quality of the sound is very low. Hao performs the entire song by rapping in a strong Harbin accent. Overall the song sounds very lighthearted and a bit funny.

³⁰ <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%83%9D%E9%9B%A8/10752195#3>

³¹ <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%83%9D%E9%9B%A8/10752195#3>

³² <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%83%9D%E9%9B%A8/10752195#3>

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qii0P-QvX8Y&t=114s>

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCZtx5i0ZOM&t=105s>

As for the lyrics,³⁵ in this song I found it very difficult to find aspects that in my view may have caused the song to get banned. In an interview with Hao Yu, he also expresses he has no clue why his song got banned but that since he has worked for the government for years, he also knows that such bans are common.³⁶ The lyrics are basically about the singer wanting to be a good student and therefore seeking a quiet place to study at the university. However, he is constantly interrupted by his fellow student who are talking, eating, or playing music in the self-study room. In the end he is fed up and asks himself what people are coming to the self-study room for. To me, the lyrics are quite innocent. The only vulgar word I could find in the lyrics was 他妈的, which literally translates to ‘his mother’s’, but is slang for ‘damn’ or ‘fuck’ (but a much weaker expletive than 操, which literally means ‘fuck’, mentioned above):

“Do you see that brother next to you, he looks a bit mischievous.
He is very busy, having more than ten text messages.
But he fucking doesn’t switch from ringtone to vibrate.”

Other than this I could not find anything explicit in the lyrics and also no content that seemed sensitive on a political front.

A lot of commenters on the video also do not seem to understand the reason of the ban. They do however express a sense of recognition and nostalgia of their own university experiences:

“初中一年级时第一次听，当时不太理解里面的情节。如今读研究生了，发现十多年了，这首歌依然那么经典，而我也完全体会到了歌中的各种奇葩事情。非常真实，难以理解为什么会禁。”

“I heard this for the first time in my first year of junior high. At that time, I didn’t really understand the plot. Nowadays I’m a graduate student and after ten years this song is still a classic. I totally experienced the marvelous things in the song. So realistic, it’s hard to understand why it got banned.”

³⁵ See Appendix V.

³⁶ <http://www.yystv.cn/p/1900>

“我真不明白为什么这个歌会被禁。这歌说的就是挺真实的事儿，想必大家也都有过类似的经历。”

“I really don't understand why this song got banned. These things in this song are very realistic, everybody probably had a similar experience.”

When reading the comments, we can see that a lot of Chinese students recognize the experiences of unmotivated students in the song. Another possible explanation for the ban could be that the song projects an image of higher education that does not correspond to the official image in which students are invariably committed to their studies and well behaved.

Conclusion

After examining the artists, music, lyrics and context of the songs, I have a better image of why the Chinese government could have banned the songs. From the five songs, three of them contain content that I think could have been subject to moral censorship. ‘I Love Taiwanese girls’, ‘Beijing Evening News’ and ‘Suicide Diary’ discuss subjects like drugs, sex and suicide, which could be considered a bad influence on people. Then there is also the song ‘They’ which does not have any explicit lyrics but does contains lyrics about Taiwan, which is a touchy subject in China. Furthermore, it also expresses critique on inequality between rich and poor. It seems like this song is more likely censored because of political reasons. The critique on Chinese society is also present in ‘Beijing Evening News’ and ‘Suicide Diary’ and in ‘I Love Taiwanese Girls’ the topic of Taiwan is also mentioned. However, since these songs also do consist of more obvious ‘immoral’ content, it is harder to tell if it is just moral censorship or a combination with censorship of sensitive politics. Only ‘University Self-Study Room’ left me guessing why it was censored. It did not discuss any sensitive political subjects or explicit lyrics except from one relatively conventional cuss-word.

After examining the songs, it is time to look into the legislations regarding internet culture and examine the article which was the reason these songs got banned. Afterwards, I will confront the article and the content of the banned songs, to see whether or not the Chinese government is consistent in censoring and what this might tell us about the nature of censorship in present-day China.

Chapter 3: Internet Regulations and Morality

Introduction

The Chinese government has always had a dual attitude towards the internet, signifying both hope and danger. Therefore, the government has always seen it as its duty to protect the Chinese people against the potential ‘harmful’ effects of the internet. This is in line with the general idea of the ‘moral slide’ that is associated with modernity in China, according to the government. (Liu 2011: 103). Especially children and young people engaging with the internet are seen as a big concern for the Chinese officials (Liu 2011: 103). Potential dangers of the internet, according to the government, are changes in the value system, the spread of liberal ideas, growing individuality and fragmentation of society (Liu 2011: 103).

In order to regulate the internet there are twelve government agencies that are involved in internet control, one of them being the Ministry of Culture. The blacklisted songs I analyzed in the previous chapter, were banned by the Ministry of Culture because they were not in line with the rules of the Interim Regulations on the Administration of Internet Culture, more specifically with article 16 of the regulations. Therefore, I will examine the context of these rules, in order to get a better understanding of China’s practice in internet culture. Furthermore, I will try to see if the banning of the songs I previously examined makes sense in this context.

3.1 Interim Regulations on the Administration of Internet Culture

On May 10th 2003, the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China published the Interim Regulations on the Administration of Internet Culture (互联网文化管理暂行规定). Its latest revision was in 2011. The regulations consist of 34 articles, of which I will highlight the most important ones, that apply to all ‘internet cultural products’. I will use an English translation of the regulations provided by Ted Wang (2016) in an article in *Chinese Law & Government*.

第二条 本规定所称互联网文化产品是指通过互联网生产、传播和流通的文化产品，主要包括：

(一) 专门为互联网而生产的网络音乐娱乐、网络游戏、网络演出剧（节）目、网络表演、网络艺术品、网络动漫等互联网文化产品；

(二) 将音乐娱乐、游戏、演出剧(节)目、表演、艺术品、动漫等文化产品以一定的技术手段制作、复制到互联网上传播的互联网文化产品。

Article 2. In these regulations, the term “internet cultural products” refers to the cultural products produced, disseminated, and circulated through the internet. These mainly include:

(1) Network music and entertainment produced specially for the internet, network games, network plays (programs), network performances, network works of art, network animation and cartoons, and other internet cultural products; and

(2) Music and entertainment, games, plays (programs), performances, works of art, animation and cartoons, and other cultural products that are processed and reproduced by the given technological means as Internet cultural products and disseminated through the internet.

The aim of the regulations is explained in article 5:

第五条 从事互联网文化活动应当遵守宪法和有关法律、法规，坚持为人民服务、为社会主义服务的方向，弘扬民族文化，传播有益于提高公众文化素质、推动经济发展、促进社会进步的思想道德、科学技术和文化知识，丰富人民的精神生活。

Article 5 People engaging in internet cultural activities shall abide by the Constitution and the relevant laws and regulations, adhere to the orientation of serving the people and serving socialism, carry forward fine folk culture, disseminate ideas, morals and scientific, technical and cultural knowledge beneficial to improving the nationality cultural quality, promoting economic development and society's morals, and enrich the people's spiritual life.

In the next article, it is explained that the ministry of Culture shall be responsible for formulating guidelines, policies and plans for the development and management of internet culture and supervising and managing the nationwide internet cultural activities:

第六条 文化部负责制定互联网文化发展与管理的方针、政策和规划，监督管理全国互联网文化活动；依据有关法律、法规和规章，对经营性互联网文化单位实行许可制度，对非经营性互联网文化单位实行备案制度；对互联网文化内容实施监管，对违反国家有关法规的行为实施处罚。

Article 6 The Ministry of Culture shall be responsible for making guidelines, policies and planning for the development and administration of internet culture, supervising the internet cultural activities nationwide; applying a permit system to operational internet cultural entities in accordance with the relevant laws, regulations and rules, applying a record system to non-operational internet cultural entities; supervising the contents of internet culture, and punishing the acts in violation of the relevant regulations of the state.

In order to control internet culture there will be a system of ‘self-examination’, ‘a specialized department’ and ‘special personnel’.³⁷ If somebody was to break one of the regulations, this person will be dealt with ‘according to the law’.³⁸

3.2 Article 16

Article 16 of the Interim is dedicated specifically to the content of internet culture. The article consists of ten rules/guidelines that describe what is considered unacceptable content:

- 第十六条 互联网文化单位不得提供载有以下内容的文化产品：
- （一）反对宪法确定的基本原则的；
 - （二）危害国家统一、主权和领土完整的；
 - （三）泄露国家秘密、危害国家安全或者损害国家荣誉和利益的；
 - （四）煽动民族仇恨、民族歧视，破坏民族团结，或者侵害民族风俗、习惯的；
 - （五）宣扬邪教、迷信的；
 - （六）散布谣言，扰乱社会秩序，破坏社会稳定的；
 - （七）宣扬淫秽、赌博、暴力或者教唆犯罪的；
 - （八）侮辱或者诽谤他人，侵害他人合法权益的；
 - （九）危害社会公德或者民族优秀传统文化的；
 - （十）有法律、行政法规和国家规定禁止的其他内容的。

Article 16. Internet cultural entities must not provide cultural products that contain any of the following:

1. content that defies basic principles set in the constitution;
2. content that undermines the country’s solidarity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity;
3. content that leaks state secrets, endangers state security, or harms the country’s honor and interests;

³⁷ Internim Regulations article 18.

³⁸ Internim Regulations article 17.

4. content that incites ethnic hatred or racial discrimination, undermines ethnic unity, or violates ethnic customs and habits;
5. content that propagates nefarious cults and superstitions;
6. content that spreads rumors, disturbs social order, and undermines social stability;
7. content that promotes obscenity, gambling, and violence, or abets crime;
8. content that defames or slanders others, or infringes upon the legitimate rights of others;
9. content that harms social and public morals or the country's good cultural traditions; and
10. other content prohibited by laws, administrative regulations, and state regulations.

If we look at the content of the rules we can observe several themes. The first theme is aimed towards every content that is going against the state law, as seen in rule 1 and 10. The second theme, in rules 2 and 3, covers everything that, one way or another, might be a major treat to the country. Next is the theme of respect towards other ethnicities or others in general in rules 4 and 8. Then we have a theme against superstition and cults in rule 5 and lastly, we have rules 6, 7 and 9, that are concerned with the people's moral conduct.

3.3 Confronting the Banned Songs with the Rules of Article 16

I have examined the banned songs and I have examined the content of article 16. The next step is to confront the songs with article 16, to see whether or not the banning of the songs makes sense in this context, i.e. whether it appears to be in line with article 16.

3.3.1 'I Love Taiwanese Girls'

This song contained a lot of sexual references. I think we can categorize this under 'obscenity' of rule 7. Based on this alone, the ban on the song appears to be in line with article 16. On top of that, MC Hotdog also seemed to insinuate Taiwan to be different from China, which is an issue that could fall under rule 2. However, this is a bit more difficult to say for sure, as he never explicitly claimed this in his lyrics. This is more about interpretation.

3.3.2 'They'

In 'They', I could not find anything vulgar, violent or criminal. So, what could be the reason for censoring the song? Li Zhi does seem to criticize 'they' in his song. With 'they', Li Zhi could imply higher-ranking officials, though yet again, he does not explicitly mention this. Still, assuming that this is the reason it got banned, I found it very difficult to categorize this.

It could be ‘harming the country’s honor’ of rule 3, ‘spreading rumors’ of rule 6 or ‘defaming or slandering others’ of rule 8. And then there is also the question of mentioning Sun Yat-sen next to Mao Zedong. This might imply undermining territorial integrity. Again, this is a question of interpretation and therefore very difficult to determine whether it was banned for a ‘good’ reason.

3.3.3 ‘Beijing Evening News’

Beijing Evening News covers themes that fit into rule 7, since it describes sex, crime and drugs. The song also mentions corruption and social problems like inequality in wealth, which could be linked to rule 6 (disturb social order), 8 (defame others) and 9 (harm social morals), depending on how you look at it. Whatever the reason for the ban might have been, several aspects of the lyrics can be claimed as a reason for banning.

3.3.4 ‘Suicide Diary’

The detailed descriptions of suicide in this song could probably be marked as ‘obscenity’ (rule 7), disturbing social order (rule 6) or harming social morals (rule 9). For describing Chinese society as ‘cruel’, the song could also be categorized under rule 6 and 9, but also under rule 8, for ‘defaming others’. Yet again, it is unclear how to classify the ‘immoral’ content of this song.

3.3.5 ‘University Self-Study Room’

After examining article 16, I still cannot seem to figure out what part of the song allowed it to get censored. It does not contain any of the themes that are discussed in the ten rules. The only thing I can imagine that censors might not like about it, is the background story of the song. Since the song is basically an internet-meme,³⁹ it is a good example of how rapid music can spread on the internet, and how a song can influence a lot of people in a short amount of time. It might be possible that the ban is used to show the public that the government is always the one to have the last word in these kinds of internet-hypes.

³⁹ An image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by internet users, often with slight variations.

Conclusion

The common theme in this chapter seems to be ambiguity. While confronting the songs with the rules of article 16, it becomes clear that most of the guidelines are vague and therefore leave room for interpretation. Some forbidden themes are reasonably well-defined, like the content concerning crime and gambling. However, most of the themes have an almost unlimited scope. ‘Harming the country’s honor’ or ‘undermining the social stability’ are phrases which meanings are as broad as the censor interprets it or wants to interpret it.

Four of the five songs discussed contain lyrics that in my view were not in line with the rules. But because the rules are so broad, it is also very hard to find out which particular rule(s) caused the songs to get banned, since the rules all seem to overlap. The result of this vagueness is that it is possible for every content to potentially get censored, since it seems that there is always room to categorize unwanted content under one of the prohibited topics. Especially rule 10 of article 16 seems to say ‘every other content the government does not like for some reason.’ This is probably what could explain the case of ‘University Self-Study Room’. I could not find anything in the song that I thought would lead to censorship in context of article 16. Still, I am not surprised that censors found a reason to ban the song, using ambiguous rules as their backup. The combination of vague guidelines with penalties for those who not obey, result into a situation that is very convenient for the Chinese government: self-censorship (van Crevel 2002: 41). And that makes the jobs of censors even more simple.

Concluding remarks

In China's modern history, music and politics always had a complex relationship. On the one hand, music has proven to be a helpful tool in the CCP's politics. Popular music allows the Chinese government to spread their ideology in an informal way that is especially suitable to reach young people. On the other hand, the government always regarded music as a terrain for political struggle, since it is believed that music can also have 'immoral' influences on people. Especially with the rise of the internet, the government is keen on controlling people's access to certain music, by censoring and banning content that is deemed 'immoral'. Therefore, music in China is not only a political barometer for ideologies of the time but can also reflect the government ideas about morality.

When looking into a selection of blacklisted music it was for the most part quite easy to spot the 'immoral' topics. The songs covered themes like drugs, sex, depression or discussed sensitive political topics in an obvious manner. When confronted with the legislations that got the song banned in the first place, it was again easy to see why they might have been labeled as 'immoral'. In fact, most of the problematic parts of the song could arguably be categorized under several topics of immorality. And this pinpoints exactly the distinguishing feature of government censorship of popular music in China: ambiguity. The idea behind government censorship in popular music is to protect the Chinese people from 'bad' influences in music. In order for the government to maintain a full grip on all music, the internet legislations concerning censorship are kept vague on purpose, creating an almost unlimited scope of 'immorality' for censors to work with. An additional 'benefit' for the Chinese government is that vague legislations could lead to self-censorship, since it is so difficult to predict what will become a target of censorship (van Crevel 2002: 41). Liu (2011: 39) also points out that the government often uses a tactic of selective censorship called 'killing the chicken to show the monkey' (杀鸡给猴看, an old Chinese saying for ruling with intimidation). This is probably also the case with the discussed blacklist, as the banned songs on the list might promote self-censorship for other Chinese musicians.

If we compare the theory and practice of morality and censorship in music in the Netherlands we can clearly see differences. According to the Dutch constitution article 7, everybody has the right to freedom of speech and preventive censorship of the government is forbidden. Music can only get censored after publication if, according to a judge, it contains

something that is not in accordance with another law.⁴⁰ This means that in the Netherlands censorship on music is practically non-existent.

However, this does not mean that the government has no opinion on ‘immoral’ messages in Dutch music. A good example of this is the uproar regarding the big Dutch hit song of 2015: ‘Drank en drugs’ (Booze and Drugs), by the rappers Lil Kleine and Ronnie Flex. Dutch parents were furious when the catchy hip-hop song scored number one in the Dutch hit charts, since their young children were singing along to lyrics about alcohol and drugs:

“If your bitch wants to hang out, it’s no problem,
I will go there and I won’t go alone,
Because I have booze and drugs, I have booze and drugs.
All the teens say yes to MDMA.”

The lyrics of the song were even discussed in the Dutch House of Representatives by the Secretary of State, where he expressed his concern that the song seemed to suggest to young people that the use of drugs is a normal thing.⁴¹ However, except a lot of discussion about the song, the song was not taken down and was still played on the Dutch radio stations. Rapper Lil Kleine even expressed that he was happy with all the commotion, since it was after all “free publicity”.⁴²

However, when looking into Dutch music with a more political message, it is not often regarded as something out of the ordinary. If for example we look at the lyrics of rapper Lange Frans (the godfather of Dutch hip-hop) of his song ‘Kamervragen’ (Questions for the House of Representatives) of 2015, we can see that he openly critiques the Dutch Government:

“I’m bright, I’m sober, I’m as sharp as a knife.
The voice of the street, an interpreter for the people,
A troubadour with a message, a rapping son of a bitch.
I want to know who reads my e-mails and has my phone tapped,
And why you save banks with a good bonus,

⁴⁰ https://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl/id/vkjaj9cwjxzo/artikel_7_vrijheid_van_meningsuiting

⁴¹ <https://nos.nl/video/2067290-van-rijn-haalt-liedje-drank-en-drugs-aan-en-uit-zijn-zorgen.html>

⁴² <https://www.parool.nl/kunst-en-media/top-notch-twijfelde-over-drank-en-drugs-op-album-new-wave~a4088234/>

And why people get cancer and a profiteering policy.”

This song was played on Dutch national public radio⁴³ without any political interference, something that probably would have never happened in China.

What does the music scene in the Netherlands – here loosely taken as representative of ‘the West’ – say about the situation in China? It shows that the relationship between music, morality and politics in China is much tighter than it is in the West. In the West, music is more than just entertainment. It is also allowed to be a form of self-expression, regardless of its moral or immoral content. In China on the other hand, the role of music is much more political. Above all else, music should be a form of non-threatening entertainment, preferably promoting the ideas of the government (Perris 1983: 2). The same applies to the role and nature of morality in China. As Hockx (unpublished manuscript) points out, moral censorship and political censorship in China often overlap, as politics and morality are so tightly connected. All content that is not in line with the CCP’s ideology is considered ‘immoral’, making the government the undeniable moral authority as they define what morality is. China’s censorship practices in music tell us that the Chinese government finds it very important to interfere with the people’s morals. It also tells us that the government regards popular music as an important influence in people’s moral behaviour and because of that, music should be under close watch. Therefore, it is no surprise that music like rock and more currently hip-hop are under censors’ microscope, since it dares to address the voices of critical young Chinese who have issues with certain parts of the governments ideology.

With the younger generation being more and more influenced by the outside world, it is no surprise that the Chinese government tightens the moral and political constraints on internet culture through vague and ambiguous legislations that form the base and nature of Chinese censorship, in order to hold on to their own power and authority. The overlap of moral and political censorship in Chinese popular music offers a productive framework for considering the case of the musical blacklist I have discussed in this thesis.

⁴³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVPeLy_xOpA

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Appendix

I. ‘我愛台妹’- MC 热狗

我的阿妹妹 快來跟我跳阿哥哥 Go 我知道你看到是我 妳不會說 No
我不是油頭葉教授 我的 homiez 都叫我熱狗 4 sure
女孩 就是喜歡妳台台 等等去家裡 home party 要不要來
只怕你掛的太快 明天要去廟裡收驚拜拜 How High ? We can kiss the sky!
人生海海 我們不會只是 stand one night (one night in 墾丁我留下許多情)
你是我的可口可樂 幫我解渴 看我穿著就知道我玩饒舌
不要說我壞話 因為我有順風耳 如果是你肚子大我帶你去看順風婦產科

我愛台妹 台妹愛我 對我來說 林志玲算什麼?
我愛台妹 台妹愛我 對我來說 侯佩岑算什麼?

我不愛中國小姐 我愛台妹 萬萬歲 妳的檳榔 2 粒要 100 好貴 有沒有含睡
如果能夠和妳共枕眠 更多更多的奶粉錢 我願意為妳貢獻 我不是愛現
請妳噴上一點點銷魂的香水 換上妳最性感的高跟鞋 人群之中 妳最亮眼
台妹來了 我是否和妳一拍即合 跟我去很多的不良場合
大家看到我都對我喊 yes sir 因為我是公認最屌的 rapper
台妹們 麻煩和我拍拖 我不是凱子 可是付錢我也不會囉唆
純情是什麼 我不懂 我的想法很邪惡 張震嶽他懂

我愛台妹 台妹愛我 對我來說 林志玲算什麼?
我愛台妹 台妹愛我 對我來說 侯佩岑算什麼?

為了妳 我可能要投資一家檳榔攤 為了妳 家裡可能要有鋼管
為了妳 我要常常下去台南 為了妳 流氓會來找我麻煩

對於帶著一點台灣味的女生 我的腎上腺素毫不考慮亮起紅燈
畢竟妳也不是天使 我也不是聖人 時尚的野獸 那就請你滾 我受夠
你是馬戲團訓練有素的 animal 所有男模 女模 你在屌什麼
我就不信你現在還有處女膜 都是凱子搓
我喜歡台妹說話的口音 有時候挾帶幾句口白三字經
愛神的箭 你要射向哪裡 這裡 free 張震嶽 熱狗 這裡 等你

我愛台妹 台妹愛我 對我來說 林志玲算什麼?
我愛台妹 台妹愛我 對我來說 侯佩岑算什麼?
我愛台妹 台妹愛我 對我來說 林志玲算什麼?
我愛台妹 台妹愛我 對我來說 侯佩岑算什麼?

把手放在空中甩 我叫你什麼都不用管
讓我看你把手放在空中甩 把手放在空中甩
台妹手放在空中甩 我叫你什麼都不用管
台客手放在空中甩 把手放在空中甩
把衣服都掀起來 把奶罩都丟上來
把衣服都掀起來 把奶罩都丟上來⁴⁴

II. ‘他们’- 李志

有人在哭泣，有人在歌唱，有人生来有钱包
有人在奋斗，有人在幻想，有人一生没吃饱
他们指向左，他们指向右，他们买了壮阳药
我们不能说，我们不能做，我们的生活多美好

啦啦啦啦啦啦，啦啦啦啦啦啦
啦啦啦啦啦啦，我们的生活多美好

⁴⁴ <https://genius.com/Mc-hotdog-i-love-taiwanese-girls-lyrics>

铁路向西走，长江不能流，到底谁才是走狗
天亮漱漱口，天黑动动手，劳动为了给税收
他们指向左，他们指向右，他们一直有洋楼
我们不能叫，我们不能交，我们的生活带套套

啦啦啦啦啦啦，啦啦啦啦啦啦
啦啦啦啦啦啦，我们的生活多美好

爸爸喜欢嫖，妈妈就会吵，上学还要请家教
爷爷睡不著，奶奶看不到，白衣天使真是好
他们指向左，他们指向右，总是有狗跟著跑
我们没有闹，我们没上吊，这样还不算厚道？

啦啦啦啦啦啦，啦啦啦啦啦啦
啦啦啦啦啦啦，怎样才算是厚道

无极是无耻，春晚是婊子，疯狂的石头有意思
孙逸仙同志，毛润之博士，阿扁闲著没吊事
他们指向左，他们指向右，你我不能没脑子
闭眼随便过，睁眼将就活，我们的生活多美好

啦啦啦啦啦啦，啦啦啦啦啦啦
啦啦啦啦啦啦，我们的生活多美好

啦啦啦啦啦啦，啦啦啦啦啦啦
啦啦啦啦啦啦，我们的生活多美好⁴⁵

⁴⁵ <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Li-Zhi-%E6%9D%8E%E5%BF%97/They-%E4%BB%96%E4%BB%AC>

III. ‘北京晚报’- 阴三儿

当夜幕降临在我的城市
有另外一种人的生活即将开始
他们白天睡懒觉 也不用去上班
所以晚上睡不着 在家太无聊
不喜欢看电视 也不爱上网
出了门约哥们商量去哪哪儿透透气儿
因为都是看得见的摸不着的假象
到底哪儿才有真的
我想要找个尖的 闲着也是闲着
就别耽误时间了
单身得自由属于成年的光棍
都露着大腿 踩着高跟飘着香味儿
漂亮的大妞儿一个比一个够劲儿
知道你一人儿 想要跟你聊会儿
跟你逗个闷儿 你也根本琢磨不过味儿
一会咱们换个地儿 找个 old dirty
北京饭馆告诉你点事儿
北京晚报 有人征婚有人打广告
其实就是吹牛逼和想操
北京晚报 太多的人在家里犯傻逼都睡不着
我根本不要
北京晚报 有人喝酒有人吃嗨药
喜欢散德行还不爱带套儿
北京晚报 老尖儿都叫我夜猫子
因为只有天黑了才出来造
但是到了后半夜
情况有所改变 因为饿狼太多了
肥羊有限 剩下一帮大老爷们儿互相看不份儿

非要给这个喝醉的晚上来点火药味儿
于是有人出手 有人逃走 有人搂着他们的
妞儿喝着假的洋酒 看了一出戏
两个没出息的大傻逼
让其他人看乐子自己发脾气
把妞儿都吓跑了 自己也傻了
酒吧老板报了警了
那我也只能闪了 上了瓷的车
在卷一个去兜风
从二环到三环都不会堵车
无数的霓虹灯照亮我的世界
不管多晚桑拿洗浴他妈都会营业
红白蓝的车灯照亮了整条大街
但是对于这些她永远装看不见
北京晚报有人在找有人在照
打架多数还是人多的欺负人少
北京晚报 有人睡地下通道
有人公款吃喝 国家给报销
北京晚报 有人持刀有地儿验尿
危险就在身边 玩的就是心跳
北京晚报 北京会越来越热闹
但我们再也找不以前的味道
深更半夜照样有人在拼命在工作
老人走在大街 捡路人喝剩的瓶子
喝多的 被花的 要饭的 疯子傻子
可怜还是骗人根本分不清真的假的
有钱人玩儿的到位漂亮女孩儿
从平时到周末谁出来都想要收获
最低消费驻场三陪
哪儿妞儿多哪儿醉过 奸商在捣鬼

总在干杯很快被灌醉
愁 鼠梅天抽尽被狐假虎威
酒吧夜总会的门前领导的车辆成群结队
厕所里躲着戏果儿 洋酒就着鸭脖儿
小明星大模特儿 陪着老逼坐在雅座儿
巡逻的警车东北的皮条客 女大学生很多
学生证儿不能打折
北京还在建设但是人已经变了
这所有的一切究竟谁应该来负责
北京晚报 病了您得吃药
可是医药费太贵没人给你报销
北京晚报 挂羊头卖狗肉
太多神经病和大傻逼进大学当教授
北京晚报 欠的钱我不还
因为学校收学费都是为了骗钱
北京晚报 妞儿的屁股不够翘
想当明星那都得先被导演操
很多人每天都看北京晚报
他们说有些国家大事儿你必须得知道
我怀疑 这些消息不可靠
我听说 动物园的猴儿自己跑了
我不想关心谁的照片登上了头条
我听说洗衣粉放进油条
我听说 马家爵和 911
我听了一堆废话他妈自己也快疯了
我离开了市中心 可是心里还是太燥
屋里做了隔音 可是邻居还是嫌吵
出门儿才发现 垃圾筒里的北京晚报
上边儿都印满了广告
谁死了他吗这事儿与我无关

我只想看看哪个小姐儿最性感
谁当上领导 这事儿谁爱管谁管
谁中了五百万 谁整天没钱
只有臭傻逼整天找私人侦探 调查婚外恋
其实出租司机也不愿意没事儿带您瞎转
只有每天四五点钟 听见街街上喊着
北京晚报
终于感到了北京的亲切⁴⁶

IV. ‘自杀日记’ - 新街口组合

And I've been going through hell
Caught in a vicious spell
Blinded by the light crossbow string but it fell
I'm feeling so alone
I think I'm about to explode system overload

曾有一天 我试着用刀片
想跟这该死的生活的做一次彻底的了断
我甚至恨我父母把我带到这个世界
成为一具尸体的欲望超过了一切
我再也无法忍受痛苦对于心脏的围攻
毫不夸张 跨过抑郁症
直奔死亡的路上 我想如果当时有枪
我一定会对准自己的太阳穴 磅
给每个最好的朋友打了最后一次电话
我从未能像现在这样平静的对话
超过公路 3 倍的限速松开安全带
恨不得能和上帝快点见面
我不想再活得像个木乃伊

⁴⁶ <http://blog.renren.com/share/263199653/3135465266>

裹着伪装的乐观 绑在生活的木棺
我宁愿懂得死亡
也不想懂这社会的复杂与残酷 身体越来越冷

And I've been going through hell
Caught in a vicious spell
Blinded by the light crossbow string but it fell
I'm feeling so alone
I think I'm about to explode system overload

我不能原谅这个世界
它把我伤害到失去反击的能力
周围发生的一切让我一阵阵的恶心
把别人当做朋友却处处遭人算计
被最好的兄弟使坏
只因为我的女人他也爱 把我们逼到分开
她说她爱我却之后很快嫁了别人
我没有办法面对也没有办法逃避
我拼命得创业累到一身的病
常常留鼻血呕吐却不敢去医院
但是没有人能给我 反而都是嘲笑
我是真的累了 我想流一次眼泪
我想要安定片让我一直的睡
我听到了自己心脏的枯萎
就让我最后一次注射发青的手背

And I've been going through hell
Caught in a vicious spell
Blinded by the light crossbow string but it fell
I'm feeling so alone
I think I'm about to explode system overload

所有对于美的描绘都是 TM 扯淡
我厌倦了一次次的酒后冲进洗手间
厌倦了明码标价的黑夜
厌倦了充满压力日复一日的白天
喜欢上满口的腥甜
渴望体验 割断 我的颈动脉血管
喜欢上镇定剂长期的睡眠
可以让我分不清现实和梦的界限

And I've been going through hell
Caught in a vicious spell
Blinded by the light crossbow string but it fell
I'm feeling so alone
I think I'm about to explode system overload⁴⁷

V. ‘大学生自习室’ - 郝雨

今天天气不错 挺风和日丽的
我们下午没有课 这的确挺爽的
我一大中午早早的跑去上自习
心里琢磨着大学生活是多么美好啊
这一眨眼的工夫我就进了主楼
要说俺么这嘎自习室其实挺多的
可是你桌上没有书包占座那就难找了
我是跋山涉水啊 翻山越岭啊
好不容易来到一个桃园胜地
我这一推门 我靠！
真是豁然开朗
这教室就真没多少人儿

⁴⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0Zs4hglVXY>

说时迟那时快 我就扔下书包
找了一个位置就坐了下去
我这一坐不要紧呐 差点成残疾
回头一看发现凳子根本没有板儿
我心说得亏哥们原来我还练过
要不然还不被你整成肛裂呀
我心说得亏哥们原来我还练过
要不然还不被你整成肛裂呀
上自习还得抓点紧不是
于是乎我就换了一个靠门的座儿
这门外走廊号啕大哭歌手还挺多
他们唱的那个爱来爱去我就忍了
但是推门进屋的同学怎么就不知道关门儿也
你们来来回回地这是走城门儿也
不一会儿我的周围就坐满了邻居
屋里的气氛可就有点不对劲儿了
(咋就不对劲也,咋就不对劲也)
坐在我前面的是一对情侣
真是有说有笑 有打有闹
根本没把我这电灯泡放在眼里
我心说算了 还是少损两句
毕竟人家是纯洁的 男女关系
后面那个兄弟他多少有点离谱
朗读发声训练做的的确刻苦
莫非他是传说中地说唱歌手
要不然嘴里怎么就唠唠叨叨没完
可是自言自语得有时有晌啊
你这叨咕叨咕的中国英语能不能改成默念
左边那个妹子她就十分乖巧
只是嘴里的零食就象灶坑一样没完没了

这嘎嘎蹦蹦地花样还真不少
我心想大妹子几天没吃了（嗯呐）
右边那个姑娘手机 40 和弦
不过你这电话不能接起没完呢
一会的工夫你都跑出去五趟了
有啥话你不能一气儿说完也
你看你旁边那位大哥他就挺吊
业务也挺忙 短信十多条
可是他妈的就不说给调成震动的
他妈的就不说给调成震动的
我说诶诶诶诶 诶我去...
我说这个屋里我的兄弟姐妹们啊
你们真地真地是来上自习的吧
不是我的冤家派来故意玩我的吧？
不是我的冤家派来故意玩我的吧？
这时候走进一个美丽的女孩
她盯着我——我的座位走了过来
我的心里扑腾扑腾地开始乱跳
她停在我面前说：这个座我已经占了
真是莫名其妙 是不是她在搞笑
可是她却在桌堂里变出一本书
那书名没看清
可是看清“占座”俩字儿
再看这位大小姐得意的看着我
得意的笑 她得意的笑
那种感觉就象——小样你新来的吧？
新新新新新来的吧
我是新新新新新来的吧
我说妹子我眼瞅就毕业的人了
对于你们这样占座还是无可奈何

最后一声“得”,还是发扬风格
打不起我我还躲不起么我
我躲躲躲躲躲躲躲
我躲躲躲躲我躲哪旮瘩去呀
只要功夫深(就是)铁杵磨成针(就是)
黄天还不负我这样的自习有心人(就是)
最终我找到了一个安静的角落
心想终于终于可以看书了
你说这不扯么?
忽然间一个黑影窜上了讲台
以迅雷不及掩耳之势在黑板上写着
下午三点有会 谢谢合作
下午三点有会 谢谢合作
我一瞅表 我靠 这不两点六十了么
你们这帮家伙简直他妈的强盗!
我背起书包骂了一句:“very well”
这就是俺们自习室俺们的学校
这就是俺们的自习室俺们的学校
走走走走走走
走走走着瞧
走走走走就走
我说这个自习室的兄弟姐妹们哪
你们真的是来上自习的吗?
你们真的是来上自习的吗?
你们真的是来上自习的吗?⁴⁸

⁴⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qii0P-QvX8Y&t=114s>