Red Sonic Trajectories - Popular Music and Youth in China
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Was it the music, the musicians, or the country that got me interested in Chinese rock, and made me want to return time and again? I don’t know. What I do know, just a few months after finishing this book, is that I start missing the people and the place dearly. Singer Qiu Ye made me feel at home in Beijing. I cherish his perseverance, his debating style and his cynical humor. I am indebted to Feng Jiangzhou, for designing the cover of this book, for his continuous interest in my study and his sharp observations on Chinese culture. It is often his music I play when I think of Beijing. And how could I forget the way Zu Zhou combined hotpot with Mongolian folk songs and a speech of Jiang Zemin? I want to thank Cui Jian, for staging the best closing ceremony for this research I could have wished for.

The music industry has, contrary to popular belief, been very helpful and inspiring. I want to thank Dickson Dee from Sound Factory (Hong Kong), whom I admire for his cynical yet highly engaged attitude; Niu Jiawei from Magic Stone (Taipei / Beijing), not the least for his enthusiasm for Chinese rock and eagerness to share that with me. Finally, I am grateful to Leslie and Louis Chan from Red Star (Hong Kong/ Beijing) and Shen Lihui from Modern Sky (Beijing) for their support and trust.

This book would have been very different had I not met Qin Liwen at the start of my research. She quickly became much more than the interpreter she was appointed to be: A companion to explore Beijing at night, a comrade to challenge prevailing values about how a Chinese (girl) should behave; a friend to show me so much more about China than, I think, she ever imagined. Later, when Liwen moved out of China, Wang Yiyou helped me further. We shared a lot of fun, including trying in our own amateurish way to play guitar in bars and sang the songs of the Sound of Music and The Flowers.

Closer home there is Peter Ho, who years ago, when I was still studying trees rather than sounds, triggered off my fascination for things Chinese. The following years had their ups and downs, binding us even stronger. The writing of a dissertation has been our most recent shared trajectory. Let’s make sure others will follow. I am grateful to Marcel Vergunst, the friend who comes closest to what it means to be, rather than to think, postmodern. I admire, if not envy, him for this. His ability to put my academic longings into perspective, his lucid observations, and his maneuvering against any form of fixation never cease to inspire me. Nicolette Hetzler and Ijme Woensdregt did not only help me with my PhD proposal - till 4 am at night, but also provided me with a ready hermitage in Shanghai when I wanted to escape from Beijing. I thank them for the fun we had in Xiamen, Yangzhou and Shanghai. With Corné de Jong I shared a common interest in, and cynicism about, cultural studies. It remains one of my regrets that I was not able to convince him to opt for a PhD. In that sense, I missed him four years long.

Fortunately, the colleagues and staff from the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research more than made it up. I am grateful to Teun Bijvoet, Anneke Dammers, Annelies Dijkstra, José
Komen, Miriam May en Hans Sonneveld for making the school the cozy and cheerful place as it was to me over all these years.

Different discussion groups have inspired me to seriously question the common academic disciplinary boundaries. I want to thank in particular the members of VOC; our debates kept my academic interest alive, convincing me of the importance to remain curious and chaotic. With the popular culture group I shared a love for the banal, for the trivial, for the cultures that are too often looked down upon in the academia. Maybe simply because there is too much pleasure. I want to thank Liesbet van Zoonen for her continuous and inspiring maternity over this group of men. On the more divine front, the Research Center for Religion and Society provided a challenging and rewarding arena for academic exchanges. I want to thank Gerd Baumann, Peter Pels, Birgit Meyer and Peter van Roooden for their valuable comments on my research. I want to thank in particular Patricia Spyer for being there all the time. She showed me how to combine a critical perspective with a profoundly personal approach.

My promotor Peter van der Veer has over the years managed to keep that delicate balance of supervision and distancing. His trust in me, combined with his playful attitude towards academic life, gave me the security to keep on writing, while his sharp comments often urged me to redo it. I thank my co-promotor Leo Douw for his continuous support. His insistence on nuances, on taking more than one perspective, helped erase quite some one-liners I was prone to write.

At conferences and other occasions I was often challenged, referred to literature I hadn’t read and, in short, encouraged. I want to thank Erik Bahre, Jacco Bax, René Boomkens, Joost de Bruin, Chen Xiaoming, Woei Lien Chong, Martin Cloonan, Maghie van Crevel, Sudeep Dasgupta, Arif Dirlik, Wilfred Dolfsma, Andrew Jones, Reinhilde Konig, Stefan Landsberger, Ruli Mariant (not just for the fun of sharing a room), Irene Costera Meijer, Gerda van Roozendaal, Holli Semetko (in particular for her trust in me since the first days and her encouraging comments on my writing), Margaret Sleeboom, Song Ping (her close presence helped me through some difficult moments of writing), Andreas Steen, Irene Stengs, Anna Szemere, Cynthia Wong, Zhang Youdai and Zhang Xudong.

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I thank Giselinde Kuipers for her critical and encouraging reading, as well as her help with the statistical part. But, more importantly, for her support at precisely those moments when I was terribly confused or indecisive. May our debates over posing and authenticity continue
in the years to come. Suzanne Kuik showed me how personal academic life could be; it remains a mystery why we only got to know one another by the end of this research.

My father passed away just a few months before my first trip to China. That contradictory experience has left an incomprehensive mark on my succeeding encounters with China and on the writing of this book. My mother, aunt, brother and sister have, in their intimate ways, helped me pursue my studies to the extent of doing a PhD.

And, finally, there is Chow Yiufai. The interview with him has never started, yet always continues. That night, he trusted me to the extent of challenging me on not even knowing Faye Wong - the pop diva of Hong Kong. The idea called rock mythology was born. Then, he was not only a stranger to me, but also a stranger with strange ideas. The strangeness, this continuous destruction and construction of ideas, has energized my quest of longings and belongings....

Jeroen de Kloet, Amsterdam, April 2001