

Silencing the Qilin: Ecological Politics in *Inside the Cable Temple*

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Abstract

This article examines how the Chinese rock band “Omnipotent Youth Society” transforms ecological and social critique into artistic form on its second album - *Inside the Cable Temple*. Prompted by the band’s own account of a train journey into the quarried Taihang Mountains, the album responds to a concrete history of extraction and industrialization. The analysis traces how its politics are constructed multimodally. The liner notes anchor the work in that history, and the cover art re-signifies the mythical Moqilin from an auspicious omen into a wounded witness of ecological damage. The lyrics of “Hebei Moqilin” render silencing and commodification in language, and the arrangement converts these concerns into sound through asymmetrical meter, unresolved harmony, and a closing descent into silence. Read alongside Adorno’s critique of the culture industry and recent work on sound and extractivism, the album emerges not as an illustration of theory but as a sonic practice of ecological witness, in which the loss of nature is staged as the loss of voice.

Keywords

Omnipotent Youth Society, Inside the Cable Temple, Hebei Moqilin, Ecological politics

Literature review

The political role of musical works produced by the band, Omnipotent Youth Society, has become a focal point among current scholars. Some contend that the political core of the band’s oeuvre is indelibly rooted in documenting and elegizing the distinct social traumas. By directly introducing the band’s lyrics, Yang Zhenyu conjures an imagery of a collapse of individual and structural status following prolonged oppression, thereby leading to a discussion on the long-standing and intractable issues status quo within Taiwan’s prison system [1]. Such articulation of collective memory elevates personal experience to a spiritual portrait of a generation, forging music into a medium that bears the weight of social and historical critique. Scholars such as Cui Yunwei and Gao Mingkuan also agreed that the band’s musical oeuvre offers a profound observation of the breakneck socio-economic development [2]. It deploys intricate symbolic frameworks to lay bare the social phenomena of Hebei - a preeminent industrial province - at the turn of the century. Meanwhile, it also captures the pervasive existential bewilderment of individuals amid this era of drastic change.

English-language scholarship places these band-specific readings within a wider account of rock as political

culture. John Street argues that popular music does not merely carry political messages: it interacts with protest, censorship, state sponsorship, and political organization, and can therefore illuminate political thought and action [3]. For Omnipotent Youth Society, this framework shifts attention from identifying topical criticism alone to asking how artistic form, circulation, and institutional context make that criticism politically effective.

Jeroen de Kloet’s study of Beijing rock further shows that Chinese rock constructs authenticity by negotiating a globally circulating genre with local cultural identification, rather than by simply reproducing Western models [4]. This helps explain why the band’s use of a global rock idiom does not diminish the specificity of its North China imagery; instead, the music’s political force depends on how that idiom is localized through Hebei’s industrial history, landscape, and myth.

But how does the oeuvre specifically materialize its political nature? One important approach is using lyrics to create imagery for listeners. As Shi Xinyue argued, the band’s lyrics abundantly depict industrial edifices, living spaces and entertainment venues in North China, forging the landscape of an industrial city in radical upheaval [5]. Beyond this spatial portrayal, the band further unveils the

younger generation's struggle between rural ideals and urban reality. In this context, the confusion and alienation of the urban-born youth echo the identity anxiety of county-town young people amid urban-rural dualism - a thematic resonance also explored in the band's musical works. Their collective creations thus mirror the living conditions of young people in the context of unbalanced regional development.

Furthermore, on its second album, the band extends its vision from the city to nature. Through imagery such as muddy rivers and quarrying, it criticizes the violent exploitation and alienation of the Taihang Mountains' natural ecology by instrumental rationality, expanding its political critique to the dimensions of developmentalism and ecological ethics. Such violent exploitation of nature is also evident in the Brazilian Amazon, where noise from resource extraction erodes the silence required to listen to the forest and river spirits.

This loss of sound symbolizes what cannot be extracted yet can be destroyed - something irreparable once lost - forging a direct link between sonic disappearance and the political realities of ecological destruction [6]. Therefore, the interconnection of music, politics and ecology is not a phenomenon unique to China, but a global issue. As Sakakeeny has argued, musical and sonic practices are now used to articulate ecological crises and resist destructive development [7]. Within this ecological turn, Aaron S. Allen's account of ecomusicology provides a useful disciplinary frame.

Allen organizes the field around the relationships among music, culture, and nature, while emphasizing that nature is not a neutral backdrop but a contested cultural construction [8]. This perspective complements the work of Matt Sakakeeny and Maria Fantinato Géo de Siqueira by clarifying that ecological politics can be produced not only through explicit environmental themes but also through the sonic and symbolic forms by which environments become perceptible. Applied to *Inside the Cable Temple*, it supports reading the muddy rivers, quarry noise, mythological animals, and final silence as interconnected modes of ecological representation rather than isolated motifs.

Yet scholars warn the difficulties when translating the band's lyrics from Chinese to other languages in a cross-cultural transmission context. Chen Jiaxuan suggests that the band's lyrics rely heavily on culture-specific imagery, requiring a careful balance between semantic and

communicative translation in English rendering [9]. In this scenario, literal translation may compromise its artistic quality and the underlying contrast, while free translation demands an accurate conveyance of its symbolic meaning - this underscores the rootedness and complexity of its political discourse.

Besides the use of lyrics, the political expression in the band's oeuvre is also inextricably intertwined with its choice of artistic forms. Cui and Gao argue that the band's creations embody resistance to the standardized model of the culture industry. Specifically, its second album adopts a 42-minute, internally coherent scroll-like musical structure, regarded as an attempt to counter the uniformity of musical commodification through artistic autonomy.

Meanwhile, its visual components such as album covers also participate in political expression. For instance, Robert J. Belton argues that the album covers function as a static narrative, and when combined with the music, it creates a modal hybrid that transcends the sum of its parts - this multimodal expression amplifies its critical intent [10].

Following Belton's idea, Shi suggests that the cover of the band's self-titled album features a sand-yellow colour palette and a human figure mid-dive, which should be interpreted as an epitome of the plain shrouded in sand and smog and the era's plunge.

Philip Tagg's work on popular music analysis supplies a methodological basis for this attention to form. Rather than treating musical parameters as self-contained technical details, Tagg links recurring musical structures to socially shared fields of association and emphasizes comparison between a piece and relevant musical conventions [11]. Such a method is especially useful here because it permits meter, timbre, harmonic suspension, and textural change to be read in relation to industrial disorder and ecological loss without assigning any one device a fixed political meaning. Together with Belton's account of the narrative potential of album covers, Tagg's approach therefore supports a genuinely multimodal analysis in which image, lyric, and arrangement contribute different but coordinated forms of signification.

Notably, the band's influence itself has become a politico-economic phenomenon. Scholars including Wang Chao have shown that rock music represented by the band has boosted music tourism in Shijiazhuang,

transforming cultural capital into economic capital and reshaping the city's image and spatial fabric [12]. The construction of such a Rock City has turned music festivals into a vital engine for driving urban economic growth, and the political reflections in its works have to a certain extent been incorporated into the narrative of local cultural and tourism development, forging a complex dynamic of interaction.

In summary, the political nature of Omnipotent Youth Society's works is multi-layered and embedded. It is manifested not only in the documentation of historical collective traumas and the critique of the ills of modernization, but also in the in-depth depiction of the living spaces and psychological states of contemporary young people. It conveys a consciousness of resistance through innovations in the artistic forms of musical and visual texts, and as a cultural symbol, it also participates in the reshaping of local politico-economic structures. These studies collectively reveal that Omnipotent Youth Society's music is not pure art divorced from politics, but an important cultural practice that penetrates the social fabric and engages in real-world critique through aesthetic forms.

Inside the cable temple

The Omnipotent Youth Society has put out merely two albums. First, their same-name album *Omnipotent Youth Society*, which was issued in 2010. Second, *Inside the Cable Temple*, which came to public in 2020. These two albums possess extremely distinct themes. The first album observes the mental condition of people residing in an industrial city. The second album concentrates on the way industrialization attacks the natural environment. Even though their themes are different, thus both albums apply a similar method: They combine lyrics, music arrangements, and visual design to put forward social and political criticism. Therefore, this article will analyze how *Inside the Cable Temple* unites these various forms and displays the political thoughts that hide behind them.

Para text

In the album's liner notes, the bass player and lyricist Ji Geng of the band depicts the thematic concerns of the entire album: It seems to have started in 2013. A trip from Hebei to Northwest China. The train disappeared into the heart of the Taihang Mountains [13].

The Taihang Mountains are located in eastern China's area, extending more than 400 kilometers through four

provincial-level administrative regions: Beijing, Hebei, Shanxi and Henan. Therefore, they perform the function of a natural geographical separation line between the Loess Plateau and the North China Plain. Hence, with steep slopes on their eastern side and gentle slopes on their western side, the mountains are famous because of their grand size, rough land feature, dangerous geographic condition and isolated character, and thus are praised as the backbone of the world. They have a high reputation for their rich coal resources.

Besides its importance in the real world, the Taihang Mountains also contain significant cultural annotations in the ancient Chinese mythological system. For example, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* suggest that it is "The first mountain in the third mountain range in the north is called Taihang Mountain. The beginning of Taihang Mountain is called Guishan Mountain. Metal minerals and jade are produced on the mountain, and jasper is produced at the foot of the mountain." Therefore, the Taihang Mountains are regarded as both a land rich in mineral resources and a symbol of ancient and mythical Chinese culture.

After highlighting his journey, Ji further describes the scene of the Taihang Mountains:

At the foot of the mountain, the village still operates on an ancient and benevolent order; while on the opposite mountainside, the performance of the dynamite dance troupe begins. Myth shakes hands with modernization, initiating the most tragic riddle in the wasteland.

The word "tragic" sets up the main emotional atmosphere of the passage as a state of sorrow and disorientation. The contrasts between "ancient benevolence" and "dance troupe", "order", "dynamite", "myth" and "modernization" transmit clearly the gap between two totally different time periods. Hence, these side-by-side comparisons strengthen the reader's connection with the theme, that is to say, the disruptive and harmful influences brought by industrialization and informatization on both natural scenery and cultural heritage. Specifically, the "dynamite dance troupe" acts as a symbol representing quarrying operations in Taihang Mountains, and "the most tragic riddle" refers to the serious environmental worsening caused by such mining activities and the left-behind deserted places.

Ji's statement reflects the historical context that the quarrying and industrialization of the Taihang Mountains between 2010 and 2020 was a complex process involving

environmental degradation, economic transformation, and ecological restoration [14-16]. Academic research has verified that non-sustainable digging behaviors were a key characteristic of this period. Hence, a study named “Chinese Scholars’ Stones: A Potential Heritage Stone Resource Under Strong Anthropogenic Pressure” puts forward the following viewpoint. Field investigations have demonstrated that the irresponsible, excessive, and unethical extraction of these stones and other geo-materials not only degrades the local environment but also leads to their exhaustion in the source areas [17]. This finding, therefore, matches with Ji’s stress on the environmental cost brought by fast industrial expansion in those years.

The inspiration of this album came straightly from Omnipotent Youth Society’s travel passing through Taihang Mountains, which was happening at the same time as the top period of local quarrying industry - a time period marked by both very strong activity and big environmental disruption. Therefore, this cross point of personal experience and historical background, hence, has produced the core theme of this album.

Album cover art

The album cover of *Inside the Cable Temple* displays a mythical beast Moqilin, which is made via woodblock printing. When interviewing Su Lei, the guitarist in the band, the author asked questions about the symbolic function of this animal. Su suggested that the author trace the origins of the Moqilin in ancient totem culture and woodblock paintings to unearth its historical connotations. Following Su’s suggestion, the author finds that this beast actually belongs to a kind of legendary animals that have no existence in human world yet are given unusual looks and superhuman capabilities through the author’s imaginative change in Chinese novel *Investiture of the Gods*.

Therefore, inside this novel, the Moqilin acts as personal mount of Grand Preceptor Wen Zhong, who is one of the Shang dynasty’s most powerful military commanders. Hence, its most unforgettable appearance happens in Chapter 41: After a long time of not being used, the beast throws Wen Zhong off its back exactly at the moment of a ceremonial military departure. As Chen Hanmei observes, this episode puts an unexpected humor element into a martial preparation scene that is otherwise very formulaic, thereby making the novel’s narrative texture richer.

The creature’s defining visual characteristic - its ink-black coloration - has also carried significance in the history of the novel’s illustration. Besides, the creature’s core visual feature - that is, its ink-black color - also has important meaning in the history of the novel’s illustration. Chen Yibin has recorded in her research of the earliest existing illustrated edition of *Investiture of the Gods*, the Ming-dynasty Jinchang Shuzaiyang edition, that the illustrators’ use of solid black ink to draw the Moqilin. It was not only a faithful writing of the text’s description but a purposeful artistic selection that “endowed the image with a sense of texture and depth,” making it visually different from other mounts and strengthening its connection with Wen Zhong’s impressive authority. Thus, the Moqilin holds a special position in cultural imagination: It is at the same time a literary creation, a visual symbol formed by hundreds of years of woodblock printing tradition, and a sign of the mutual connection between divine power and the natural forces of thunder and rain that it is said to control.

This mythological visual language not only covers the album cover but also spreads to the band’s wider promotional identity. Posters for their international shows present a single figure riding on a Fenghuang which is made with the same sharp, single-color artistic style. Ruan Qianrui, who takes charge of both album covers and the band’s overall visual plan, has built a whole symbolic system based on animals coming from Chinese mythological animal collections. But these are not direct renewals of traditional symbol meanings. In their original backgrounds, both the Qilin and the Fenghuang are creatures of confirmation - they are messengers of wise kings and cosmic harmony, whose appearance makes the legitimacy of political and natural order become certain. The literary Qilin shines with golden light and mist and moves with amazing sky-high speed; the Fenghuang flies above a balanced world.

On the album cover, none of these features remain completely. The prefix “Mo” - ink, blackness, carries out a color-related disenchantment, which takes away the beast’s traditional brightness and redraws it in the tone of charcoal, ore, and slag: The mineral words related to the damaged industrial land of Taihang Mountains. The Qilin does not come down from heaven, it comes out from the quarry. Its huge body presses against the ground in a position that is more like a geological formation rather than a godly visit - it is still quiet and filled with a deep

black that takes in light instead of sending it out. The Fenghuang, similarly, no longer gives out cosmic confidence. It carries a human rider whose sitting way shows not victory but unstable reliance, as if the action of flying itself has become unsure.

Therefore, what Ruan's designs do is not nostalgic revival but intentional symbolic reconstruction. The traditional Qilin predicts a golden age; the Moqilin sees the opposite situation - the systematic breaking of the land that it was once supposed to protect. Its lying position can be understood as the tiredness of a protector who has watched its mountain being blown up by dynamite, its forests being cut down, its rivers being blocked. It does not shout or stand up, it only bears. And this silent, dark bearing is exactly what changes it from a symbol of cosmic optimism into what the liner notes call "the most tragic riddle in the wasteland": What will happen to a sacred protector when the sacred order it protects has been destroyed?

The creature does not answer the question, it is the question, shown in ink and silence. Together, the Qilin and Fenghuang build a visual mythology that goes in the opposite direction - instead of coming down from heaven to bless the earth, they have taken the earth's harm into their own bodies and now carry it forward as evidence. They are re-enchanted not as pure traditional symbols but as hurt creatures, and it is exactly their hurt state - their blackened, ground-staying, geologically changed existence - that gives them their political power as figures of ecological witness and silent resistance.

Lyrics

In the album, there is a song called Hebei Moqilin, which is most relevant to this study as its lyrics give verbal form to the figure that the album covers renders visually. Whereas the cover makes the creature stay in quiet suffering without movement, the lyrics show in detail the process that forces this silence onto it.

The song starts with an order - "Hear the rolling thunder" - right after which comes the picture of the Qilin closing its mouth, stopping to recite "twilight and longing". The ironic feeling is very strong: In mythological background, the Moqilin is a divine beast that controls thunder and rain, thunder is the sound showing its own universal ruling power.

However, in the song, this creature can no longer make thunder - it only listens to thunder and becomes silent. As Shi has argued, the recurring image of thunder across the

album's five tracks' functions as a sign of modern civilization's invasion and transformation of people, while she further identifies "he" as the Moqilin itself, suggesting that the creature may represent a kind of primal spirit. Read through this lens, the grammatical change from acting side to listening side - from the wild animal that orders the storm to the existence that only can hear it - thus marks the exact time point when the original, magic-related self is defeated by industrial modernity's forces. What the Qilin stops reciting is also full of meaning: "twilight and longing" are not words of strength but of sad memory - the language of remembrance and weakening light. Its being made silent put out not a voice of success but a voice of sadness.

The next line - "He is at this moment grieved and dangerous" - does not allow the creature to become a passive victim completely. The connecting word "and" links sadness to danger, inner feeling to threat, creating a figure that has direct similarity to the lying Qilin on the cover: Still, dark, but filled with the squeezed energy of a protector pushed to its last limit. As Shi observes, this unstable hanging state between sadness and threat is the point where fear and fury converge and erupt, and thus the song represents the emotional climax of the entire album.

The second stanza extends this state to a wider area of destruction. "Dark clouds block the bright moon, flooding the river bend" makes the whole vertical range of the natural world - sky, light, water - full of pollution, echoing the "muddy river that secretly fell from the clouds" talked about before. Under this background, the Qilin "rises and stands alone facing the wasteland" - the same "wasteland" mentioned in the liner notes' phrase "the most tragic riddle in the wasteland."

As Shi has argued, the "wasteland" that recurs across the album's five tracks constitutes a classic metaphor for the crisis of human modernity. This action is one of watching instead of acting: The creature does not run away or attack, only refuses to turn its eyes away, performing with words the same quiet resistant posture that the cover shows with pictures.

Then the refrain provides the song's most compact political picture: "Try the cold, costly art of lightness that enters clouds and wades through water." The "art of lightness" refers to the Qilin's traditional supernatural ability to move across the world without much effort - but the words "cold" and "costly" are shocking, out-of-

place elements from a totally different language level. Mythical grace does not have a temperature; divine power does not have a price. Therefore, by using market-related words on a sacred characteristic, the lyrics let people hear a process that usually works in secret: The change of things that the universe once gave for free - flight, transcendence, connection with clouds and water - into things that people must buy, and after buying, the buyer feels cold instead of noble. This is commodification shown as a lyrical experience: Before listeners can say clearly why it is wrong, they can feel the inappropriateness of applying “cold” and “costly” to the inherent right of a mythical creature.

Cui Yunwei's analysis of the album via Adorno's negative dialectics offers a theoretical way to explain this feeling. Cui says that the band's works are a kind of resistance to the standardized model of the culture industry, in which the independence of artistic form refuses to be absorbed into the logic of exchange value. Hence, the refrain's “cold, costly art of lightness” is a small example of this resistance: It points out the exchange logic coldness, cost and at the same time shows that this logic violates the sacred, thus refusing to make normal the very commodification it describes.

The below sentence “Look at the electrocardiograms of actors, nobles, vagrants, thieves” - brings the magic vanishing to its end: The human heart, which was once the site of moral sense and inner feeling. It is changed into screen-displayed data, and thus all social distinctions - performing, powerful, without home, criminal - are equalized under the observing gaze of technological rational thought. When we read the two repeated lines together, they indicate a world where both mythical creatures and human beings have undergone the same procedure: The former are made to keep silence, the latter are subject to measurement. Hence, their original depth, which once made them more than objects exploited, is stripped away from both.

Arrangement

As the emotional climax of the album, “Hebei Moqilin” rewards close attention to its arrangement. Three features organize the analysis that follows.

First, the instrumentation - lyre, guitars, and trumpet - stages the encounter between mythology and modernity announced in the liner notes. Second, the song's asymmetrical meters generate a sense of disorder that can be heard as an analogue of modern alienation. Third, the

trajectory from the symphonic climax to the quiet bells of the coda carries the album's ecological politics from text into sound.

The song opens with fingerpicked guitar arpeggios spread across all six strings, joined by a lyre. The choice of instrument resonates with the ancient Greek tradition of music education, in which training on instruments, such as the lyre was bound up with the formation of civic virtue and the maintenance of social order [18]. The parallel is one of function rather than influence: There is no evidence that the band had Greek antiquity in mind, but their music carries a comparable concern with collective predicament and social reality, and the lyre - an instrument whose sound evokes an older, ordered world - serves that concern.

In the first theme, the drum kit and bass guitar act as the main narrators, playing 5/8 times. Because the asymmetrical bar divides into unequal groups, the pulse denies the listener a stable point of orientation; the result is not harmonic dissonance but a persistent rhythmic instability - a felt disorder. The bass and drums converse in a deliberately flat, monotonous manner, interspersed with hollow guitar strokes.

This minimal, cold texture strips the music of conventional warmth and projects onto the ear the desolation and mechanical rigidity of the “electronic wasteland” the album names elsewhere. Rather than fixing a symbol, the sparseness reads as an invitation to the listener's imagination, it sketches a vast, empty soundscape in which one may picture the Moqilin wandering the plain alone - an image the lyrics later make explicit when the creature “rises and stands alone facing the wasteland” - while foreshadowing the thunder to come.

Meanwhile, the drums continuously vary their accents and density, shifting from rim to drumhead and layering in tambourine and cymbals to build tension by degrees. Through this graduated layering of texture and the pointed selection of instruments, the arrangement converts the ideological friction between classical order and modern industry into audible tension, laying a political backdrop for the melody and lyrics that follow. The entry of the lead guitars introduces a new melodic pattern that extends to the earlier material. The bass line holds steady while a high-register guitar riff is overlaid on the original theme, producing an effect of renewal and surprise. The two guitars then take a single unresolved

sonority - Bbm sus11, in which the suspended eleventh hangs against the minor triad without resolving - break it into its constituent tones, and pass those tones between them in staggered, canon-like imitation, so that order and disarray sound at once. Arriving after the plain narration of the opening, this first conspicuously unstable element aligns with the album's textual concern with ecological destruction and with the underlying history of predatory quarrying in the Taihang Mountains. Lyricist Ji Geng's binary opposition in the liner notes - "an ancient, benevolent order" set against "on the opposite mountainside, the dynamite dance troupe's performance begins" - supplies the political frame that this conflict within the arrangement takes up.

Within the critical tradition of music history, such formal instability has long been read as politically charged: Adorno heard in the dissonances of expressionist atonal music a refusal to compromise with the culture industry's soothing, standardized surfaces, a refusal that exposes the alienation those surfaces conceal [19]. The analogy must nonetheless be drawn with care. A suspended eleventh is common currency in popular harmony and stands far from Schoenberg's atonality; what the passage shares with Adorno's account is not a radical harmonic language but a stance - the refusal of resolution. The suspension is prolonged and circulated rather than discharged, denying the listener precisely the consolation that standardized song forms exist to supply.

After an intro of such varied devices, the song settles into the first verse. Two clean guitars play arpeggios, and the drum part adds syncopation and ornamental fills within its established framework. Although the verse shifts to a regular 4/4, the instability built up in the preceding 5/8 section persists as a kind of auditory inertia, so that the new meter's stability registers as merely notational - an orderly surface over an unquiet pulse. On its own, this perceptual carryover is a fact about listening, not about society; what licenses a social reading is the text sung over it. The verse carries the line "the electrocardiograms of actors, nobles, vagrants, and thieves," in which heterogeneous human lives are flattened by technological rationality into uniform, quantifiable data on a screen.

Set against that lyrics, the music's condition becomes legible: A notated regularity that cannot erase felt irregularity mirrors a social order whose stable surface leaves the alienation and anxiety of drastic change intact.

Cui Yunwei and Gao Mingkuan's reading of the band through Adorno's negative dialectics points the same way: For them, the formal autonomy of this music resists the standardized, commodified models of the culture industry and refuses easy absorption into the logic of exchange value. The verse - a "correct" meter that never feels settled - offers a concrete instance of that resistance. The final theme is built around an electric guitar solo that alternates between quadruple and quintuple meter while maintaining control of accent and harmonic colour.

As the end approaches, the drums grow more insistent while the guitar recedes, ceding the foreground to the voice and its harmonies. In the repetitions of the last chorus, voice, drums, and guitar contend for prominence; when the trumpet reaches the highest note of the song, the music tips into its final emotional phase. The backing vocals turn clamorous, almost chaotic, yet remain locked into the instrumental fabric. The passage is readily heard as the agonized howl of the Moqilin - the suffering of nature under industrialization given voice - or, in the lyric's social register, as vagrants and thieves rioting outside while nobles dance to an orchestra within the palace: Order persisting within chaos. Then the ensemble thins. Instrument after instrument withdraws in sequence within the established framework, and a string of bells closes the song, easing the fade and marking the silence that follows devastation. This ending is more than a fade-out.

Recent work on sound and extraction argues that ecological destruction is experienced above all as the loss of audible voices, heard in these terms, the final hush of the cymbals and the orderly withdrawal of the instruments enact that loss in sound [20]. The music ends where the album's politics conclude: In the irretrievable silence into which nature and the individual fall once capital and industry have arrived [21].

Conclusion

This article sets out a question the existing scholarship raises but does not fully answer: By what concrete means does Omnipotent Youth Society's music materialize its politics? The analysis of *Inside the Cable Temple* suggests that the answer lies in coordination across media, with each layer of the album performing a task only its own medium can accomplish. The liner notes anchor the work in a verifiable history, naming the Taihang Mountains and the moment when "myth shakes

hands with modernization.” The cover art compresses that history into a single still image, re-signifying the Moqilin from an auspicious emblem of cosmic order into a blackened, grounded witness of ecological damage. The lyrics of “Hebei Moqilin” narrate the process the cover can only hold in suspension: The silencing of the mythical voice and the commodification of what was once freely given.

The arrangement makes these conditions audible as experience, through asymmetrical meters that unsettle the listener’s footing, suspended harmonies that withhold resolution, and a coda in which the instruments withdraw one by one into silence.

Across these layers a single figure recurs: the loss of voice. The Qilin closes its mouth, human interiority is reduced to the flat trace of an electrocardiogram, and the music ends not with a cadence but with a hush. The album’s politics are therefore performative rather than declarative. It does not argue that industrialization has silenced nature and numbed the individual, and it stages that silencing in image, word, and sound, and asks the listener to undergo it. In this respect the album confirms, in concrete detail, the Adornoian reading advanced by Cui and Gao - resistance lodged in artistic form rather than in slogan - while joining a wider conversation in the study of sound and ecology, in which environmental destruction is registered as the disappearance of what can be heard.

The case of *Inside the Cable Temple* shows that this widespread global environmental problematic has a distinctly localized Chinese articulation, one that routes heavy ecological grief through the rich mythological inventory of the *Shan Hai Jing* and *Investiture of the Gods* and through the rugged industrial exploitation history of Hebei Province. A biting final irony should not be smoothed over or ignored. As the earlier literature review noted, the band’s enduring critical prestige now greatly feeds the cultural economy of Shijiazhuang branded as a “Rock City”: An album that laments violent resource extraction has itself ironically become a valuable cultural resource waiting to be extracted and commercialized.

That the work consciously anticipates this contradictory fate - thematizing, in the so-called “cold, costly art of lightness”, the troubling modern conversion of spiritual and sacred value into trivial purchasable commodities - does not exempt it from the inevitable tide of market

commodification. Yet this self-reflexive insight means the album carries within itself clear critical frameworks and theoretical terms for readers and listeners to rationally interpret and unpack its own ironic commercial fate.

Limitations

Several limitations qualify these findings. First, the scope is narrow: Close analysis concentrates on one song and the album-level para texts, and the remaining tracks receive no sustained treatment, so claims about the album as a whole rest on its most prominent case. Second, the musical description depends on the author’s ear. No published transcription of the album exists, identifications of meter, chords, and texture are the author’s own, and the interpretations built on them concern how the music can be heard rather than what the band intended. Only one member, guitarist Su Lei, was consulted, and only on cover art. Third, the account of listener experience - perceptual carryover, felt instability - draws on general reasoning about musical perception rather than on empirical study of actual listeners, and no reception data was collected. Fourth, all lyric quotations appear in the author’s English renderings. As Chen’s study of the band’s translation problem shows, culture-specific imagery resists transfer, and the readings offered here are to that extent interpretive choices. Finally, scholarship on the band remains sparse, consisting largely of theses and short articles, so parts of the framing rest on a limited secondary base.

Future research might extend the analysis across both albums, incorporate systematic interviews and reception study, and produce transcriptions that would put the musical claims on firmer ground.

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