

Postmodern Artistic Expression: An Analysis of Popularity of *Wild Wolf Disco*

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ABSTRACT

Wild Wolf Disco became one of the most popular songs on the Internet in 2019, attracting most concerns. Meanwhile, its original song and diverse adaptations have gained widespread popularity from the audience. The paper mainly analyzes the style, features, elements, and lyrics of *Wild Wolf Disco*, as well as the background for the popularity of the song. Next, the paper compares the song with other adapted versions, aiming to find out why *Wild Wolf Disco* became popular. It then probes into the trends of reforming the popular culture and elite culture in the Internet era. Eventually, the paper reaches the conclusions that the boundaries between the popular culture and elite culture are dissolving and that the 'cycle' is the product left behind by dividing a new generation of ideological trends.

Keywords: *Wild Wolf Disco, earworm song, popular culture, elite culture*

1. INTRODUCTION

A song named *Wild Wolf Disco* attracted widespread attention on the Internet in 2019, becoming the most eye-catching online popular song. It was played by four billion times on Tik Tok. Meanwhile, the page views of topics related to *Wild Wolf Disco* on Sina Microblog exceeded 100 million. Besides, an adapted version of *Wild Wolf Disco* [SU Xiao-ya. A study on the transmission mechanism of online popular music—take *Wild Wolf Disco* as an example [J]. *Journal of News Research*, 2019 (24): p.222] was even performed on the stage of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala. By analyzing *Wild Wolf Disco*, the paper aims to find out the reason why earworm songs like *Wild Wolf Disco* become popular and relevant modes of transmissions. Nowadays, earworm songs become famous overnight and are rapidly adapted, which reflects that the public's cultural demands are changing with each passing day. The paper then draws forth a conclusion: In the Internet age, the boundaries between the popular culture and elite culture are dissolving, and postmodern music affects the Chinese audience.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The *Wild Wolf Disco* is a new song written in 2019, so few scholars have studied it. At present, there are only two papers on the topic. The first paper is entitled *A Study on the Transmission Mechanism of Online Popular Music—Take Wild Wolf Disco As An Example*. It analyzed the view counts and topics concerning the song and studied the transmission mechanism of the song based on the development environment for online music. The second paper is entitled *Who Was Embarrassed by Popularity of*

Wild Wolf Disco? [HUANG Qi-zhe. Who was embarrassed by the popularity of *Wild Wolf Disco*? [N]. *Shanghai Mercury*, 2019-12-05] It compared and analyzed the rapid development of the grass-roots, popular earworm song in China and the retrogression of songs written by professional singers in China, probed into the popularity of Chinese music, and analyzed the commercial values of such music. Based on such research findings of predecessors, the paper first explores the reason why a song becomes popular rapidly through content analysis. Next, it discusses the artistic aesthetics of the masses from diverse perspectives. Then it reflects on and discusses the fast-food culture, earworm songs, and popular culture. Eventually, the paper finds that earworm songs become popular because the art needed by the masses should be close to life, mirror the reality most directly, and have reminiscence that overrides the reality.

3. ANALYSIS OF WHY WILD WOLF DISCO BECAME POPULAR

3.1. Retro and Reminiscent Content and Postmodern Ideological Trend

"If modernism is a break from traditional (classical) art, pursues the pureness of art, and explores why the art is an art rather than non-art, postmodernism is a separation from the postmodern art. Also, the postmodern art resolved the boundaries between the

art and non-art.”¹ As a representative of postmodernism, Dadaism is characterized by anti-rebellion, artistic life, and chance². It not only advocates that the art should contain no thought but emphasizes oneself. Regarding literary and artistic techniques, it opposes cultural traditions and the laws of art. It worships nihilism and advocates that literary and artistic creation should be as inexplicable as an infant’s murmurs. Moreover, it calls on expressing through chaotic sleep talks and absurd images. The mixture and collage of elements in the song embody stronger postmodern features.

At present the main means is low click type and the lever type, low click type is on the bottom of the ball through attack the ball flew over obstacles, this method is able to pick the ball’s advantages and makes the energy loss in institutions least, the shortcoming is the ball high requirement of the shape of the electromagnetic valve [11]. Therefore, the development of a high-performance control system of soccer robot has become an urgent desire for soccer robot fans.

Wild Wolf Disco is a rap song written by Gem in 2019. It is a typical example of postmodern songs that successfully break away from the constraints of traditions. The style background of Wild Wolf Disco epitomizes the popular music of Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as the disco culture in the 1990s. To some extent, the song summons up the memories of one generation about their youth and thus becomes a popular symbol of one era. The lyrics of this song are simple and catchy, which break away from the shackles of traditions and reflect happy nihilism. Besides, the song has a typical postmodern style and is strongly entertained and commercial. Breaking away from cliché feelings, it gives up miserable sentiments and seeks a free, diverse, and unrestrained style. The monotonous and repeated sense of movement is closer to the general public and life. Also, its northeastern accent vividly reproduces the scenarios of the disco culture in the 1990s (in northeastern China). Thus the song is humorously termed by netizens as “northeastern renaissance” and “commonplace sincerity and coarse romance”. Songs like Wild Wolf Disco combine the popular culture and art, follow the artistic standard of rejecting conventions, and pursue an unintentional, accidental, and spontaneous state. This trend fully represents Dadaist features and is dissolving the boundaries between the art and non-art.

Analyzed from the audience’s perspective, *Wild Wolf Disco* has a large audience. Its lyrics remind the middle-aged and elderly people of the long past years. For instance, words such as back-combed hair, beeper, and break-dancer all revive the memories about the past era. In the 1990s, cassettes were played on streets and lanes. It was an era featured with cultural and literary reforms, respect for freedom, and the emergence of Dadaism. This song carries people back to that era to relive their unrestrained life as a tribute to the classical century. As for modern young people,

this song is partly consistent with their lifestyles. People born after the 1990s and the 2000s advocate the club culture. The fake carnival where young people jointly rejoice has been a mode of consumption for releasing pressure and seeking stimulations. This consumption group pursues fashion, is emotional, and has unique opinions about modern cultures. These people are devoted to the fast-food way of socializing. Disco was the predecessor of the club culture. It is no wonder that disco can trigger young people’s curiosity in that era and fantasies about the last century. This song guides young people to relieve the past and know about the trends and styles of that era. Thus they play a key role in spreading the song. For babbling children, the song is easy to learn because of its simple lyrics, a repeated melody, repeated brainwashing content, and memorable style. For the above reasons, Wild Wolf Disco attracted a widespread audience and soon became popular.

3.2. Incorporation of Rap and Cantonese Elements Make It Original and Unique

Although *Wild Wolf Disco* is a rap song, its rhythm part has a Cantonese accent with Northeastern characteristics, which satisfies the audience’s curiosity in novelty. Rap and Cantonese are difficult to learn for non-professional rap singers and people whose mother tongue is not Cantonese. However, this song has simple lyrics and an airy rhythm that makes it characteristic. Also, the absence of singing skills and awkward pronunciations meet the public’s demands for humming. A highly repeated song requires a catchy rhythm and a distinctive style. Apparently, *Wild Wolf Disco* is a perfect combination of both. The Cantonese part is easy to learn and barely has any level and oblique tones. Besides, its rhythm is single, and its lyrics consist of several short sentences that repeatedly brainwash listeners. That is why the song is eventually sung by nearly every Chinese.

Other songs that achieved success through similar trials include *The Coolest Ethical Trend* and *Three Lucky Treasures*. These songs successfully incorporate characteristic elements into songs, are easy to learn, and are sung by many people. By comparison, the remix version of *If You Feel My Love* at the 2008 Golden Stag International Music Festival was sung at a lower frequency. The song was sung by Blaxy Girls. As a song with a strong flavor of Beijing opera, it became a highlight of the music festival. *The Case of Beheading Chen Shimei* occurs at the beginning and reappears in the transitional part. The case tells the story that Qin Xianglian is betrayed by her lover and then seeks justice at the government

office. Its plot slightly echoes with and is integrated into the English lyrics of *If You Feel My Love*. This song is highly acclaimed and receives the popularity unsurpassed by the domestic market. However, the joining of obscure Beijing opera elements, a varying rhythm, special punctuation make it difficult to be imitated. Besides, the song has awkward-sounding meanings and incomprehensible content. Although the song has gained a high level of popularity, it can hardly be sung by all Chinese.

3.3 Interactions and Sense of Movement

Another important reason why *Wild Wolf Disco* is widely sung is that it has close interactions with the audience and a unique sense of movement. Such interactions are reflected in arousing words in the lyrics, such as “everyone at present joins me in unison”, “come on”, and “there you go”. These words allow the audience to take fast participation in the song and resonate with it. Its unique sense of movement is reflected in the simple dance that is perfectly incorporated into lyrics. Indicative movements and lyrics, such as “draw a dragon on the left” and “paint a rainbow with the right hand”, can be imitated and memorized conveniently. The rhythm is simple and repeated, which makes the dance less difficult. It directly guides the audience to reproduce the disco dance of the last century and turn the audience from the targeted audience into transmitters. Owing to such stimulation and a sense of participation, each batch of audience may change from targeted audience to transmitters, which enhances the effects of transmission.

4. MODE OF TRANSMITTING WILD WOLF DISCO

4.1. Transmission through Variety Show

Wild Wolf Disco was sung by its author Gem at *The Rap of China* in the repechage link. Its performance immediately won attention from most audiences. Programs such as *The Rap of China* are targeted at young people who are fond of raps. Thanks to promotion via *The Rap of China*, *Wild Wolf Disco* became a topic for young people to chat about and was rapidly transmitted nationwide. A small proportion of the young audience was impressed by the *Wild Wolf Disco* after watching it. Thus they posted it on social platforms to promote it, which laid a foundation for subsequent transmission of the song on key social platforms.

4.2. Loop Playback on Social Platforms

After *Wild Wolf Disco* was promoted by *The Rap of China* and endlessly played on social platforms, users had to accept passive brainwashing. As if a spell, the lyrics were played repeatedly. Such promotion took advantage of the masses’ blind pursuit of fashion and herd mentality. Once the song was repeatedly encountered on video and microblog apps and assisted by positive opinion guidance and brainwashing, a majority of waving people were influenced by public opinions. Owing to these characteristics, the audience’s concepts were guided by other groups on the platform after receiving passive brainwashing. They unconsciously or involuntarily had the mentality of being consistent with the majority of people to get social contacts and social proof. Large-scale play of the song on such apps formed a craze of *Wild Wolf Disco*. Some audiences that blindly followed the crowd and trend either interacted online or had secondary creation and transmitted new versions after adding their adaptations. It then caused interactions among all people and enhanced the effects of transmissions. When the audience expanded from young people that followed the fashion in early days to people of all age groups, the song became an earworm song heatedly chased after by all people through its simple interactions and characteristic content.

4.3. Nationwide Adaptations

After accumulating a certain number of audiences, the craze of adapting *Wild Wolf Disco* elevated the transmission of the song onto a new level. Adapted versions retain the original melody yet have new lyrics. A majority of adapted versions even keep the Cantonese elements and only re-edit the lyrics before becoming characteristic ones. Thus the adapted versions still follow the catchy rhythm of the original version and the lyric with simple repetitions. In some cases, even the changed lyrics follow the rhythm and rhymes of the original lyric. People with different occupations put forward their adapted versions based on several TV plays and films in different languages. For example, one can find *Wild Wolf Disco* of the PLA version, the *Home with Kids* version, the Korean version, and the English version. The craze of adaptations contributed to reciprocal transmissions. For one thing, the original version brings new traffic to adapted versions. For another, adapted versions create topics and popularity for the original version. It maximized the effects of transmission. It is worth mentioning that the Spring Festival Gala follows the principle of being close to the general public’s life and approaching the crowd. A new version of *Wild Wolf Disco* was performed at the stage of the Spring Festival Gala 2020. It was an adaptation consistent

with the atmosphere of the New Year and full of Chinese characteristics. The lyrics contained words such as high-speed rail, large lanterns, and Chinese red, which elevated the northeastern features into Chinese characteristics and replaced the 1980s and 1990s with the era of prosperity and wealth. Apart from retaining the characteristics of the original song, it made only a few alterations to successfully present the thriving social status of a wealthy and powerful country. The program later became highly acclaimed due to its grandeur, hospitality, and closeness to people. Moreover, the song reached the peak of national popularity. It indirectly reflects that what gets to the bottom of Chinese people's hearts is not the literature, art, and laments that intentionally convey profound thoughts but the most straightforward acquittal in trivial life. As a positive vent for inner feelings, it is not hindered by learning and temperament. Such is the charm of the popular culture.

5. DISSOLVING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN POPULAR CULTURE AND ELITE CULTURE

With the emergence and update of we-media and social application, the boundaries between the popular culture and the elite culture become vague in the Internet era. The popular culture measures the significance of cultures through popularity, entertainment, and even high sales. It is represented by structuralism that clears up the authoritative discourse. Structuralism is fully manifested in low costs and aims to meet the primary goal for the audience's consumption—entertainment.³ If the popular culture is regarded as a popularized culture, it minimizes the screening of interpersonal relations, such as interpersonal levels and differences. By comparison, the elite culture strives to separate itself from popular culture. As a less-popular culture, it keeps out of the affair. However, a majority of the so-called elite cultures take shape because the public has no access to or lack conditions to know cultures that only serve the ruling class. With the popularization of the Internet and improvement in the masses' material and cultural levels, the so-called inaccessible elite cultures become the popular cultures that can be appreciated by everyone. Now there occurs the trend where the concepts of the popular culture and elite culture are diminishing, or both cultures fuse into a new combination. However, such changes are accompanied by uncertainty, fugitiveness, fragmentation, and debris, proving that popular online elements are featured with a rapid update, diverse categories, and various styles. There were generally no adequate material and

cultural conditions for the masses to attend concerts, listen to choruses, and appreciate painting exhibitions in the 20th century. With the improvement in people's material and cultural levels, these elite cultures eventually become easy to attain. Thus the so-called elite culture is inclined to be perfectly combined with the masses' aesthetics. For instance, the Rainbow Choir performed *A Guide to Self-Rescue* during Spring Festival and *Feel Like the Body is Being Emptied*. Also, Wang Zhongshan Chinese Zither Concert performed *Little Apple* and *The Coolest Ethical Trend*. It shows the culture is catering to the popular taste unexceptionally in an entertained, commercialized, and popular manner. It is in this process that the audience of such elite cultures changes from less popular elites to the general public. Correspondingly, the popular culture and the elite culture start to overlap and integrate, giving birth to a new product named circle.

The circle is a division most consistent with Chinese national conditions. There is the two-dimensional circle, the Han clothing circle, the ancient style circle, and even the fans circle, disco dancing circle, and the health preservation circle. Each circle is differentiated by people's distinctive likes and hobbies. These circles differ from the popular culture and elite culture that classify cultures into different levels and classes. Circles are not restricted by the level, culture, language, and nation. Instead, a circle is only a chain of appreciation joined by people with common interests. People with roughly the same aesthetics form a social circle, aiming to meet their shared cultural and spiritual demands. More precisely, *Wild Wolf Disco* allows more people to know about the rap circle and promote its culture. Such is the significance of its existence.

Regarding popular aesthetics, the world is full of postmodern songs and films. Such cultures seem to be meaningless malformations and combinations of popular aesthetics. However, these cultures are only pastimes for the public to kill time. It should be noted that earworm songs and absurd films keep emerging in an endless stream and will not perish. Eventually, they will change from one form into another. As vents for releasing negative feelings under the pressure of surviving, these cultures involve temporary happiness and nihilist indulgence. No cultures and art should be abandoned or despised because they are only fulfilling the meanings of their existence in their circles.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Wild Wolf Disco became popular for diverse reasons. Its popularity is not restricted to transmitting in one form or the prevalence of one culture. In fact, the song

became a national symbol because of the cultural and ideological trends, postmodern features, and integration of rap and Cantonese behind it. With the advent of the Internet era and the prevalence of new media, the songs with both popular and commercial features will be the mainstream trend of aesthetics in China. Owing to polarization in the last century, the boundaries between the popular culture and elite culture dissolved and were replaced by gradual integration. These two cultures eventually become new circles through transcendence. Compared with predecessors, such circles weaken the importance of class but emphasize distinctive characteristics and aesthetics. Thus diversity and overlapping become new mainstreams of Chinese society.

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