

1 **Creating a New Chinese Cyber-Celebrity: A Cultural Analysis of Han Han's Blog as Web-based Media Spectacle**
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2 **I. Introduction**

- 2 ■ Aim: To shed light on
- China's new celebrity & the use of Web 2.0
 - Intellectual engagement &
 - Impact of cybersphere
- Case Study:
- Shanghai Generation X writer Han Han 韩寒 (1982-)
- Sources:
- Han Han's blog, 2005-2013
- Method: Analysis of
- Blog contents
 - Blog frame
 - multi-media environment

3 **II. Literary & Cyber-Celebrity**

- Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle* (1967)
 - Celebrity = key element of banalisation of modern world
 - 'Consumption celebrity'
- Han Han's (b. 1982)
 - High school dropout
 - Bestselling novelist
 - *Sanchongmen* 三重门 (*Triple Gate*), written aged 17
 - 2 mio copies sold & millions of pirate copies
 - No royalties
 - Copyright issue
 - Plagiarism? Ghost writer?

4 **Han Han:**

Consumption Celebrity

- 2 ■ Multi-personality
 - Car racing champion
 - World's No. 1 blogger
 - Public intellectual 2.0
 - Social critic, opinion maker
 - Literary magazine editor
 - Singer & Film director
 - Playboy
- = all personae linked with consumption

5 Han Han Bestselling Author

- Freelance writer
 - New phenomenon in reform-era China since Wang Shuo
- Second Channel
 - Earns more than official 'Red Channel' publications
- Income:
 - Advances
 - 1 mio RMB per book = 120,000 EUR
 - Book royalties
- 2011:
 - Earned ¥ 6 million RMB
 - = 720,000 EUR
- Among China's top 10 best-paid writers

6 III. Han Han's Use of Web 2.0

- Han Han's Sina blogs
 - 'My Way, My Road'
 - *Wo xing, wo lu* 我行 我路
- 2005-
 - Several 100 blogs
- 2008-
 - Most popular rank
- Some 'harmonised'

- i.e. deleted by government censors
- 2013:
 - 595 mio hits
 - 1 mio hits/blog post

7 **Netizens & Bloggers in China**

8 **Age of Netizens**

9 **Bloggers' Gender Ratio & Age**

10 **Popularity of Blogs, Microblogs, Online Games & Web Literature**

11 **Purpose of Blogging**

12 **Han Han's Blog**

- 2005- Early Blogs on
 - Car racing / Subaru
 - His pet dog
 - Romantic affairs
- 2008- Blogs: Social critique
 - Anti-establishment
 - Education system
 - Authority, power & corruption
 - Inequality
 - Media censorship
 - Nationalism
 - Migrant workers' plight
 - Current affairs, e.g. Kindergarden stabbings

13 **On the Kindergarden Stabbings**

- 'Kids, You're Spoiling the Old Boys' Fun'
- 5 Feb 2010

Satire targets corrupt officials

- In ancient Chinese knight-errant style

- To fight for the poor & needy in society

14 **Kindergarden Stabbings**

‘Kids, You’re Spoiling the Old Boys’ Fun’

- 2010-02-05

Satire targets corrupt officials

- In ancient Chinese knight-errant style
 - To fight for the poor & needy in society

15 **‘Kids, You’re Spoiling the Old Boys’ Fun’**

If the government is telling the truth, then why are they not letting parents see their children? They’ve also blocked off the hospital and shut down all related news coverage, allowing no photographs or video of these children. So I searched the web for Taizhou and unexpectedly came across this article written a few days after the killings on April 30: “Triple happiness arrives in Taizhou”.

I was very astonished. The Taizhou government has successfully imposed a news black-out, closed the hospital, controlled the media, forbidden visitors, and diverted public attention, but now they have successfully taken the people’s anger at the killer and directed it at themselves, and for what?

It’s their usual process: eat, drink and be merry all night until something happens, then hide, isolate, shut down the media, black out information, send out press releases, make compensations, cremate the bodies — then go back to eating and drinking. Their way of dealing with things isn’t much nobler than a killer’s.

Five school killings in a month, and two within just a week. I don’t want to delve into the social reasons for the killing, I just

want to tell everyone here that a man rushing into a kindergarten and stabbing children can't even make the news. To the 32 kids whose ages would only reach a hundred if you added them all up, you've been stabbed, but you can't even get into a newspaper, because a few hundred kilometers away there is a grand event with millions of fireworks, and your story would be too disconcerting to us. At the same time, your hometown of Taizhou is enjoying "triple happiness": national tourism days, economic talks, and a ceremony to celebrate overseas Chinese starting businesses.

Perhaps in the eyes of those old boys, you kids are just spoiling their fun.

- 16 **Pressure Cookers and Safety Valves**
- Blogger Murong Xuecun 慕容雪村 alias Hao Qun (b. 1974)
 - On blogging (2013)
 - Jonathan Hassid (2012):
 - Online pressure cookers
 - Safety valves
 - Han Han's blog as safety valve
- 17 **Han Han's Internet Strategy**
- Indirect ways of criticism
 - Avoids direct confrontation with authorities
 - "Rebel" in the age of maintaining stability
 - Deleted blogs circulate widely on fan sites
 - BRAND-NEW publishing strategy:
 - direct distribution onto mobile phones
 - bypassing World Wide Web
- 18 **IV. Public Intellectual 2.0?**
- Time Magazine* Person of the Year 2010
- No. 2 of 100 influential people
 - After Facebook's Mark Elliot Zuckerberg
- Ai Weiwei on Han Han:

–Gravedigger of older generation

–More influential than Lu Xun

Praise until his 2011 conservative essays on democracy, revolution & freedom

- ‘Public Intellectual’
- 公共知识分子
- Han Han: ‘Like public toilets’

19 **Marketplace 2.0:
Han Han as a Consumer Brand**

- 2 ■ Postmodern pop culture
 - Mixes art & commercial culture
- Blog marketed for consumption
- Blog =
 - Medium & Product
- Blog = commercial site
 - Fuelled by advertising industry, e.g. Subaru
- Han Han as China’s Generation Y celebrity consumer & cultural entrepreneur

20 **V. Conclusion:
Towards a New Public Sphere 2.0?**

- 2 key elements
 - 1. nationalism
 - 2. anti-radicalism
- Celebrity status
 - Satisfies competing demands:
 - Audience
 - Authorities
- Embraces:
 - Status quo &
 - Spectacular rebellion
- Blog:
 - Not yet independent of state power
 - But high impact on readers

- Potentially political dynamite?

21 **Thank you!**

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22 **Satire & Subversion**

- Subversion through 'play' (玩 *wan*)
 - 1980s 'hooligan literature'
 - Wang Shuo 王朔 (1958-)
- Han Han's magazine
 - 'Renaissance' title censored
 - *Duchangtuan* 独唱团 (*Chorus of Solos*) 2010
- Subtitle: *Party*
Censored frontispiece ->

23 **1. 'Speaking of Revolution'**

- 23Dec 2011
- 'for China, it's not necessarily a good choice. ... China needs more substantial reforms.'
- Q: Why don't you lead an uprising yourself?'

24 **2. 'Talking about Democracy'**

- 24 Dec 2011
- 'Gradual reform is the best way out at present.'
- 'To change the people is to change everything.'
- Democracy:
 - Western import
- Since 1919 May Fourth
 - Mr Sai and Mr De
- Cultural appropriation -> change in meaning

25  **3. 'Pressing for Freedom'**

- 26 Dec 2011
- 'I call upon the authorities to loosen the bonds that are stifling culture, publishing, media, and film.'

- Criticism of 3 blogs:
 - Conservative
 - Little innovation
 - Not radical
- But: sensitive topics brought into public sphere 2.0