

The Global as the Postcolonial: Desire, Identity, and Liminality in Indian Rock

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This essay uses the concept of desire to reinfuse existing conversations about the postcolonial condition and its relationship with globalization. The essay uses the Indian uptake of the seemingly alien cultural practice of rock music to understand the confluence of vestigial structures of colonialism and a globalizing subjectivity that challenge unified notions of a national identity in India. By exploring media coverage of rock and testimony from musicians, the essay unravels the liminal spaces of destabilized identities and fragmented subjectivities that mark the global postcolonial condition. In doing so, it illuminates the role of structures, past and present, in shaping cultural desire and determining affective responses to global culture.

Keywords: desire, postcolonial condition, globalization, rock, India

Introduction

Popular cultural practices are imbued with messages that scholars have historically read as political (Bennett, 1999; Hebdige, 1979; Fiske, 2010). This essay seeks to understand the ongoing sociocultural changes in India and the transformations within notions of its national identity through a close study of the cultural formation of rock music in India. Globally feted for joining the league of fast-growing nations, including the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China; Armijo, 2007), the narrative of India's economic growth in the decades since globalization has been both affirmed and challenged (Drèze & Sen, 2013; Pal & Ghosh, 2007). Although the economic consequences of the emergence of BRICs nations have been much studied (Baskaran & Muchie, 2008; Jadhav, 2012; Mallick & Sousa, 2013), the transformations in their social and cultural realms resulting from their embrace of global capitalism, which this essay analyzes, are just as deserving of analysis.

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By unearthing the political stakes embedded within the production and consumption of rock in India, this study examines the role of global cultural and capital flows in the construction of a national subjectivity and its conflicted relation with a postcolonial cultural realm. The opening up of India's economy in the early 1990s (McDowell, 1997) set the country on the path to join the emerging BRICs economies, but it also opened doors to cultural interactions leading to increased consumption and appropriation of Western culture in India. The new avenues for cultural ascriptions opened up since have pushed traditional boundaries of Indianness, further amplifying the deep fissures within the postcolonial cultural space in India. This essay's emphasis on the textual and experiential aspects of Indian subjectivity among practitioners of rock challenges imaginations of unified and homogeneous Indianness as evident in state-led branding campaigns such as Incredible India (Kerrigan, Shivanandan, & Hede, 2012). The essay reveals a fragmented postcolonial space where centrifugal forces of globalization continuously destabilize the imaginary center.

To understand how contemporary and historical structures enable rock's uptake in India, I analyze three dimensions of the rock scene: representations of rock in the magazine *Rock Street Journal* (henceforth RSJ), the musicians' descriptions of their affective relationship to the music, and their conflicted choices about desired audiences. Through this analysis I argue that the structures of contemporary globalization interact with historical experiences of colonialism within the cultural sphere of globalizing societies such as India to construct a national subjectivity situated at the intersection of the past and the present. Contemporary Indian rock takes root in a scene where a prior familiarity with Anglophone culture and English language facilitates rock's appropriation and the very process of globalization in India. To demonstrate this relationship between the postcolonial and the global (Krishnaswamy & Hawley, 2007), I invoke both the broader notion of affect and the specific concept of desire to show how global and colonial cultural power can be better understood through the lens of educated desire positioned alongside corporeal and affective responses to popular culture.

This search for explanations for cultural globalization that go beyond rationalistic categories of ideology and interpellation is inspired by the idea that cultural choices are motivated by affective categories of want, incompleteness, anxiety, and longing that are "visceral forces" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) escaping rational thought processes. These affective notions precede and form the genesis of human desire whose various articulations by thinkers reveal an interactional evolution of desire that is mediated through symbolic and discursive structures to shape cultural choices. In pointing to those structures, both past and contemporary, this essay intervenes within theories of cultural globalization that have located the impetus for the appropriation, imposition, and adaptation of "foreign" cultural texts either in institutions producing and distributing texts (Miller, 2005; Schiller, 1992) or in texts themselves (Liebes & Katz, 1994). This essay's attempt to understand Indian rock through the affective lens turns the focus on the space between global subjects and structures both contemporary and historical through which global cultural desire is mediated.

Indian rock is a rich case study for investigating how global power dynamics operate through the cultivation of desire and allows us to explore the limits of traditional explanations for global cultural flows to fully account for rock's uptake in India. Thousands of bands across India (amateur and professional) play a mix of various genres of Western rock interspersed with Indian influences that resist categorization

through simplistic lenses of cultural imperialism, hybridity, or ideological dominance. The variations of linguistic, regional, political, and cultural identity expressed through performances such as at annual rock festivals, exclusive magazines and media (e.g., *Rock Street Journal*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Score*), and prominent coverage in Bollywood movies showcase the multiplicities and contestations within national identity engendered by globalization (Appadurai, 1990; Kennedy & Danks, 2001). Those multiplicities are informed by India's colonial history, which differentiates its cultural politics from other globalizing nations and is germane to explaining rock's meaning in India. India's historical interactions with the Anglophone cultural world due to colonialism and the contested position of English within it means that global cultural flows must encounter preexisting vestigial structures of colonialism to create an altered dynamic of globalization in India.

Desire and Cultural Globalization

The nature of rock's uptake in India allows us to extend existing theories of cultural globalization, whose critique of the continuing influence of former imperial powers in the world focused on the manifest, measurable aspects of global cultural dominance. Critical analysis along these lines asserted that the economic advantages of former imperial powers allowed them to continue pushing their ideology onto former colonies, forming what is known as the cultural imperialism thesis (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1975; Miller, 2005; Schiller, 1992; Tomlinson, 1995). Here, global cultural flows were shown to be a new colonialism of ideas reinscribing the worn paths of military imperialism. A product of its time, the cultural imperialism thesis was a polemical attack on Western cultural domination of the world and an unmasking of its collusion with capitalism. Its critique of the emerging global order after decolonization in the latter half of the 20th century was much needed and reminded observers that the end of de jure colonialism had only moved the dynamics of global domination from the material and corporeal to the cultural.

Even though its theorizations have proven largely correct, scholars posing a correction to the cultural imperialism thesis made a case for theories of hybridity, arguing that cultural export, even in conditions of less than total equality, did not result in homogenized, look-alike cultures, but rather in a productive and empowering fusion referred to as "hybridity" (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 2004; Canclini, 2006). In consonance with active-audience theorists such as John Fiske (1989) and Liebes and Katz (1994), theorists of hybridity (Appadurai, 1990) argued that global audiences remake the media they consume in a process of adaptation by which it is suggested they can assert collective power great enough to mitigate the potential homogenizing power of postimperialist culture industries.

Within these theories of globalization generally and cultural globalization in particular, the human subject and his or her relationship to structures figure as some impenetrable and universal entity that leaves unexplored the psychic and symbolic mechanisms by which subjects participate, embrace, or reject the global condition. Lessons from explorations of human subjectivity in cognate fields such as postcolonial theory (Bhabha, 2004; Fanon, 2008; Ghosh, 2008; Khanna, 2003; Stoler, 1995; Young, 2003), cinema (Kaplan, 1990; Mulvey, 2009), and critical cultural studies (Gunn, 2004; Žižek, 1991) have much to contribute to conversations on cultural globalization. Within postcolonial scholarship, for instance, desire and affect differentiate a strident thread that investigates the political consequences of human sexuality by arguing that, whereas colonialism ostensibly was about political and economic power (trade

and usurpation), it was also in fact steered by human desire and shaped it in return (Bhabha, 2004; Fanon, 2008; Ghosh, 2008; Khanna, 2003; Stoler, 1995; Young, 2003).

Drawing on these insights, this essay analyzes the rich and diverse conversations on desire to argue that the threads that posit its discursive, cultural, and symbolic construction (Foucault & Hurley, 1990; Lacan, 1978)—as opposed to those that see desire as drives or as a positive productive force (Deleuze, 1983; Freud, Riviere, Strachey, & Gay, 1989; Nietzsche, Kaufmann, & Hollingdale, 1968)—are most salient to an examination of the relationship between desire and power within cultural globalization. Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan both challenge the notion of desire as an immutable precultural eros and instead argue for its emergence within an interaction between the subject and the symbolic world. Their notion of constructed desire, while resolutely opposing its precultural origins, makes a case for its genesis within structures of discourse, culture, and symbols that subjects inhabit and journey through.

As demonstrated in the analysis that follows, subjects of Indian rock are immersed in a cultural world that shapes and channels their motivation toward this form of music. Lacan's emphasis on the linguistic turn in psychoanalysis definitively moved the register of desire from the Freudian biological drive to the signifying chain of symbols akin to a structure. In this schema, the symbolic realm becomes a collective reality, wherein "not only the subject, but the subjects, caught in their intersubjectivity . . . line up" (Muller & Richardson, 1987, p. 16) in their relation to circulating signs. Lacan's challenge was directed toward linear models of power in which large social institutions are seen to force or interpellate individuals into subjective roles (e.g., Althusser, 2001), instead decentering control into the horizontal realm of the semiotic. His description of the relationship between desire and the sign pivoting on the notion that entrance into the symbolic world is premised on a lack is pertinent to cultural consumption under globalization given this essay's contention that the symbolic and cultural structures that global subjects inhabit operate to simulate the lack and sense of incompleteness that is the genesis of Lacanian desire. Lacan's proposition that all subjects are driven by the "desire of the other" (Fink, 1997, p. 50), meaning both the desire to possess or understand another and the desire to *be* desired (Lacan, 2007) is key to understanding the yearning and its frustration that are key determinants of a global subjecthood as expressed in Indian rock. The role of the linguistic and symbolic realm in this process is clear given Lacan's contention that "the unconscious is structured like a language" (Lacan, 1978, p. 20) and that this linguistic turn was already sensed by Freud (in his attempts to reach the unconscious through slips in language) but remained incipient in Freudian psychoanalysis.

In providing for an interactional basis for desire, Lacan's emphasis on symbolic and discursive structures is strikingly congruent both with Foucauldian notions of desire (Butler 1999; Foucault & Hurley, 1990) and recent attempts to theorize affect (Ahmad, 2004; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) that underscore its existence in the space in between. Foucault's counter to the Freudian repressive hypothesis argued that sexual desire was in fact *cultivated* through the institution of regulations, norms, and discursive practices that directed human desire to particular ends (Butler, 1999; Foucault & Hurley, 1990; Stoler, 1995). In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault's convincing case against biological or precultural eros historicizes the production of desire through a process that "put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning it" (Foucault & Hurley, 1990, p. 69). Foucault cites the "confession" as the institution that, by playing the normative regulator of truth and falsehood, ensured, far from the myth of

Victorian repression, that "Misunderstandings, avoidances, and evasions were only possible, and only had their effects, against the background of this strange endeavor: to tell the truth of sex" (Foucault & Hurley, 1990, p. 57). The structures meant to encourage truthfulness created the grounds for deception, concealment, and, according to this model, pleasure itself. In its focus on the space in between, this interactional basis of desire shares in a symbiotic model with theories of affect. The emphasis on corporeality, sensation, and movement within affect theory, while engaging with categories that are broader than and precede the notion of desire, nevertheless illuminate a contingent and reciprocal unfolding of "the felt reality of relation" (Massumi, 2002, p. 16). Testimonies from musicians that reveal affective themes and portrayals of rock as objects of desire reveal an interplay of these categories in the analysis below.

In different ways, these threads of scholarship show us the manufacture and legitimation but also the movement of affect and desire toward particular objects (Butler, 1999). In moving away from a biological or natural basis, they inform our thinking about their cultural and discursive construction that shapes our understanding of the rock culture in India. In a claim that lends itself most centrally to studies of the global flow of culture and the global regulation of desire, Foucault surmises that "the law is what constitutes both desire and the lack on which it is predicated" (Foucault & Hurley, 1990, p. 82). Claiming that, "For Freud, sexual desire is a cause; for Foucault, an effect" (Stoler, 1995, p. 169), Stoler's Foucauldian study of the affective dimension of colonialism anticipates this essay's thesis that the operation of global cultural power today cannot be divorced from its role in shaping and determining global desire.

Global cultural consumption and production thrive in this interplay between power and desire. As a prime ingredient of cultural globalization (Mitchell, 2002; White, 2011), global music cultures are a crucial vehicle for acquiring global citizenship through the construction and consumption of difference and enacting the desire for the "other" (Young, 2003). Globalization of music cultures such as rock in India illuminates the functioning of global desire through the dialectic of yearning and negation, of fascination with and fear of contamination by the other.

The Case of *Rock Street Journal*

To understand the role of the symbolic realm in presenting rock as an object of desire, I analyze the early editions of the magazine *Rock Street Journal*, which started publishing in 1993 and has been both a witness to and an active participant in the growth of the Indian rock scene. A close analysis of the nine issues published in 1995 (its third year of publication) captures a formative moment in India's rock culture and the magazine's early history. This period is also significant because it marks the opening of India's economic and cultural spheres, which set in motion the processes leading to its emergence as a BRICs nation almost a decade later. My analysis focuses on the magazine's editorials, the letters sent by readers, the stories, and the advertisements to understand the magazine's construction of rock as an aspirational cultural practice that required a "scene" to develop. The magazine's discourse on rock is marked by a tenor of both informing and educating its readers and is better understood when temporally located during the early days of globalization, when interactions with Western culture were still in the realm of fantasy and imagination in India.

The editorials of RSJ (written and signed by its now deceased editor Amit Saigal) provide insights into the magazine's intentions to create a scene from spread-out fans, far-flung readers, and practitioners of the music. The concept of scene has been deployed by scholars of music cultures to capture the multitude of practices and influences that converge within musical cultural formations. As in the case of Indian rock, "Scenes take shape, much of the time, on the edges of cultural institutions" (Straw, 2004, p. 416). The magazine's solipsistic interrogation of the rock scene appears in the first (January 1995) editorial of 1995, where Saigal strikes a hopeful note for Indian rock, claiming that the genre had enough room for global variations. He claims that, just like the most popular songs on the American charts are different from those on the British ones (thus pointing to music's global variability), the "unique Indian psyche," with a penchant for "deeper, more complex music," would identify its own niche. By seeking to root Indian rock in local issues and consumer tastes, these exhortations present the genre as more than just a derivative of Western rock. While making a claim for the Indian scene, another editorial (May/June 1995) hypes the Indian rock market as the next frontier for Western bands and record companies competing within saturated Western markets. "The east is still hungry," it says, while showing optimism about the promise of cultural exchange that will lead to Western labels discovering Indian talent when they travel here. This hopeful narrative for Indian rock leapfrogs to an imagined future wherein the impediments faced by Indian bands in breaking on to the global rock scene have been wished away. Key to this imagined future is Indian bands being asked to play original songs as opposed to covers of Western hits. While imagining a global citizenry of rock musicians, the magazine can nevertheless not entirely eschew its nationalistic ambitions of securing India's rightful place in the global fellowship of rock.

The letters to the editor resonate the sense of community that the editorials envision and seek to create. Letters from readers represent ongoing conversations between them about commendations, suggestions, and critique of writers of specific stories in the magazine. In a pre-Internet world, when satellite television was barely arriving in India, these letters represented the only form of communication between members of a community who would have otherwise remained invisible to one another. The "penpals" section of the magazine allows writers to invite friends with common musical tastes for letter-based friendships. Although the literature on subcultures (Bennett, 1999; Hebdige, 1979) primarily focuses on communities living in close physical proximity, the letters in RSJ show an incipient form of virtual community sustaining itself through an imagined (Anderson, 1983) affiliation with a spread-out group of listeners and aficionados of rock. The exchange represented by these letters is a precursor to "the ways in which particular musical practices 'work' to produce a sense of community within the conditions of metropolitan music scenes" (Straw, 1991, p. 373). RSJ's formative role in its early years of building a community among spread-out and disconnected individuals demonstrates its centrality to creating the rock scene prevalent in India today.

RSJ's extended feature stories are about both foreign (primarily Western) and Indian bands, but with notable differences in the way Western and Indian bands are written about. The celebratory and aspirational tone toward Western bands changes to an evaluative one when discussing Indian bands, thus positioning the former as a yardstick against which the latter should be measured. The magazine's coverage of the Western rock scene shows an attempted erasure of distance and the assumption of a global rock subjectivity by ignoring historical differences between Western and the emerging Indian bands. The Western history of rock is universalized and presented as the common global history of rock. An

article invoking this history claims, "It may be difficult for most of us in our zillion gizmo, hi-tech world to fathom the excitement, sheer thrill and super-charged sexual energy that the first strains of rock & roll generated amongst American teenagers in the Fifties" (RSJ, February 1995, p. 9). The quote represents a doubly displaced temporal (invoking and yearning for the past) and spatial (invoking the West) nostalgia. The yearning constructs an imaginary past that is displaced both in time and space from the site of the magazine's location by imagining the life of "American teenagers in the Fifties." It presents the Western history of rock as the "master narrative" (Chakrabarty, 2007, p. 27) to which all other narratives must be compared. This slippage persists in other stories in the magazine where Western bands are eulogized as the implicit standard of comparison for Indian bands.

A story on punk rock (RSJ, March 1995) asks whether it is the "next big thing" without discussing the location of this cultural phenomenon. Although an Indian magazine commenting on and predicting the future of a popular culture scene in the West may seem odd, it is less so when situated in the context of the magazine's self-imposed dual charge of informing and educating its readers. The story includes an image of a tattooed, ostensibly angry (yelling with an angry grimace) punk musician (Henry Rollins) as it details how the genre of punk has emerged as a new cultural expression of "the age." In homogenizing world history through this universal "age," the magazine obviates the need to distinguish or qualify that it is referring to particular histories or cultural moments. In explaining the cultural moment of punk's revival, the writer (Renu Khanna) does not feel the need to contextualize its descriptions for an Indian reader. The article's assumption of readers' prior knowledge about the cultural scene is illustrated by this opening quote:

If the music industry needs a new cash cow after Kurt Cobain blew the top off grunge, it may just find one in the form of "Punk." . . . Punk—the Seventies' anti-establishment, raw, screaming, DIY (Do It Yourself) attitude filled with angst and anger, is back. (RSJ, March 1995, p. 5)

These introductory sentences are notable in eschewing the need to mention that they are referring to the Western music industry and not the Indian one. The reference to a pivotal moment (the 1970s) in U.S. cultural history is universalized as one that all fans of rock (Indian and Western) must identify with. Terms such as *DIY*, which would be alien to an Indian readership, are used as if culturally specific concepts can be interchanged without translation. Feature stories on most prominent Western bands and musicians, including John Lennon, Kurt Cobain, Judas Priest, Neil Young, Slash, the Cranberries, and Sheryl Crow, are interspersed with stories and reviews of Indian bands. However, several issues of the magazine have no stories on Indian bands, thus underscoring the message that only Indian bands with special talent and achievements would find space in RSJ. A case in point is the magazine's feature on the Indian band Millennium (July 1995), which is given ample space because the band had opened for Def Leppard in Delhi.

The educational nature of the magazine's writing is exemplified in a story (the first in a series on jazz) titled "What Is This Thing Called Jazz ?" (RSJ, July 1995, p. 20) by Haridas Rao, which labors over the difficulty of defining the genre but also guides readers toward inculcating a taste for the music. The author reminds those interested in initiating themselves to the genre that most good music stores in

major cities have separate jazz sections. Lyric booklets with guitar chords frequently complement stories such as these, which serve the dual function of educating readers about the genre and cultivating curiosity by presenting lack of knowledge as a deficit that needs to be corrected. To inhabit the cultural world created by RSJ is to be constantly aware of one's incompleteness as a less-than-full subject of global rock. The yearning for the insatiable wholeness produced by this discursive structure is what I posit as the genesis of desire propelling cultural transfers within globalization. In Lacanian psychoanalysis (Gunn, 2004; Lacan, 1978), the moment of a subject's entry into the symbolic order is also one of alienation (Fink, 1997) and the realization of a perpetual lack. For Lacan, "Lack and desire are co-extensive" (Fink, 1997, p. 54), and the desire experienced by the subject is "cast in the mold of the language or languages they learn" (Fink, 1997, p. 6). I posit the cultural formation of Indian rock as a symbolic universe, and RSJ's pointers to readers' inadequacies functions like language to channel the subject's desire in particular directions.

In creating an aspirational standard alien to the preexisting Indian cultural ethos and then nudging the Indian scene to emulate and live up to those standards, the Indian cultural scene as imagined by RSJ is marked by a lack similar to one experienced during subjects' entry into language. Desire, the insatiable yearning for a union with the sign, arises because "there is no such thing as desire, strictly speaking, without language" (Fink, 1997, p. 9). RSJ's role in continuously pointing to an aspirational ideal channels desire and exemplifies a noncoercive and nonideological iteration of global power. RSJ is one among other similar structures that global subjects inhabit that shape aspirations—and particularly so in a postcolonial cultural space such as India, riven by continuing legacies of colonial rule. Rock's location at the intersection of these vestigial postcolonial structures (such as English language and colonial music cultures) allows us to examine the iteration of postcolonial desire within the global cultural *mélange*. Postcolonial theory has argued for the cultural (Said, 1979) and affective (Stoler, 1995) aspects of colonialism as key sites for the operation of colonial power. This analysis is informed by how the colonial experience animates cultural desire in postcolonial times (Bhabha, 2004; Gandhi, 1998; Spivak, 1999). The focus on musicians' affective invocations in their relationship to rock, to which I now turn, continues this attempt to showcase nonideological dimensions of globalization that nuance our understanding of global power.

The Affect of Rock

That the musicians use affective terminologies to describe their attraction to rock pushes against power-centric understandings of global cultural flows. Lawrence Grossberg (1992) cites affect as the missing link in a fuller understanding of ideology and how it operates. In moving to the broader notion of affect that precedes the category of desire, this analysis "offers the possibility of a 'psychology of belief,'" which could explain "how and why ideologies are sometimes, and only sometimes, effective" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 83). Affect, for Grossberg, must be central to understanding the reasons underlying human action and choices. Expressions of longing, alienation, rage, and pleasure as reasons for choosing rock escape rationalistic justifications for cultural choices and yet "might be culturally-theoretically thinkable" (Massumi, 2002, p. 4). Cutting across conversations, musicians and listeners of rock in India identify themes of aggression, energy, freedom, newness, and rebelliousness as motivating their gravitation toward rock.

For Mahesh Tinaikar, the guitarist of Indus Creed, one of the earliest Indian rock bands and the first to have toured outside India, the "energy and aggression" kept him hooked to the music. Many interviewees claimed an almost immediate and instantaneous connection with the music the first time they heard it. Nolan Lewis, the lead vocalist of the band Kryptos, explained that it was, "like when you meet someone for the first time but feel like you've known them for ages." Rajeev, the guitarist with the band Thermal and a Quarter, listened to all kinds of Eastern and Western musical genres until he discovered rock, and he describes his reaction to heavy metal songs by Metallica as a visceral one of "being caught by the testicles." Similarly, for members of Skinny Alley (a band with a female vocalist based out of Kolkata), it was "the energy and the charge," especially from the sound of electric guitar and drums, that enticed them to rock. The musicians' descriptions of their affective responses have undeniably masculine overtones, because, as everywhere else, rock musicians in India are primarily male (with rare exceptions). In discussing the "sexual division of labor" (Frith & McRobbie, 1978, p. 9) in rock music cultures, Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie show rock to be a "male form" within which female roles are "limited and mediated through male notions of female ability" (Frith & McRobbie, 1978, p. 5). The predominantly male interviewees' descriptions of their responses as well as the representation of rock as an object of eroticized desire within the pages of RSJ reveal the Indian rock scene to be just as masculine as elsewhere.

The musicians' memories about their first interactions with rock echo affective themes of high energy and aggression that the pages of RSJ symbolize as rock's freedom. The high decibel at which rock is typically played is a key aspect of its iconoclastic connotations. Sandeep Chatterjee, a former rock musician who has since sought to be successful in the Hindi film industry, says that the high volume of the music was itself a statement. It conveyed a sense of iconoclasm that resonated with his youthful days growing up in a small town in India. Rock's rawness and aggression echoed with Tony Das, a musician based in Bangalore, who reminisces about the adrenaline rush when listening to a Guns N' Roses album the first time. References to the bodily experiences of loudness and "rush" invoke the affective encounter as a sensory and corporeal experience through a body that becomes the "accretion of force relations" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 2) within the symbolic realm. In pointing to the discursive mediation and construction of bodily affect, this analysis subverts the equation of the body with a prediscursive eros.

The emphasis on the energy and the implicit aggression in rock's sound and the musicians' corporeal responses to it resonate with themes in the pages of RSJ, whose stories, images, and posters show the very emotions that interviewees describe when listening to the music. This mirroring challenges arguments about the primal purity of pleasure and desire to make room for alternative imaginaries of affect that discursively and culturally construct "a different kind of pleasure" (Foucault & Hurley, 1990, p. 71). This Foucauldian notion of pleasure disengages it from a primal eternal truth (e.g., bodily pleasure) to locate it in a regime that "multiplied, intensified, and even created its own intrinsic pleasures" (Foucault & Hurley, 1990, p. 71). This regime is not based on a "natural" law but on a constructed one. To understand the expressions of affect narrated by Indian musicians is to make space for this interactional notion of pleasure and affect that is constructed and that lies between the subject and its object of desire (Ahmad, 2004; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). The iteration of key motifs of pleasure in the magazine and in musicians' testimonies points to a symbolic affective regime around rock that is then reproduced by participants as the "true" experience of rock.

Musicians' responses to what the musical genre means to them echo signifiers of emotions and values divorced from intrinsic aspects of the music but ultimately reflecting their own life stories and experiences. Nolan Lewis of Kryptos recounts how he found in rock everything that was missing in his own life. "I was the thinnest and weakest guy in class, pretty much a nerd who couldn't associate with most other people," he recalls. Rock reassured him that "it's okay to be a little weird." This license for nonconformity was key in a social setting where most students had similar dreams and pressures to succeed academically and professionally. Countering the widespread conflation of rock with anger, Lewis, a self-proclaimed avid reader of everything from supernatural science fiction to philosophy, found a deeply intellectual connection with the music. Rock lyrics reflected the complexities of day-to-day life that other means of cultural expression around him were failing to provide.

For Vipin Mishra (who gave up a career in rock to compose music for the Hindi film industry), this intellectual connection stood for a politics that was "left of the center." People doing rock were considered "mad," but in an intellectual sort of way. The songs were unpredictable, with multiple interpretations and with weird titles and album names. The totality of it all signified a freedom "beyond what we could ever imagine." Grossberg (1992) argues about rock that globally, "There is nothing intrinsic to its practices (including its place vis-à-vis the 'mainstream') that guarantees that it delivers its audience to a specific political position" (Grossberg, 1992, p. 137). The associations made by those in India therefore betray the already existing politics of those taking it up. Coming to it through an English liberal education, most rock musicians in India are predisposed to challenge the traditional mores of Indian society.

That practitioners and musicians would connote rock differently and often contradictorily points to both rock's polysemic nature (Hall, 2006) and the interactional construction of meanings (Mead, 1934) of cultural texts. The dual connotations of rock as both philosophical and intellectual while rebellious and iconoclastic are not irreconcilable opposites but instead show the genre's emergence as a floating signifier to which preferred cultural meanings are attached. Rock can do so given its marked difference from existing Indian cultural texts representing, in the words of musician Sandeep Chatterjee, "a deviation" from "accepted norms and principles, social and personal rules" as it connoted a "rebel's mind." This symbolic challenge to the status quo not merely in its content and lyrics but, as Sooraj of Mother Jane claims, in the aural experience of its radically different sound is presented as a heady mix signifying a change from all that existed. The meanings the musicians ascribe to rock are therefore projections of an experiential identity that is distinct from dominant notions of Indianness. Indian rock allows for the unmooring of Indian national identity from classical identity markers, a phenomenon inseparable from globalization itself (Kinnvall, 2006).

The radical politics and seemingly pure connotations of rock must be contextualized within its cultural and economic marginality in the face of Bollywood's dominance in the music and celebrity space. Whereas rock is centrally tied to market forces (Weinstein, 1991) in the West, its inability to usurp the dominant space in India allows it to appear uncontaminated by commercial imperatives and hence as a vehicle for channeling alternate notions of personhood. Its marginal status gives Indian rock an uncompromising irreverence that Bruce Mani, the vocalist of the band Thermal and a Quarter, finds admirable at a time when commercial pressures shape the content of most other forms of music. For

Rajeev of the same band, rock provides the possibility of a cathartic release from the values of deference to power intrinsic to Indian social hierarchy.

Conversations about rock's globalization debate the attribution of universalism to yet another globally dominant cultural form with Western origins. Rock's use as a vehicle of change and resistance around the world from opposing tyrannical regimes such as in Russia and Eastern Europe during communism to Argentina during the military dictatorship (1976–1983) have allowed scholars (Regev, 1997) to argue that rock has embedded itself within a global idiom for resistance. Explaining the basic desires that make rock music popular around the world Regev claims:

In their musical tastes, in their fascination with new styles, in their enthusiasm for local concerts by rock stars, in their belief in the "authenticity" and artistic quality of rock—and in their attempts to make local rock music, audiences and musicians in so many countries are not much different from their peers in "rock countries" like the USA and UK. (p. 130)

This claim about an undifferentiated global rock subjectivity, although well made, must be qualified by the preexisting social and cultural grooves within which the musical genre must flow. In the case of India, those grooves are formed by the unique confluence of its historical experience and contemporary global forces, thus differentiating what may from a distance appear as just another variant of rock's global appropriation. Critiques of claims about universalism of popular cultural forms (Cohen, 2008; Tomlinson, 1995) remind us that such arguments discount the power of Western media institutions to distribute their media products worldwide. Tomlinson conjectures, "The force of this argument is seen when we think that no Mongolian or Balinese comedian has been suggested, by Western critics, as striking the chord of common humanity" (1995, p. 53). The fact that the popularity of rock music around the world remains unchallenged by non-Western forms of music belies Regev's claims of universalism while lending credence to Tomlinson's caution. This is especially so because not all fans of rock music around the world are resisting a regime or making political music in the traditional sense, as is evident in the case of India.

Instead of a politics of resistance, this essay locates Indian rock within a politics of identity. Musicians' testimonies point to their indeterminate location, their conflicted sense of belonging, and their dilemmas about audience. Given the performative aspect of the cultural practice of rock, their location is a continuous negotiation that is visible in concert performances, their lyrics, and music as well as in their choice of audience. In explicating identity as the performance of a repetitive ritual that naturalizes what may be a construction, scholars (Butler, 1999; Goffman, 1959; Hall & Gay, 1996) see it as a dialogic suturing whereby subjects are continuously in the process of identifying with and becoming (Kinnvall, 2006). This transient and contingent notion of identity operates within an overdetermined *mélange* that is the cultural space in India where musicians must carve out their space.

Identifying the Audience

The fragmented subjectivity engendered by the confluence of a postcolonial cultural space with a globalizing one is best revealed in the musicians' conflicted choices of desired audiences and their reasons

for seeking certain types of listeners. The question of audience is an eternally debated but never settled one on the Indian rock scene. Choices of desired audiences become contentious, because practitioners must make claims about their own identity and often contend with charges of emulating a non-Indian cultural practice. Even within the diverse and plural (linguistically, culturally, socioeconomically) Indian cultural sphere, rock's position as the other of an imagined homogeneous national identity (Anderson, 1983; Robins, 1996) necessitates an intricate negotiation of conflicting threads making up the global and postcolonial subjectivity in India. Choosing audiences they can identify with is germane to their own identity construction, revealing the entangled and interactional construction of the self and personhood (Kennedy & Danks, 2001; Mead, 1934) and pushing against the boundaries of Indianness.

Given their Western inspirations, many bands desire to play at Western locations to emulate their icons, but that desire comes with its own baggage of alienation and apprehensions of being dismissed as clones. As described later, this baggage is compounded by difficulties of getting gigs abroad and unpleasant experiences during travels to perform in the West. A second space within the scene is occupied by bands that proudly eschew any desire for recognition in the West, seeking instead to Indianize their music and appeal to local audiences. The third category is composed of musicians who, having renounced rock, now seek mass audiences by producing and creating music for mainstream Bollywood. Enduring dilemmas about who their audiences are capture the processual notion of identity as a performative process of continuously "becoming" (Hall & Gay, 1996; Kinnvall, 2006).

Successful Western concerts and global tours are an undeniable sign of a rock band's stature in India, and bands prominently display details of their tours on their websites. Awards and recognitions in Western competitions as well as contracts from Western labels are another marker of distinction in an increasingly competitive scene. But musicians' desire to play outside India comes with its own pitfalls, as explicated in a story in the January 1995 issue of *RSJ* about Indus Creed (India's first band to tour the United States). Although adulatory about the band's achievements, the article also is a sobering reminder about the discrimination and racism the band experienced in the United States. These experiences illustrate the alienation of liminal unbelonging that arises from an altered relationship with home within globalization (Kinnvall, 2006).

Describing his experiences of traveling to perform abroad, Indus Creed's guitarist Mahesh Tinaikar concludes that the goal of wowing audiences in the West is the wrong one for Indian bands: "You can't give back to them what they already have." He adds, "We look different and so are expected to do something different." Despite Tinaikar's sobering assessment, several bands persist and have met with success in this effort.

Bangalore-based band Kryptos has given up the quest to Indianize their music, have diligently targeted a Western audience—and with considerable success. They call themselves a thrash metal band and have recently released their second album through a California-based record label. Their unapologetic eschewing of any Indian connection to their music is supported by their large fan base in Europe. Reviews of their music and their performances frequently appear in German and Scandinavian magazines, in languages they do not understand. After the release of their second album, the band's popularity entered new territory when they began to be requested on heavy metal radio stations in the United States, often

appearing on the top 10 lists of some stations. Explaining the rationale behind their popularity abroad, Nolan Lewis, the band's front man claims, "It is important for us to be appreciated by people who understand what we are trying to do. Even if only a hundred people turn up for our concerts it is important that those few connect with our music." He adds, "It is easier to find those kinds of fans in the West because the metal scene is much bigger there."

The relative obscurity of the band within the Indian fan community and its immense popularity abroad point to the bifocality of the Indian rock scene and the deterritorialization of culture (Appadurai, 1990) due to globalization. Given Kryptos' Indian identity and looks and their overtly Western music, fans and reviewers in the West find it difficult to categorize them, says Lewis. This conflict between Western expectations of what Indian culture is supposed to be and the reality of an Indian heavy metal band exposes slippages between global imaginations of national cultures and their hybrid and fragmented constructions. In the case of India, those Western imaginations are invariably premised on Bollywood's dominant role in projecting a particular brand (Aronczyk, 2013) of Indian culture abroad—a phenomenon that ignores the multiplicities and contestations in the Indian cultural space.

Unlike the former category of musicians seeking Western audiences, the other two broad positions are occupied by those attempting to Indianize rock or those who have given up on the music to pursue a career in India's thriving Hindi film and music industry. Each of the two positions comes with its own existential questions that find expression in their music. Sandeep Chatterjee, who once rebelled against his family to learn the guitar and play rock, is today seeking to carve out a space in Mumbai's film industry. In explaining his transition away after many years as a rock musician, he retorts with a question that underscores the contestations within this cultural world: "Whom was rock invented for? Was it you or someone else? You cannot make a name in a genre that does not belong to you." The "harshness" of metal is quite unpalatable to the Indian ear, he claims, and credits the Hindi film industry with giving him the "joy of creating something new," a feeling of "groundedness" that Chatterjee had not experienced while he was doing rock. "Rock musicians in India are destined to be compared with Western musicians and be complimented for playing *like* one or another famous band," a realization that disillusioned him. Chatterjee's position is echoed by others, such as Vipin Mishra, another former-rock-musician-turned-famous-film-composer, who concludes about rock: "It is not our form of music."

The third category of musicians continues to play rock while striving to find an Indian audience. Skinny Alley, the older Kolkata band, for instance, believe their future lies in striking a chord, even if with a fraction of the huge population of music listeners in India. Sooraj, the vocalist of Mother Jane, echoes this sentiment by countering the idea of niche, fragmented audiences that bands such as Kryptos identify with: "A mass audience for your music is a sign that you have been able to share the pleasure you felt while creating that music with others." He adds that it is the joy of sharing an emotion captured in the song that makes the process worthwhile. The negotiation of audience choice in Indian rock represents the "building of musical alliances and the drawing of musical boundaries" (Straw, 1991, p. 373) to mark exclusions and inclusions through which musicians' sense of self is constructed. Rock bands seeking and playing for an Indian audience, for instance, frequently perform in traditional Indian garb on stage even while playing music in English. Partaking in the cultural practice of Indian rock is, therefore, as much about constructing and projecting an identity as it is about consuming the music.

Conclusion

The case of Indian rock music has been used in this essay to illuminate the affective dimensions of cultural globalization by focusing on the interactions between subjects and discursive structures that those global subjects inhabit and journey through. The construction of rock as an aspirational ideal by *Rock Street Journal*, the expression of affective dimensions of musicians' choices of rock, and their conflicted sense of alienation and belonging when choosing audiences each showcases that global cultural flows are as much about desire as they are about power and ideology. The echoing of these affective themes and their anxieties about audiences must also be situated within the ideal rock scene that RSJ imagines. The magazine's emphasis on an authentic experience of rock intermingles with a postcolonial cultural terrain to animate the contours within which the tropes of affect, desire, and alienation operate in Indian rock. The recourse to theorists of desire (Fink, 1997; Foucault & Hurley, 1990; Gunn 2004; Lacan, 1978; Stoler, 1995) and affect (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Grossberg, 1992; Massumi, 2002) illuminates facets of globalization that showcase a different valence of power that functions interactionally as circumscribed agency within global cultural flows.

Our search for postideological underpinnings for global cultural flows cannot ignore the question of power, and this essay reveals its seepages in different ways to present a fuller explanation of the operation of power. Subjects' experience of Indian rock, analyzed in this essay, is mediated by the discursive and symbolic structures that refract and shape their zone of "true" experience. RSJ's indictment of the Indian rock scene as less than complete baits its readers with the promise of wholeness that is fated to continuously slip away from them. Setting Western rock as the implicit aspirational standard channels global subjects' longing in particular directions similar to and in conjunction with what scholars have described as the operation of colonial desire (Krishnaswamy, 1998; Young, 2014) that functioned through structures of culture and power. The continuation of those structures in postcolonial times and the ways in which they cohere with newer ones enabled by globalization (such as RSJ) to shape the angst-ridden ambivalence about home, belonging, and audiences within Indian rock must remain a central lens through which to analyze the Indian cultural sphere.

Although limited to a study of the *Rock Street Journal*, the insights of this analysis could be extended to consider other cultural structures within globalization and their role in shaping global desire. Analyzing global culture from the lens of the interactions between the past and the present in other cultural spheres such as cinema, television, and the Web in postcolonial locations such as India introduces the differentia of history. These distinctions make space for productive interrogations that anticipate more nuanced operations of power within globalization. Allowing for agency, albeit a circumscribed one, that the affective lens of desire makes possible in this essay is perhaps one way to chart that alternative course.

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