

SONGS AS COUNTER-ARCHIVES: INDEPENDENT POPULAR MUSIC, MEMORY, AND STATE POWER

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ABSTRACT

In this research paper discussed how songs can be used as counter-archives to maintain cultural memory, defying and challenging the state power. The aim of this research paper is to show how independent music enters into the discourses of nationalism, war, and crisis, and to suggest that independent music is a testament to the repression of the official past. This argument relies on three of original works of '1946' which reimagines the Calcutta riots as a meditation on the partition memory, 'Battle Zone' which criticizes the militarization of the nation and instrumentalization of human sacrifice, and 'I Am Virus' which was released during the global pandemic and reflects on the surveillance, vulnerability, and control of the state. These songs shed light on how popular music uses and warrants the discursive power of the state. Contextually, this question is placed in the paper within the wider discussions on music, protest, and postcolonial statehood and considering transnational appeal of these topics in the context of the 250th anniversary of independence of the United States. This research paper is a combination of the lyrical as well as musical analysis and practice-based reflection in a form of direct reflection of audiovisual work and its placement into socio-political contexts. This amalgamation style of independent music-making becomes both scholarly investigation and artistic witnessing. Placing these songs in conversation with protest musical theories, censorship and state authority, the paper identifies the ways popular music opposes erasure, remembering, and dissent-making-as-a-counter-archive, which is an important part of the global democracies.

KEYWORDS: Counter-Archives, '1946,' 'Battle Zone,' 'I Am Virus,' Lyrical, Musical.

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INTRODUCTION

Popular music has been used to express cultural memory, political resistance, and social commentary and this has been well known to popular music studies and culture theory. In addition to entertainment, songs have been used as sites where marginalized histories are preserved as well as dominant narratives are challenged especially when official history operates on a privileged basis (Bennett and Janssen, 2016). In this regard of this, this research is going to be argued that independently produced popular songs can operate as counter-archives, therefore maintaining memory as well as opposing the authority and exclusions of state-centred historical, thus this research is going to be in line with critical debates on archives, power, and cultural memory.

The difficulties of the institutional power, documentation, and national consensus are prioritized in the official archives in most of the post-colonial as well as crisis-based contexts, therefore this highlights a measure of the political interests aligned by the archival activities. As per the statement of Brandellero *et al.* (2014), these archives frequently marginalize lived experience as well as silence trauma even erase dissenting voices for those especially that challenge nationalist or state-sanctioned narratives. In contrast, popular music functions by affect as well as repetition and circulation that essentially allowing memory to be maintained by emotional involvement rather than bureaucratic validation. Songs simplify historical events into a form of lyrics even into a form of sounds that are portable as well as easily accessible and emotionally moving. As mentioned by Van der Hoeven (2018), with listening as well as sharing and performance, memory is preserved beyond formal archival institutions which significantly allowing other histories to continue in the daily cultural life.

Music also has a flexibility of time which they do not have in state archives which are usually rigid, closed even controlled by the institutional authority. Songs are repeated in various public as well as private spaces that essentially allows historical memory to be reactivated across the generations and social circumstances (Spinetti *et al.*, 2021). This cyclic circulation allows music to be a living archive, an archive that can be reinterpreted and emotionally addressed instead of being documented as unchangeable history which sustains the suggestion that memory is a continuing cultural process as opposed to a historical one that is record.

Considering all of these, this research is going to be analysed three original works that are '1946,' 'Battle Zone,' 'I Am Virus.' Among these '1946' which revisits the Calcutta riots as well as the violence surrounding Partition, on the opposite hand, 'Battle Zone' which critiques the militarization of the nation at the same time the normalization of human sacrifice, and last one 'I Am Virus' that written in the COVID-19 pandemic and viewing surveillance, vulnerability, and state control. All the three songs can be found online on my official Spotify artist page as well as they are discussed within this research as independently produced cultural texts circulating beyond institutional and state frameworks.

Placing these works in the context of popular music studies as well as memory studies and postcolonial critiques of the state, this research is going to show how independent music can be viewed as a counter-archival practice that interferes with the dominant historical narratives. Lyrical narration along with sonic design and digital circulation are the factors that keep these songs in memory as well as express dissent and challenge the authority of official histories within contemporary democracies that emphasizing the political as well as ethical importance of popular music as a site of historical knowledge (Longet *al.*, 2017).

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

"Archives, State Power, and Cultural Theory"

In a traditional knowledge historical legitimacy within historiography, archival studies, institutional authority, state power, and cultural theory linked to the notion of the archive. As per the state men of Walsham (2016), archives are generally understood as collections that gather, arrange, and store documents that are thought to be worthy of historical documentation, in most cases are managed by the state or its institutions. However, archives are not neutral containers of truth that critical scholarship significantly has demonstrated and neutral containers of truth means a position articulated across poststructuralist as well as postcolonial critiques of knowledge production. Instead, they are organized around power even ideology and selective inclusion and not only what gets preserved but also what gets forgotten. This makes the archive a political tool that allow significantly to construct collective memory as well as national identity rather than merely reflecting historical reality (Poole, 2020).

“Advanced Counter-Archives”

Developing this criticism of archives, researchers have developed the concept of the counter-archive as a way of archival authority and institutional control over memory therefore as noted by Brusius and Rico (2023) counter-archives are formed out of marginalized positions and challenge official histories by preserving alternative narratives as well as affective experiences and suppressed memories that are often excluded from state records. Unlike state archives counter-archives often circulate through informal as well as cultural and artistic practices that allow it to remain accessible outside institutional gate keeping, that therefore give preference to testimony, embodiment, and emotional over documentation as well as standardisation as foregrounding of lived experience as a historical knowledge (Taylor, 2003).

‘Memory’

The concept of memory studies also sheds light on this conflict between formal history and the experience of recall by making distinctions between the institutionalized memory and the cultural mediated recollection. Assmann (2011) mentioned that cultural memory is sustained through symbolic forms that essentially includes rituals, texts, and artistic works where repetition, transmission, and shared meaning are the focus. The main part of this process is taken by music since it enables memory to be transmitted through sound, repetition, and act through time and social space. Songs allow people as well as groups to collectively recall even where institutional memory is repressive or revisionary to historical events, thus helps people maintain memory through affective and performative memory (Greeley and Rajaram, 2023).

“Popular Music”

The co-relationship between protest and music is a widely studied subject of popular music studies as well as political sociology. Protest songs are not just the reaction to the political music studies but the practice of creating the oppositional meanings and alternative publics through mobilizing sound, language, and collective identification. According to Jacques Attali music tends to anticipate social change by pointing out the rifts in the current structures of power as well as prevailing forms of organization. In this regard, music can serve as a diagnostic and disruptive element of political life and can reveal the tension that will lead in a wider social change (Murphy and McConville, 2017).

“Postcolonial Theory for Modern Archival”

Postcolonial theory also makes the role of the state in the creation of historical narratives a complex issue, as it attracts attention to the colonial legacies in the modern archival systems (Karabinos, 2018). In most cases of post-colonial states, the state inherits colonial archival systems which value order, surveillance, and control as an instrument of governing the state. Through official discourse these systems frequently marginalize subaltern voices at the same time depoliticize violence therefore rendering certain histories invisible or unintelligible. The forms of culture like music interfere with this process by re-inscribing memory in areas where the state operates on silence. Songs express histories that nationalist consolidation and official forgetting can never enact as well as suggest alternative ways of engaging with history through metaphor and sound and narrative (Linebaugh and Lowry, 2021).

METHODOLOGY OF PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH AND AUDIOVISUAL ANALYSIS

Within this research, a practice-based research methodology has been adopted which as a legitimate form of knowledge generation significantly recognizes artistic production. Therefore, this research methodology rather than separating theory from practice, it treats composition as well as songwriting and audiovisual production as sites where critical reflection and

even analytical insight emerge, which is something that allows creative processes to function as methodological evidence rather than supplementary examples (Riley, 2021).

Within this study considering examined songs, a reflexive position has been adopted that explicitly acknowledges the entanglement of authorship as well as interpretation and critique. This self-reflexive stance is something that does not collapse into autobiography instead it essentially allows for situated knowledge grounded in creative decision-making as well as ethical positioning and historical awareness. This research integrated three interrelated components that together form a methodological loop in which creative work informs theory on the opposite side theory reshapes practice for experiential insight (Sormani, 2016).

Song lyrics within this research paper are closely read that sustains attention to musical structure as well as vocal delivery and sonic texture. Lyrics are examined for narrative perspective, metaphor, and political symbolism but within this research musical elements are analysed for their affective as well as rhetorical force. As mentioned by Di Lorenzo Tillborg(2016), music's capacity to communicate emotion as well as tension and resistance often exceeds linguistic articulation that making sonic analysis essential.

Within this methodology, audiovisual circulation also forms a crucial component and the songs discussed in this paper are released through digital platforms. Music videos along with online listening significantly shape how audiences encounter these works as well as how memory is mediated within this (Ross, 2022). So, this research recognizes circulation itself as part of the counter-archival process by significantly considering audiovisual dissemination alongside composition this research paper situates the songs within contemporary media ecologies.

Last but not the least, it is important to note that methodology of this study is informed by cultural as well as political and historical context. Each song is significantly read in relation to the specific conditions including partition violence as well as militarized nationalism and the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore this contextual grounding essentially ensures that practice-based reflection remains.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

“1946 and Partition Memory”

The song ‘1946’ is a counter-archive in the sense that it revisits one of the most traumatic but unevenly memorialized events in “South Asian history” that was “the Calcutta riots of 1946 and the violence that engulfed the whole of the subcontinent and its diaspora in the context of the Partition of India” (Manjapra, 2018). With diplomatic timelines as well as constitutional transitions Partition's official state narratives of Partition often frame “the Calcutta riots of ‘1946’ as nationalist teleology's therefore essentially emphasizing political resolution as well as state formation. However, by doing so, they often obscure civilian suffering even emotional trauma and the daily state of violence of ordinary people especially those whose experiences fall outside official documentation. Therefore, for that the song of ‘1946’ intervenes in this historical framing by essentially foregrounding memory as well as loss and unresolved grief rather than political resolution therefore significantly positioning affective experience as central to historical understanding.

In terms of lyrically, the song does not provide much historical exposition but rather a reflective and elegiac type which does not provide an explanation but rather focuses on the atmosphere. Instead of pointing to the political actors or institutions this song lyrics point to toward absence, discontinuity, and silence that highlight what is not said in the official histories (Solinski, 2022). This approach stands in opposition to the shutting down those official histories and the memory

in '1946' is also introduced as disjointed and haunted that echoing how Partition remains in the cultural memory even after its official end. The song does not follow chronologically instead it echoes the mechanism of traumatic memory through repetition as well as disjunction and emotional residue instead of chronological coherence.

In terms of musically, through restrained arrangement as well as atmospheric texture '1946' supports this counter-archival role that is why the sonic form is aligned with the thematic meaning. The piece makes use of space, long notes, and slow progression as opposed to strong momentum or rhythm action at the same time the sonic pacing invites contemplation as well as allows memory can be unrushed that resisting the urgency and triumphalism that is expected of nationalist musical forms as well as commemoration sounds capes (Crespo and Fernández-Lansac, 2016). Vocal performance within this song is a very important part in this process as it conveys vulnerability as well as restraint and mourning. By so doing, it does not make the singer a historian but a historian of its afterlives which means that the focus is on testifying rather than explaining.

The counter-archival strength of the song also consists refusal to assign blame in simplistic terms however instead of reproducing the communal binaries or nationalistic discourses, '1946' centre is the human cost of political partitioning and shared disruption. This practice with the general academic critiques of the Partition historiography is consistent essentially that hold that state-comparisone accounts for the moral ambiguity of violence by addressing merely the question of sovereignty rather than suffering. The song maintains some kind of memory which cannot easily be ideologically dispensed and instrumentalized by the nationalists through its metaphor and affect.

The electronic circulation extends the archival role of the song in the modern media space as well. Published on its own as well as accessible on international streaming services, '1946' becomes globalized as well as appeals to both diasporic and international viewers whose connection to Partition is defined by displacement as well as inheritance and mediated remembrance (Mahn and Murphy, 2017). Within this transnational circulation, to regional historiography Partition memory is no longer confined but therefore it enters global conversations about displacement as well as ethnic violence and historical trauma. The song therefore functions as a moving archive that bringing more localized memory to the wider arenas of the people that is influenced by digital circulation.

Being a counter-archive, '1946' does not aim to replace the historical academia as well as governmental archives. But this song significantly challenges them by preserving what official archives often cannot means the emotional continuity as well as affective truth and unresolved mourning. By doing that, the song goes to show how popular music can be used to maintain historical consciousness by keeping memory open, unresolved, and ethically charged instead of resolved which emphasizes the role of sound and affect in postcolonial memory work as politically important.

"Battle Zone and Militarized Nationalism"

The song 'Battle Zone' is a criticism in militarized nationalism as it reveals how the language of patriotism often covers the dynamic of violence, discipline, and sacrifice. As mentioned by Levy (2024), militarism is culturally normalized in most contemporary nation-states, where national belonging and disobeying, heroism, and war-readiness are insinuated. Discourse about military action is often structured in such a way that it seems to be essential, courageous, and unifying, at the same time the effects on the human being and community are underestimated. Therefore, 'Battle Zone' disrupts this ideological paradigm by questioning the ethical legitimacy of these narratives and previewing their effects.

The song is confrontational but symbolically addressed considering the song lyrically. Instead of glorifying military power within the song the lyrics highlight the cycles of destruction as well as fear and dehumanization. As stated by Basham (2018), within this song, as an abstract geopolitical necessity war is not presented but as a lived condition it is presented that consumes bodies even identities and futures. By use of metaphor as well as repetition, the song divulges the militarizing of language that makes the citizen expendable resources thus reducing human life to strategic value, so by refusing to romanticize sacrifice or heroism the lyrical strategy destabilizes nationalist myths within this song.

In terms of musically, '*Battle Zone*' is played in a more violent sonic palette in comparison to '*1946*' as the documentary aims to criticize violence, and within this '*Battle Zone*' rhythmic intensity and layered instrumentation as well as dynamic shifts create an impression of urgency and confrontation (The Orchard Enterprises, 2016). These musical components do not just accompany the lyrics at the same time they perform the tension as well as instability that militarization creates. The vocal that is used in the songs is alternated between control and strain which hints at the mental stress of nationalist demands. Sound is in such a manner in this song turned into a medium of political criticism which conveys the affective aspects of militarism that could not be analysed through textual aspect.

Although the voices of anti-war counter-archival role of the song is essentially is the ability to record opposition that are usually suppressed or marginalized by state narratives still '*Battle Zone*' significantly preserves resistance with articulating a perspective that challenges essentially the inevitability of conflict (Spotify, 2000). This is consistent with the literature on protest music which focuses on how songs build oppositional publics and how songs support a critical discourse when the political is being consolidated. This song by circulating independently avoids institutional gate keeping at the same time retains its critical autonomy.

The use of digital distribution also increases the archival aspect of the song as by using streaming sites as well as online distributions, '*Battle Zone*' can be viewed by a wider audience beyond national borders and militarized nationalism thus situating in a global context of war and protest. The listeners in various geopolitical places can make out the song which refers to their experiences of the state power and violence (The Orchard Enterprises, 2016). The song gains a multiplicity of meaning that goes beyond the original context in this transnational reception.

Therefore, as a counter-archive '*Battle Zone*' significantly challenges the authority of nationalist memory essentially by refusing to sanctify war, instead this song significantly preserves a record of dissent. With the help of '*Battle Zone*' lyrical force as well as sonic intensity and independent circulation, the song essentially demonstrates how popular music can confront militarized ideology as well as sustain critical memory in the face of state power (Lleshaj, 2024).

“I Am Virus and Pandemic Surveillance”

As a counter-archive of the COVID-19 pandemic, the song '*I Am Virus*' essentially operates as it interrogating the expansion of state surveillance as well as the management of vulnerability and the politics of control. Although the official accounts on pandemic portray the common belief that safety, efficiency in government, and collective responsibility are what counts, more often than not, they ignore unequal power as well as fear and exposure among people (Andrejevic and Volcic, 2021). '*I Am Virus*' gets involved in these narratives by essentially prefiguring the human subject as both being biologically vulnerable as well as politically monitored.

Considering lyrically, it can be viewed that song uses anthropomorphic approach in lyrics as it gives the virus a voice, therefore this inversion essentially upsets prevailing systems of fault and terror that had dominated much of pandemic discourse. Instead of promoting the virus as an external enemy, the song significantly resorts to metaphor to think over the way crisis rhetoric makes citizens the objects of surveillance and discipline (Killing Joke, 2015). The lyrics are pointing to captivity as well as loneliness and anonymity which really capturing the psychological as well as emotional costs of lockdowns and online surveillance. By doing it this way, *'I Am Virus'* also repackages the pandemic as a medical crisis but a time of heightened state authority.

The composition supports this thematic tension considering musically that done with restraint but disturbing sonic decisions. The orchestration focuses more on the feeling rather than sound thus leaving a feeling of hanging and discomfort. Within this song, the simplicity of the textures as well as restrained dynamics and repetitiveness echo the boredom and the stress of the extended lockdown situation. The vocal work is not overdramatized and deliberately measured at the same time this restraint amplifies the song's critical force by suggesting containment instead of being liberated and echoing the experience of controlled movement and limited expression throughout the pandemic.

Counter-archival meaning of *'I Am Virus'* is that it is a record of affective experience but not the epidemiological fact. Data as well as institutional responses and policies are likely to be given priority in state archives of the pandemic. In comparison, the song maintains emotional realities with noting fear as well as alienation even moral ambiguity and the conflict between care and control. In that regard, *'I Am Virus'* correlates to cultural memory theory that underlines the relevance of forms of art in documenting what cannot be encompassed in official records (Spotify, 2021).

In terms of expanding the archival reach of the song digital circulation is another way in that *'I Am Virus'* released as an independent work to be listened to on streaming services and the finds itself in a global listening situation influenced by shared yet uneven pandemic experiences. The song can be connected by the audience to their own experiences of restriction, surveillance and uncertainty in their experiences in various national as well as cultural environments (Van der Hoeven and Hitters, 2019). This transnational reception makes the song a portable vault of pandemic memory which does not allow one-liner narratives and is multiple.

'I Am Virus' being an anti-archive significantly questions and with metaphor lyrical as well as sonic restraint and autonomous dissemination, the song essentially maintains a critical account of the reorganization of state power even vulnerability and subjectivity in the pandemic (Spotify, 2021). In addition, *'I Am Virus'* in during crisis times shows how popular music can step thus documenting dissent as well as ambiguity and ethical doubt as well as government histories.

TRANSNATIONAL RESONANCE, MEMORY, AND THE IASPM CONTEXT

Although the songs addressed in this paper are a result of a particular historical as well as political situation, their distribution and acceptance are not restricted to the borders of national countries. Independent popular music now exists in transnational digital networks to enable the localized memories to travel across the world, what is referred to by Jan Assmann as the migration of memory outside the "*fixed sites of storage*" to cultural circulation (Assmann, 2011). This mobility is the main feature of seeing songs as counter-archives because it allows them to engage in more general discourses of state power, violence, and remembrance in a variety of geopolitical settings.

The issues of '1946,' 'Battle Zone,' and 'I Am Virus,' notes partition trauma, militarized nationalism, and pandemic surveillance and these are not limited to one nation-state. Rather, they appeal to audiences across the globe who experience the same type of structures of authority, exclusion and crisis governance in some form or another. With streaming platforms as well as online circulation these songs invite audiences to draw personal as well as collective memories on broader histories of displacement, conflict, and control. Thus, counter-archival music is not merely an act of preservation of memory but rather it brings about comparative reflection as well as what theorists of protest culture refer to as transnational solidarity by way of collective affect.

This transnational aspect is especially applicable to the intellectual context of the "International Association to the Study of Popular Music" of U.S. Branch that has interdisciplinary as well as critical and cross-cultural approaches to the study of popular music. The fact that popular music studies have long recognized that songs circulate across borders therefore acquiring new meanings as they move between cultural and political contexts. Music, in as much as it unveils social tensions prior to their full expression in institutional discourse, thus music is prophecy as Jacques Attali states (Shonk and McLure, 2017). Counter-archives constituted by music are hence open, dynamic and relational as opposed to being attached to one historical narrative.

The timeliness of this question is also important considering the fact that the United States is on the edge of its 250th anniversary of independence. The national commemoration moments tend to encourage the new interest to archives as well as monuments and official histories. These events have the power to strengthen dominant accounts as well as devalue unresolved violence and opposing memory. Popular music, in comparison with such, provides other ways of interaction with the past that is foregrounded by the questioning of ethics instead of triumphant sealing (Stone, 2016). The songs analysed in this research paper give one reason to think about the way the states perceive themselves and how the citizens and artists react to such narratives by the periphery.

In the IASPM, it can be seen that this research adds to the existing conversations on the contribution of music in memory work, protest, and political discourse. The study presents aesthetic practice as the intersection of scholarly inquiry with autonomous songs by presenting them as counter-archives to alter historical erasure. It also points to the significance of analysing contemporary music not only as a form of culture but as memory scholars observe, as a practice of meaning-making, active intervention of a historical nature (Schiller, 2019).

The international movement of these songs proves that counter-archives gain power through movement. In the process of their spreading out and crossing platforms, borders, and listening communities, they get piled in layers of meaning which cannot be contained in any of the national histories. Thus, popular music can be identified as an important site of memory, protest, and global democratic discourse as it remains in close contact with the ideals of IASPM's commitment in studying music as a socially situated and politically significant practice (Till, 2017).

DISCUSSION

The three case studies discussed in the present research, '1946,' 'Battle Zone,' and 'I Am Virus' all of which point to the effect of independent popular music as a counter-archival practice which questions the dominance of state-centred histories. Although each of the songs is a response to a particular historical or political situation when united they demonstrate common tactics by which music maintains the memory, expresses the opposition, and disobeyed the destruction. Such strategies exist in the lyrical storyline, sound formation, emotional involvement, and circulation patterns

and strengthen what memory experts refer to as the cultural production of history that cannot be dominated by institutions (Long *et al.*, 2017).

One thing that comes out during this analysis is that, counter-archives are not aimed at overthrowing official archives but instead expose their shortcomings. Documentation is an essential value of the state archives that essentially combined with legality as well as institutional continuity, at the expense of emotional truth and ethical complexity. As per the assertion of Derrida, the archive is determined by exclusion as much as it is preserved and the songs that are talked about here come in at this point of exclusion (Derrida, 1996). Through foregrounding vulnerability as well as dissent and trauma, they maintain structures of historical knowledge that otherwise cannot be accessed by bureaucratic record keeping. Music is therefore one of the places where memory is not fixed, but maintained in an open, unsettled, and reinterpretable state, instead of being closed historically (Poole, 2020).

The other important aspect of counter-archival music is its emotional capacity. Songs can have the listeners experience the memory and not only refer to it, unlike written archives, which involve sound, voice, and repetition. Cultural memory according to Jan Assmann is maintained in symbolic and sensory forms that are participatory and melody, rhythm and vocal performance are emotionally charged enough to make music remain conscious of the history those songs maintain (Karabinos, 2018). Such an emotional involvement is especially noticeable in the way these songs address the listeners and ask them to observe violence, challenge authority and consider the moral accountability without giving specific answers or dictating specific political stand.

These productions are also independent which also reinforces their counter-archival role. The fact that the songs are functioning beyond the large industry as well as state institutions enables the songs to maintain a critical autonomy and cannot be put into narrative containment. This is in line with the popular scholarship of music that highlights the political importance of non-institutional cultural production. The internet enhances this independence by making it circulate widely without having any centralized authority. These songs as they cross borders and listeners are built up with multiple meanings that are created depending on different contexts of listening. Counter-archives are made communal and interactive in this process, produced by interacting between artist, text and audience instead of authorship (Walsham, 2016).

Collectively, these remarks indicate that popular music is playing an instrumental role in the modern memory politics. With commemoration, surveillance, and cultural policy becoming more a state obligation, the music provides an outlet in which other memories may persist and spread. Through art within the framework of critical reflection, autonomous songs act as living archives, in this regard, popular music not only represents the struggle of the past but also is involved in the continued negotiation of the ways in which societies remember as well as forget and challenge power (Karabinos, 2018).

CONCLUSION

In terms of concluding this research paper, it has been argued that popular songs produced independently can serve as counter-archives with cultural forms that save memory, express dissent, and disrupt the dominance of state-centred historical discourses. Within this research, '1946,' 'Battle Zone,' and 'I Am Virus' essentially has shown that music functions as a site of historical intervention especially in an environment influenced by violence as well as militarization and crisis governance. These songs are not passive expressions of political reality but are themselves involved in the process of producing historical by shaping how past and present are emotionally and ethically understood.

In the three songs, there are a number of common characteristics of counter-archival music as these songs include affective and experiential dimensions of history that are excluded from official archives. The human costs of militarized nationalism even the traumas of partition and the psychological impacts of the pandemic surveillance are not kept and these songs have the ability to express that emotion, ambiguity, and ethical stress enable memory to exist in a form that cannot be subjected to bureaucratic control.

Within this research, the role of independent production and digital circulation in the support of counter-archives noted these songs do not have institutional gate keeping that is why it retain critical autonomy and circulate in transnational networks. As these songs pass through listeners, they gradually acquire layered meanings that outgrow their historical locations of origin and this mobility turns counter-archives into practices of collective and relational practices shaped by audience engagement. In addition, within this research, it highlighted the importance of practice-based research to the study of popular music.

In democratic practice popular music still plays a critical role where the state has amplified its control over memory with commemoration as well as surveillance and cultural policy. Counter-archival songs do not solve historical trauma and provide clear-cut accounts. They maintain memory open, combative, and morally involved instead. The independent music helps an individual to have a more democratic and critical perception of the past by saving dissent and lived experience and attest to its contribution to the future of democracy.

LIMITS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although the songs in this research paper have been examined as counter-archives by closely analysing the lyrics, music, digital circulation, and the context, it is worth noting the constraints of the current study and where research can be conducted in the future. A major constraint is audience reception, despite the spread of the songs and its analysing, empirical data about the audience are not presented in this research paper. Rather, the issue of reception has been treated conceptually through the potential meanings generated as songs move cross cultural as well as geopolitical settings. With interpretive traditions this approach in popular music studies essentially aligns but limits essentially claim essentially about lived audience response (Schweizer, 2021). That is why future studies can build on this area by exploring the ways in which various listening communities make sense of these songs and the manner in which memory will be negotiated at the audience response level such as identification, resistance, or reinterpretation.

Another constraint is although the digital platforms deserve more analytical consideration still streaming services are not neutral distributors of music, they mediate the musical visibility based on algorithmic recommendation systems, playlist cultures, and sorting based on data. That processes affect the kind of songs seen as well as heard or forgotten that virtually creating what researchers' term algorithmic memory. In this view, counter-archives created by music are in opposition to the algorithmic memory where the visibility is determined by the engagement rates and not by the historical or ethical importance (Schweizer, 2021). That is why focusing on how autonomous politically engaged songs navigate these systems and whether or not algorithmic circulation enhances or limits the counter-archival capacity of such songs within the practice.

The other weakness of this study is its narrow corpus as the research paper is depth-oriented by focusing on three original compositions this makes it possible to maintain an analysis of lyrical, sonic, and contextual strategies but the comparison of work across artists, genre, or national setting limits here that would help to better understand the concept of

counter-archival music as a culture-wide practice. The comparative studies in future therefore might involve how comparable strategies can be applied in other political contexts or how the use of counter-archives can be done in group musical movements and not in individual works especially in protest cultures and grassroots music scenes (Ganjavi, 2023).

Irrespective of these constraints, the framework that has been formulated in the present study provides a basis of future research on the topic of music, memory, and power. The combination of practice-based research with the critical theory provides the research with the opportunities of interdisciplinary work connecting the music studies, digital humanities, and political theory. Because state control over memory increases, popular music has been a key site in which alternative histories may be maintained thus future scholarship that prefigures platform politics and audience reception as well as and algorithmic mediation will be vital towards comprehending in the contemporary digital culture how the counter-archive is enacted.

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