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The Inside Outdoors:  
Return(s) to Nature in Urdu and Anglophone Poetry

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Comparative Literature

by

Fatima Burney

2017

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Inside Outdoors:  
Return(s) to Nature in Urdu and Anglophone Poetry

by  
Fatima Burney

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature  
University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Aamir R. Mufti, Chair

This dissertation examines the reception of Urdu, Persian, and Indo-Persian ghazal poetry in primitivist scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While seventeenth and early eighteenth-century poets writing in Urdu or Persian would have regarded the Indo-Persian ghazal as a cosmopolitan literary tradition, starting in the eighteenth century, scholars begin to represent ghazal conventions in ‘naturalistic’ terms that seek to imagine it as a folk tradition. I highlight the discourses of ‘nature’ in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Anglophone and Urdu literary scholarship to illustrate the particular challenges that writers faced in assessing the ghazal by primitivist standards of authentic expression. I demonstrate how the reengineering of the ghazal towards more ‘natural expression’ sought to transform ghazal poetry into a literary tradition that representing its ‘people’.

The first chapter highlights the introduction and integration of the category of ‘lyric’ within eighteenth-century ghazal criticism to colonialist representations of India as a pastoral. I examine this pastoralizing trend in colonial scholarship through the writings of William Jones, who was one of the first litterateurs to translate Persian ghazals as ‘lyrics’, and the paintings of

William Hodges. Both Jones and Hodges combine their representation of India as a rustic space with motifs of classical nostalgia which seek to (re)member India in terms of Ancient Rome. I argue that Hodges' and Jones' employment of the pastoral aesthetic towards the shared effect and ambition of (re)membering Classical European empire, evidences how pastoralism was not simply an aesthetic trend but also a discursive strategy of colonial governmentality.

Chapter two examines the scholarship of the *naichral shāi 'rī* (natural poetry) movement which sought to reform Urdu poetry towards more natural expression by reorienting the poetic tradition towards more 'self-expressive' ends. I argue that, in large part, their reconfiguration of 'Urdu poetry' entailed 'narrativizing' the ghazal and the tazkirah, two literary genres/forms that were historically arranged in a more encyclopedic manner. By reorganizing the key materials of Urdu literary history through a teleological and historiographic model that we may think of as 'landscape-thinking', the Urdu modernists effectively redirected the ghazal and the tazkirah towards representing the perspective of emergent national movements.

Chapter three looks at the class-dimensions of eighteenth-century Indo-Persian ghazal culture and its nineteenth century reformation. The *naichral shāi 'rī* reformists criticized the ghazal (and Urdu poetry, more generally) for being too inclined towards cerebral and 'other-worldly' contemplation. I argue that this commentary on the Urdu ghazal (and its Indo-Persian antecedent) exhibits the values of bourgeois ideology which differed from the courtly and elite context in which the ghazal had been exercised (and patronized) for centuries. The very discussion of nature by the Urdu reformists exhibits an almost administrative concern with the *material* effects of language. As this concern was shared by vernacular linguists of the period, like John Gilchrist and S. W. Fallon, I trace the representation of literary materiality in key lexicographic texts of the period too. By outlining changes in the social and material conditions

of literary production from the context of the Indo-Persian ghazal to the nineteenth century reform, I demonstrate how economic and technologic factors heavily influenced the trend towards primitivist scholarship which idealized vernacular, rather than cosmopolitan, literature as a more utile register of language.

Chapter four examines the reception and idealization of the Persian ghazal by German and American writers in the nineteenth century. In both contexts, I highlight how Persian poetry was reimagined in forms that construed it as ‘folk’ poetry even though, in many regards, this was an erroneous interpretation of the tradition. I argue that the primitivized readings of Persian poetry (notably, ghazals), in fact, allowed it to circulate and assimilate into literary conventions quite foreign to it. Moreover, this primitivization of the Persian ghazal also enabled universalist readings of the tradition in which the ghazal’s language of mystical devotion could be redeployed towards the ‘ecstatic’ versification of the *demos*.

The dissertation of Fatima Burney is approved.

Efrain Kristal

Stephen I. Yenser

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Aamir R. Mufti, Committee Chair

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2017

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## TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

For all transliterations from Urdu, I have followed the Annual of Urdu Studies revised guide (2007) with some variations that are listed below.

Vowels:

a, ā, e, ē, i, ī, o, ō, u, ū, ai, au

Consonants:

bē b	dāl d	zuād z	lām l
pē p	dhāl dh	ṭō`ē t	mīm m
tē t	zāl z	zō`ē z	nūn n/ñ
ṭē ṭ	rē r	‘ain ‘	vā`ō v
śē ś	ṛē ṛ	ghain gh	hē h
jīm j	zē z	fē f	dō čāshmī hé h
čē č	sīn s	qāf q	yē y
hē h	shīn sh	kāf k	hamzā ’
khē kh	ṣuād ṣ	gāf g	

1. Word-final h is indicated only when it is pronounced, e.g., in nigāh, but not in qaṣīda.
2. *Izāfat* is indicated by adding -e to the first member of such compounds, e.g., nigāh-e čashm-e surma-sā.
3. The Arabic definite article is transliterated al- e.g. ‘ilm al-ḥadīṣ Note, however, the transliteration of such common words as bilkul and allāh.
4. English rules of capitalization will be followed for proper names, titles of books, etc.
5. Urdu words retained in the text are not transliterated and are given in roman if they are listed in Webster or in Nigel Hankinís Hanklyn- Janklin. When consulting the latter, it is often best to first look up the word in the index at the back.

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My other committee members have each been thoughtful and supportive in their own capacity. I am deeply grateful to Efrain Kristal for his dependability, his insistence on conceptual clarity (which I will keep striving towards), and his graceful leadership as the chair of the Comparative Literature Department. Eleanor Kaufman's enthusiasm for the Sufi dimensions of this project continues to motivate me and I look forward to continuing our conversations on this front. Lastly, I thank Stephen Yenser for keeping me moored, always and most importantly, to poetry. Other faculty members at the University of California Los Angeles to whom I am indebted include Sanjay Subhramanyam, Nile Green, Michael Cohen, Michael Cooperson, Anne Gilliland, Saloni Mathur, David Macfayden, Nouri Gana, and Ali Behdad. Professor Frances Pritchett, whose breathtaking scholarship on the Urdu ghazal prompted my own research interests, was also kind enough to speak with me about this project on a number of occasions—I thank her especially. I must take this moment to also remember my mentors from Wellesley college and SOAS that made it possible for me to study at UCLA and who continue to give me guidance and support from afar. In particular, I must thank Amy Bard, Margery Sabin, and

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scholarship and I hope that we both shall chart the ‘virgin’ territories of lyricized ghazal-reception together, as we planned. Many thanks, also, to Kevin Schwartz for generously sharing his insights on tazkirah history and Zirwat Chowdhury for her superb suggestions on landscape painting.

I must thank my extended family; although we are too numerous to list everyone by name, a few special mentions are warranted: Kulsoom baji and Mudi bhai—who were my home base in the United States, Cuckoo phuppo—who supervised my studies and made me *dāl* sandwiches, Nani—who always asked about my studies, Āmir phupajān—for his special encouragement and appreciation, and Chacha—for procuring books for me over the years. Thank you, also, to Ashley and Dena Nussbaum for cheering me on during the final leg of dissertation writing and to Kris Bishop for his brotherly guidance and help with writing. I am also endlessly grateful to my immediate family: Sarah, for her friendship and intuition on managing this gargantuan ‘project’, Uzma, for her counsel on all graduate school matters, and (most of all) my champion editor, Hira, for saving me from myself. My parents are so fully immersed in all my scholarly achievements that it seems false to thank them when I should simply commend them for all *they* have enabled. Ammi, my first and finest *ustād*, taught me how to read English, Urdu, and the Holy Quran; this research would not have been possible without those early (and continuing) years of language instruction. Likewise, this research would never have materialized had my first and eternal *dost*, Baba, not recognized my inclination towards poetry and encouraged me to pursue it.

Finally, thank you to the two pillars of my daily happiness: my sweet and faithful companion, Indie, and my partner, Aron Nussbaum, who made me truly *experience* the ‘nature walk’ and who fills my life with real and rhetorical flowers.

## VITA

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- Served as Panel Chair for 'World Literature and Translation: Western Literary Influence in South Asia' *Annual South Asia Conference*, Madison-Wisconsin, 2014
- Presented Paper 'Natural Remedies: Natural Shairi and the Landscape' at *Annual South Asia Conference*, Madison-Wisconsin, 2014
- Presented Paper 'The Inside Outdoors' at Boundary 2, Los Angeles 2014
- Presented Paper 'Women's Lyric: Private Gestures to the Public' at *What is the Pakistani Public*, American Institute of Pakistan Studies Conference, Lahore 2012
- Presented Paper 'What Else Ends with a Night of Ghazals' at South Asian Literary Association Conference, 2012

## **The Inside Outdoors: Return(s) to Nature in Urdu and Anglophone Poetry**

I confess I owe a great deal to Hegel, Goethe, Mirza Ghalib, Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil; and Wordsworth. The first two led me into the ‘inside’ of things, The third and fourth taught me how to remain oriental in spirit and expression after having assimilated foreign ideals, and the last saved me from atheism in my student days.<sup>1</sup>

### **Comparative Naturalisms: Modernism and Exchange**

This dissertation project attends to the history of literary dialogue between Anglophone and Indo-Persian poetics by analyzing the relationship between two types of such literary encounter: the influence of British Romantic thought in nineteenth-century Urdu writing (which has its roots in Indo-Persian literary culture) and the reception of Persian poetry by European and American litterateurs.<sup>2</sup> The ‘ancient East’ has famously been represented as a source of cultural regeneration in the works of several ‘Western’ writers like T. S. Eliot, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Ezra Pound, to name a few.<sup>3</sup> Yet, the reception of such a portrait of the ‘East’ within modern Urdu, Persian, Hindi and/or Arabic literary accounts has far less tract in Anglophone literary studies. I seek to put these two phenomena, the orientalist representations of Indo-Persian poetry and the engagement of modern Urdu littérateurs with Anglophone literary

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Iqbal ed. Javid Iqbal, and Afzal Haq. Qarshi. *Stray Reflections: The Private Notebook of Muhammad Iqbal*. (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2006), 36.

<sup>2</sup> My use of the term ‘orientalist’ simply connotes scholars who studied and published writings on ‘Oriental’ literature with some conscious affinity to this term and with an understanding of ‘Orientalism’ as a distinct body of knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Schwab’s masterful study *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* offers exemplary and pioneering scholarship on the earliest chapters of this phenomenon. See Raymond Schwab. *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East 1680-1880*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

criticism, against one another as a study of *comparative Romanticisms*.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, this dissertation highlights some of the shared patterns of translation and literary exchange that facilitated eighteenth and nineteenth-century concepts and methods of *Weltliteratur* (world literature), within which *Romantic* writing was particularly vogue. The above quote by Muhammad Allama Iqbal (1877-1938) is a spectacular example of the intellectual hybridism of Anglophone and Indian Romantic writing. In addition to being one of the first thinkers to conceive of an independent Indian Muslim nation-state and one of the most widely read and cherished writers of the Urdu language, Iqbal was also a prominent Pan-Islamic thinker of the twentieth-century. He is routinely commemorated as ‘Poet of the East’. To think that this immensely influential Islamic thinker credits Wordsworth, of all writers, for saving him from godlessness is a remarkable testament to the intellectual exchange between Indo-Persian and Anglophone writing.

Of course, we should not be surprised that Islamic thought, and particularly modern Islamic thought, has been shaped by European writing. Yet, as many scholars of postcolonial studies have pointed out, there is often a significant disparity between how Western *influence* on ‘eastern’ culture has been portrayed in scholarship in comparison to its inverse. Partha Mitter expresses this asymmetry in his study, *The Triumph of Modernism*:

Indeed, influence has been the key epistemic tool in studying the reception of Western art in the non-Western world: if the product is too close to its original source, it reflects slavish mentality; if on the other hand, the imitation is imperfect, it represents a failure. In terms of power relations, borrowing by artists from the peripheries becomes a badge of inferiority. In contrast, the borrowings of

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<sup>4</sup> In describing this project as a study of ‘Comparative Romanticisms’ I’m alluding to a growing body of scholarship that, in referring ‘Romanticisms’ as a plural, highlights the diversity of thought behind the broad category of ‘Romanticism’. For example, we may fruitfully differentiate British, German, French, and American varieties of ‘Romanticism’ on account of their unique socio-political and linguistic context. I hope that this study encourages us to consider ‘Indian Romanticism’ as an important participant within a wider constellation of Romantic movements.



European artists are described approvingly either as ‘affinities’ or dismissed as inconsequential. . . . Picasso’s integrity was in no way compromised by the borrowing, in contrast to the colonial artist Gagenendranath.<sup>5</sup>

This dissertation project also traces a history of the intellectual exchange between ‘Western’ and Indo-Persian poetic traditions that is still, I argue, fraught with anxiety on the nature, scale and direction of *influence* in this period. In particular, it seems that there is still some hesitance to acknowledge the role of colonial intellectual culture on modern Islamic thought. For example, Barbara Metcalfe’s scholarship on the transformation of Islamic practice under British colonial rule portrays this period’s intellectual culture as one that was determined to overcome colonial subjugation through a return to its own ‘authentic’ past.<sup>6</sup> She writes,

The reformers saw themselves in no way as accommodating to any pattern of modernity, let alone to the values of their rulers. They were in fact, committed to a return to pristine Islam. They looked back, not West, and believed themselves to be in the company of great Muslims of the past... they were engaged in renewal, *tajdid*, of the teachings of the Prophet and the Qur’ān. An appreciation of this overriding meaning given to the movement is crucial if one is not to be misled into seeing “modernity” where the participants would see Islam. . . . their view of history was... a cyclical unfolding of occasion . . . when humans emulated the great historic peak which is the period of revelation itself.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, Modernism is not inherently Western, as Metcalfe’s ventriloquizing of the Muslim reformers might suggest. In fact, while there are multiple paradigms with which to map the chronologic and geographic dimensions of ‘modernity,’ the concept of a return, renewal, or cyclical unfolding of an authentic historical past is inarguably one of the most recognizable

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<sup>5</sup> Partha Mitter. *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde, 1922-1947*. (London: Reaktion, 2007), 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> For a more extensive discussion on the discourse of authenticity in postcolonial scholarship, see Aamir Mufti. “The Aura of Authenticity.” *Social Text* 18.3 (2000): 87–103.

<sup>7</sup> Barbara Daly Metcalf. “Islamic Reform and Islamic Women: Maulānā Thānawī’s Jewelry of Paradise.” *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*. Ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 185.

‘patterns’ of modernity, not its opposite.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps, if we were more aware of the extent to which modern European writing *looked* to the Orient, we might not need such a defense of modern Islam’s Western influences. Modernity itself might be allegorized as the intellectual posture of ‘looking back’ while simultaneously (and furtively) glancing sideways—‘East’ looking westward and vice-versa.

The title of this dissertation, *The Inside Outdoors*, attempts to capture an especially popular paradigm of imagining the *return* to authentic experience: across the eighteenth and nineteenth-century exchange between Anglophone and Indo-Persian writing, we find parallel discussions of the need return to ‘natural expression.’ *Naturalness*, in these discussions, could both connote *interior* authenticity—often articulated in terms of expressing selfhood and genuine emotion—and/or gesture to those geographic sites of unspoiled, natural beauty that would serve as the aesthetic ideals of this intellectual trend. As such, much of the scholarship that this dissertation examines envisages the uncultivated and pristine ‘outdoors’ as *the primary* source from which to derive literary inspiration. Such a valorization of natural landscape is, understandably, quite useful when versifying the “imagined geographies” of nation and country.<sup>9</sup> What is less commonly recognized is that ‘nature’ was also a primary lens through which literary *difference* was perceived and articulated. Indeed, a *primitivist* conceptualization of nature not only underpinned the aesthetic qualities of eighteenth and nineteenth-century poetry and

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<sup>8</sup> This is not to suggest that the articulation of *tajdīd* as a “cyclical unfolding of occasion” was *exclusively* modern but that its redeployment in eighteenth and nineteenth-century reform was actually in keeping with global historiographic trends. Much like the European Romanticists of this period, Islamic modernists also implemented traditional ‘narrative structures’ towards new subjects.

<sup>9</sup> See Edward W Said. “Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental.” *Orientalism*. 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 49–73.

painting, but also the historiographies and theories of translation that facilitated the ‘global’ exchange of literature in this period. By tracking the discourses of nature in Orientalist readings of Indo-Persian poetry and Urdu modernism, this dissertation attempts to highlight the very *global* character of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Romantic thought, and the conceptual role that ‘nature’ played in this international exchange.

In some regards, Muhammad Allama Iqbal’s articulation of his own intellectual formation as a negotiation between faith, the ‘inside’ of things, and “oriental expression” conveys some of the central concerns of modern literary exchange between ‘Western’ and ‘Oriental’ literature. Nor was Iqbal the only litterateur to express the mediation between ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ intellectual culture in these terms. In fact, his words may be read as the culmination of a previous generation of scholarship in which the project to reform poetry was perceived as a return to the ‘interior’ language of *real* emotions and feelings, as opposed to the exterior, ‘bodily’ shell of conventionalized language. These nineteenth-century critics mobilized a concept of *naichral shā’irī* (natural poetry) that imagined the cultural revival of an elite, North-Indian Muslim community in terms that were, in part, interpreted from British Romantic literary trends.

The natural poetry movement has been my own entry point into this project, in part for the overwhelming degree to which its ideals have been attributed to Romantic English Poetics. The *naichral shā’irī* program has also been cited as *the* major recalibration of the classical Indo-Persian traditions into a modern vernacular poetic tradition.<sup>10</sup> In Frances Pritchett’s masterful study of this movement, the influence of Anglophone authority is central to the conditions and

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<sup>10</sup> Since many of the most influential literary histories of the Urdu language were also written by its participants, this movement remains an invaluable lens through which to understand the portrayal of classical ghazal poetics in contemporary poetic practice too.

quality of *naichral shā'irī* criticism. Although the relevance of colonial history to Urdu poetry, in particular the physical and cultural violence of Colonial governance on the North Indian Indo-Muslim culture, is difficult to overstate, there is a slight propensity to read colonial exchange as *exclusively* one of colonial dominance and, as such, of the modern Urdu poetic terrain as an 'inauthentic' parroting of English poetics. This leaves us hiccupping the same charge of 'unnaturalness' that inaugurates the discussion of *naichral shā'irī*. More so, such a formulation can ignore the fact that the supposed British source of influence, Wordsworth's 'Romanticism', was also conceived as its own radical break from tradition.<sup>11</sup> How do we, then, explain the immense pathos surrounding the *naichral shā'irī* movement in comparison to the heroism attributed to its Anglophone counterpart? I argue that, in part, this has to do with the unique strain placed on European influence in postcolonial modernist traditions.

A major objective of this project is to consider the convergences between Anglophone and Urdu modernist poetry beyond, simply, a theory of Western influence by reiterating various moments of *mutual* influence between the two traditions. It is my hope that such a rebalancing of ones 'indebtedness' to the other may encourage a reevaluation of both traditions, and of modernism more generally. Secondly, by conceiving of the 'Western' equivalent' to *naichral shā'irī* as, not simply the 'naturalism' of Romantic poetry but rather, the rise of *landscape thinking* and *primitivism* in intellectual culture more broadly, this research brings to light the *mutual* concerns of inheriting a corrupted literary language in nineteenth-century Urdu and Anglophone poetry. It is my hope that this research will demonstrate how the aestheticization and abstraction of 'nature', in both traditions, was produced through shared sources of literature

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<sup>11</sup> Wordsworth, William, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Michael Schmidt. *Lyrical Ballads: With a Few Other Poems*. (London: Penguin, 2006).

and literary criticism and was also symptomatic of the mutual modern-urban conditions that fueled *pastoral nostalgia* in bourgeois scholarship.<sup>12</sup>

### **From the Garden to the Landscape**

Frances Pritchett's study, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics*, offers a compelling allegory through which we may conceive of the literary phenomenon that this dissertation traces:

Because of the centrality of *mazmūn āfirīnī*, of all genres of poetry the ghazal has surely the least interest in the "natural" world, in wildflowers and birdsongs and sunsets and rambles through the countryside. The ghazal world creates its own flowers, birds, and suns according to its own laws of metaphor, and these have only the most abstract resemblance to their namesakes in the "natural" world. Mīr was archetypally correct when he never bothered to open the shutters of his study—his own ghazal garden was much more absorbing than the "real" one outside.<sup>13</sup>

In her analysis of the Urdu ghazal, Pritchett not only describes the conventions of the classical ghazal as a garden, she also conveys the transition from the classical Indo-Persian poetic sensibilities to the new 'English' naturalism as shift from the 'garden' to the 'natural world'.<sup>14</sup> We must infer by this comparison that the 'natural world' which Pritchett connotes is more *outwardly* orientated than the domesticated outdoor space that the garden represents. In fact, such a conception of 'naturalness' comes to disqualify the garden as an 'natural' or outdoor space altogether. It also, as this dissertation will sketch, imagines the turn from 'garden' to

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<sup>12</sup> For a fuller elaboration of the ideological underpinnings of the modern pastoral tradition see Saree Makdisi. *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998),

<sup>13</sup> Frances W Pritchett. *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*. (New Delhi: Katha Books, 2004), 104.

<sup>14</sup> For example, chapter one of the book is titled "A Garden Now Destroyed" and can be interpreted as describing the devastation of the poetic culture of Delhi, particularly after the failed mutiny of 1857. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*, 1-46

‘landscape’ as shift from a literary practice concerned, primarily, with elaborating poetic convention to one that, instead, aspired to mimic direct experience as closely as possible.

The “ghazal garden” which Pritchett suggests Mir prefers to the outdoor ‘real’ garden is, of course, a metaphor for the literary conventions of the premodern ghazal; the vocabulary, stock characters, metaphors, and the particular structure of association between these different aspects. Yet, these conventions are also referred to as a ‘garden’ because many of the ghazal’s metaphors (*māzmūn*), characters, and tropes are specific to gardens themselves, e.g. the cypress tree, the nightingale, the rose, and the tulip. Thus, nature is hardly absent in the Indo-Persian ghazal. Rather, it is the *particular* portrayal of nature that earns the Indo-Persian ghazal tradition this charge of ‘un-naturalness.’ I argue that the important disparity between Mir’s garden and the British ‘countryside walk’ is not so much about the inherent differences between Urdu and English poetry but rather the move from a classical to a modern poetic sensibility. In this scenario, while the garden comes to be read as a site mediated by culture, the ‘natural’ landscape offers modern writers who were looking for ostensibly ‘new’ forms of expression that ideal occasion for wonder and self-discovery in a space seemingly un-cultivated and freed from the history of representation. W. J. T. Mitchell compellingly illustrates how such a modernist conception of nature as the primordial ‘blank slate’ should be understood as variety of *landscape thinking*. In his essay “Landscape and Power”, Mitchell writes:

Formerly, nature was represented in “highly conventionalized” or “symbolic” forms; latterly, it appears in “naturalistic transcripts of nature,” the product of a “long evolution in which the vocabulary of rendering natural scenery gained shape side by side with the power to see nature as scenery... One end to the story of landscape is thus abstract painting... nonrepresentational painting, freed of reference, language, and subject matter; on the other hand, pure hyperrepresentational painting, a superlikeness that produces “natural representations of nature.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell. “Imperial Landscape.” *Landscape and Power*. 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 12.

Nature, as Mitchell's scholarship explains, is not itself an inherently 'modern' subject. Rather, it is the projection of nature as a contrast to *corrupted* convention which we may identify as the modernist gesture and which Mitchell designates as 'landscape thinking.' Furthermore, while 'landscape' is most commonly associated with painting (such as the landscape paintings of William Turner) or architecture (such as the landscape gardens of Lancelot Capability Brown), Mitchell's observes that, in fact, the aesthetic and ideological tenants of this concept proliferated well beyond any specific medium.

The desire to represent nature 'naturally' finds expression in a variety of formats including, most importantly for this dissertation, literature, literary criticism, and literary history. In the fields of philology and literary studies, in particular, *landscape thinking* produced varieties of scholarship that articulated their reform from existing poetic convention to 'natural' language as a return to 'authentic' experience. Indeed, we can clearly discern a similar formation of 'nature' in the Anglophone tradition as William Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads* evidences when the writers asserts that the "beautiful and permanent forms of nature" are more readily found in "rustic" and "rural" life.<sup>16</sup>

Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and, from the necessary

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<sup>16</sup> Of course, unlike the Urdu reformists, Wordsworth's rejection of existing poetic convention (that is also imagined as a return to 'permanent' forms) escapes the charge of 'borrowing' from an 'other' tradition. This is despite the fact that both the poetic narrative of many poems (like Tintern Abbey) and the material history of *Lyrical Ballads* suggests that the 'rustic' aesthetic which captivated Wordsworth was produced through the experience of travel. In her essay "Poetic Identity, Aesthetics and Landscape in Wordsworth's Poetry" Yu San Yu points out that the picturesque aesthetic ideal was extensively influenced by the rise of inter-European Tourism and, similarly, Wordsworth's foundational 1799 version of 'The Prelude' was written away from home in a foreign country (Germany) and that in the 1805 version the writer admitted to being influenced by tourist guide books of the period.

character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.<sup>17</sup>

Wordsworth's scholarship is only one example of this wider phase in literary criticism that we might describe as adopting, essentially, primitivist and pastoralist postures.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, a wide range of artists, writers, philosophers, and even statesmen of this period reflect an almost anti-civilizational attitude in their valuation of 'low', or non-elite, art forms as purer and more authentic forms of expression. In this dissertation, I have chosen to treat 'nature', rather than primitivism or pastoralism, as the primary organizing term because, unlike these other terms, 'nature' (transliterated as *nēčar*) becomes highly operational in nineteenth-century Urdu scholarship. In particular, *nēčar* was mobilized by major Urdu literary figures like Altaf Hussain

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<sup>17</sup> William Wordsworth. "Preface to Lyrical Ballads." *Prefaces and Prologues: To Famous Books*. Ed. Charles W. Eliot. Vol. 39. New York: P.F. Collier & Son. Print. The Harvard Classics; Bartleby.com, 2001. [www.bartleby.com/39/](http://www.bartleby.com/39/). 12/20/2016.

<sup>18</sup> Gillian Perry offers a brief and introductory purview of Primitivism as a discourse. She writes, "primitivism" is seen as a complex network of sociological, ideological, aesthetic, scientific, anthropological, political and legal interests (that is, 'discourses'), which feed into and determine a culture... Within this European frame of reference, concepts of the 'primitive' have been used both pejoratively and as a measure of positive value. During the late nineteenth century, a range of cultural assumptions and prejudices contributed to the discourses on the 'primitive'. For the majority of the bourgeois public at this time the word signified backward, uncivilized peoples and their cultures... At the same time, more positive views of the essential purity and goodness of 'primitive' life, by contrast with the decadence of over-civilized Western societies, were gaining ground within European culture. Such views were influenced both by notions of the 'noble savage' (derived, often in distorted form, from the writings of the eighteenth century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau) and by well-established traditions of pastoralism in art and literature. A so-called 'primitivist' tradition evolved, which associated what were perceived as simple lives and societies with purer thoughts and expressions. Following certain Romantic notions developed by the nineteenth-century German philosopher Herder (among others), this tradition assumed that there was a relationship between 'simple' people and more direct or purified expression; it exalted peasant and folk culture as evidence of some kind of innate creativity. In Modernist revaluations of 'primitive' art and artefacts, these ideas were reworked and modified. Gauguin (as we have seen) is often identified as the first modern artist for whom this myth of the 'savage' became the touchstone of his philosophy of art and life."

Gillian Perry. "Primitivism and the Modern." *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*. Ed. Charles Harrison and Francis Frascina. (New Haven: Yale University Press, in association with the Open University, 1993) 4-6



Hali, Muhammad Hussain Azad, and Syed Ahmad Khan as a response to the ascribed decadence, artificiality, and hermeticism of the Indo-Persian ghazal, which was cited by both British colonial and Indian *littérateurs* as both symptom and cause of the Mughal empire's social and, perceived, moral decline. Ironically, while Urdu *littérateurs* routinely articulated their return to natural poetry as a rejection of high Indo-Persian literary convention, European and American writers gravitated towards Persian poetry as an exemplar of natural poetry. Accordingly, as this dissertation will illustrate, certain qualities, affects, and hermeneutical concepts of the Persian ghazal—particularly its formulation of 'interior' and 'exterior' truths—*also* came to inform European and American constructions of 'authentic' literature.

As this brief sketch should suggest, the questions underlying the representations of 'nature' and naturalness in eighteenth and nineteenth-century scholarship are concerned with more than just actual trees, flowers, or mountains. Rather, this shift from conventionalized to seemingly 'natural' language engages a complex constellation of issues. Each of the chapters that follow will illustrate a slightly different iteration and dimension of the modernist veneration of nature that I have described here as 'landscape' thinking. While it is not my intention to outline too deterministic a relationship between each of these different chapters, I hope that readers will ascertain some important parallels, consequences, and (even) paradoxes across the different moments that I highlight.

Chapter one examines a formative moment of 'World Literature: the introduction of 'Asiatic literature' into Western reading through the translations and critical essays on Persian and Sanskrit poetry by William Jones. Jones was a prominent colonial philologist who served in the East India Company in the eighteenth-century and was one of the first scholars to define Persian ghazals as "lyricks," a designation that is used extensively in Anglophone ghazal

scholarship and which continues to offer a comparative framework through which to examine these two terrains of poetry. While Jones' *lyricization* of Persian ghazals offered a terminological bridge between 'Western' and 'Eastern' poetic models, his philological research on the common proto-Indo European ancestry between English, Classical Sanskrit, and Persian also offered a route for linguistic and cultural comparison. By tracing a broad swath of Jones' scholarship, I demonstrate how this genealogical dimension of Jones' scholarship projected India (and Asiatic territory, more generally) as the pastoral, hinterland of Classical European civilization. This effect is further illuminated when Jones' scholarship is compared to the scholarship and paintings of company painter William Hodges who, by also projecting India as a pastoral, corroborates the ways in which 'landscape' thinking was intimately complicit with colonial strategies of governance, both as a form of historiography and as a genre of painting.

Chapter two examines the scholarship of the aforementioned natural poetry movement. This movement comprised of writers who mobilized the term *nēčar* in their program for a broad cultural reform of the North Indian Muslim community. Building on the work of prominent Urdu scholars Frances Pritchett, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, and Javed Majeed, I offer some ideas about what the role and effect of the term *nēčar* was in the works of these scholars. Primarily, I illustrate how the reformist conceptualization of nature, as a point of origin and return, served in the development of (and preference towards) teleological narrative. Such a paradigmatic understanding of 'nature' delivered the streamlined perspective that these critics regularly lamented was missing from pre-reform poetics, particularly in the ghazal and tazkirah genres. I argue that this reorganizing of poetic form and poetic history (in part, through the rubric of nature) is effective in delivering a historiographic and horizontally inclined 'landscape perspective'. This representation of 'forward motion' and 'direction' complimented the rhetoric

of corrupted and exhausted convention in nineteenth-century primitivist scholarship by projecting a teleological model of history. Such a reorientation was also, and perhaps more importantly, expected to deliver a more *purposeful* and effective poetic culture that reflected the ambitions and values of an ascendant bourgeois literary culture.

The third chapter shifts attention from tracking the rubric of nature to thinking about materialism which, I argue, was one of the central dimensions of nature in *naichral shā'irī* criticism. In response to the activities of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (who was one of the key advocates of *naichral shā'irī*), theologian Jamal al-din Afghani warned readers that 'nēčari ideology' was nothing but a materialist argument. Indeed, the *naichral shā'irī* critics routinely brought attention to the *material* conditions and effects of poetry when they insisted that poetry should be reflective of the realities and concerns of 'everyday' people. While the poetic conventions of elite, courtly Indo-Persian culture were just as 'materially' informed, in reformist accounts, the highly conventionalized and coded nature of eighteenth-century literariness is represented as either too 'other-worldly' and hermetic, or (worse still) too inclined towards abstraction and artfulness to be useful to the 'common' goal of national politics. Accordingly, a range of nineteenth-century linguists and litterateurs advocated the promotion of 'simple' vernacular language as a corrective to the apparent 'opulence' and artificiality of Indo-Persian courtly (*nawābī*) culture. Such a rhetorical emphasis on plebian language was quite typical of primitivist scholarship and, in fact, betrays the extent to which the poetic norms of this period reflected a new literary economy defined by 'mass' readership rather than the select influence of literary connoisseurs. In chapter three, I argue that the blatant instrumentalization of poetry (particularly of the ghazal tradition) reflected the rise of a new 'class' that trumpeted the values of 'utility', purposefulness and effect where its courtly predecessors had valorized loyalty,

fidelity and friendship. These shifts in the values and functions of poetry were undoubtedly shaped by new material circumstances such as the establishment of colonial institutions of literary patronage and improvements in print technology. Indeed, we can argue that these fresh conditions fundamentally changed the practices of poetic reception and interpretation by renegotiating the hierarchy between mystical and material concerns. While this new environment of ‘democratic’ literary ideals could be quite hostile to the modes of literary ambiguity and abstraction that permeated classical Indo-Persian literature, select tropes and conventions from the ghazal tradition were nonetheless coopted and redeployed by modernist scholars in ways that continue to influence our image of ‘people’s poetry.’

Chapter four, the final chapter of this dissertation, examines the reception and circulation of Persian poetics in what we may describe as the ‘Goethian’ model of ‘World Literature.’ While there are many competing conceptions of this term, I use it mostly to convey a mode of reading ‘foreign’ literature as an example of *national* character, which became distinctly popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In particular, this chapter examines the integration of ghazals into the German lied tradition and the adoption of Persianate literary convention by Transcendentalist poets Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. As can be expected, the prism through which Persian poetry was refracted in these contexts had much more to do with the qualities that its target audience valued than what Persian literary conventions necessarily offered. In an intellectual climate fascinated with *Volkskultur*, both German and American writers interpreted Persian poetry as ‘folk’ literature rather than the elite, cosmopolitan tradition it had been across Asia for centuries. Moreover, instead of being read as a poetics inherent to a *particular* region or language, we find that nineteenth-century conceptions of the ghazal as ‘folk’ literature made it quite marketable and *mobile* since primitive culture was understood to embody

common and universal qualities that were *particularly* transferable and translatable. Such an assessment of Persian ghazals tended to amplify the sung dimensions of this form and redirected the ghazal's conventionalized language of alienation, wandering, and exile (*ghurbat*) towards a nationalist nostalgia for the 'homeland'. Similarly, primitivist readings of Hafiz understated the role of poetic convention in his writing and, instead, augmented the idea of his Bardic *genius*.

My reading of Emerson's idealization of Hafiz as a 'Bardic' figure, demonstrates how the American writer interpreted much of the ghazal's conventionalized language of mad-love (*Ishq*) as a stamp of *genius* which, for Emerson, particularly connoted an affinity with 'the people' and with nature. As with the previous chapter, I argue that these moments of literary exchange illustrate how ghazal poetry influenced some of the key trends in nineteenth-century American and 'world' literature, particularly in lending Sufi structures of feeling to the new ideological forms of democracy and nationalism.

**Landscapes of a Lyric Empire:  
William Jones and William Hodges at Fort Williams**

“To say that the concept of lyric poetry that is in some sense second nature to us is a completely modern one is only to express this insight into the social nature of the lyric in different form. Analogously, landscape painting and its idea of "nature" have had an autonomous development only in the modern period. I know that I exaggerate in saying this, that you could adduce many counterexamples. The most compelling would be Sappho. I will not discuss the Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic lyric, since I cannot read them in the original ... the manifestations in earlier periods of the specifically lyric spirit familiar to us are only isolated flashes, just as the backgrounds in older painting occasionally anticipate the idea of landscape painting.”

-Theodore Adorno <sup>19</sup>

**i. Lyric as World Literature**

There is perhaps no category that has been used to describe poetry from such a wide geographic territory and across such a range of historical time as the *lyric*. Sappho’s ‘lyric poems’, Wordsworth’s *lyrical ballads*, Walt Whitman’s ‘lyric utterances’ and Faiz Ahmed Faiz’s ‘lyric history’; all these examples go to show how abundant and pervasive the idea of lyricity is in contemporary literary scholarship.<sup>20</sup> Yet while the ability of this literary classification to transcend linguistic, cultural, and historical boundaries appeared almost utopic in eighteenth and nineteenth-century literary scholarship, contemporary poetry scholars are increasingly viewing

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<sup>19</sup> Theodor W Adorno. *Notes to Literature*. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen. (New York: Columbia UP, 1991), 38.

<sup>20</sup> I’ve taken these examples of ‘lyric’ criticism from diverse sources. Sappho’s poetry is almost ubiquitously described as lyric poetry and this is arguably the most uncontested of all the examples I have given. William Wordsworth titled his own book of poems ‘lyrical ballads’ so we cannot disagree with the usage but can only wonder exactly what he meant by the term. In a (dates) response to a review of his writing, Walt Whitman referred to his writing as ‘lyric utterances’ and Faiz Ahmed Faiz’s poems have been described by a number of Urdu literary critics as ‘lyrics’ but this specific example is taken from Aamir Mufti’s chapter from *Enlightenment in the Colony*. See Aamir Mufti. *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2007.

the same expansive reach of this terminology with a sense of caution and skepticism. This chapter considers some of the mechanisms by which lyric criticism achieved hegemonic presence not simply in Anglophone writing, but more properly in readings of world literature. In fact, eighteenth-century discussions of lyric poetry reveal that key ideals of even contemporary lyric practice were themselves produced through an immense network of cross-pollinating literary encounters that include German, British, American, Indian, Persian, and Chinese texts. Accordingly, many of the stock trends we associate with lyric poetry are understood more acutely when conceived as a product of world literature than constricted within the confines of any one literary tradition, or simply across various ‘Western’ traditions.

Perhaps the primary obstacle in historicizing lyric criticism is that ‘lyric’ poetry has been incrementally idealized within poetic scholarship (particularly academic scholarship) so much that it has become institutionalized into our discussions of poetry at large. Contemporary assumptions about what good poetry is (e.g. emotive, introspective, meaningful) and what it does (contemplate) often feed back into our readings of poems from disparate reading cultures, thus ‘lyricizing’ texts as we read.<sup>21</sup> One of the most conspicuous effects of a ‘lyric reading’ is its capacity to reflect the reader’s conditions back through the text as a portrait of universal human conditions. This ability of the lyric reader to convert the ‘I’, and even the ‘You’, of poetry to mean him/herself is an appropriative gesture that renders invisible the historical and social

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<sup>21</sup> In their introduction to *The Lyric Reader*, Jackson and Prins write “Rather than proposing or pursuing a straightforward line of influence or progressive development in discourses about lyric, we emphasize a loopier logic that attributes later ideas about lyric to earlier moments in literary history and discovers in these historical moment the latent possibilities of later ideas. Thus reading lyric, where *lyric* is the object of interpretation, necessarily involved lyric reading, where *lyric* is part of the interpretive process to be called into question.”

See Virginia Walker Jackson and Yopie Prins, eds. *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 6.

context of writing through phenomenological reading. Nonetheless, we can excavate something of the ambitions and significances of this method of reading by considering a defining phase in which it flourished: the colonial reading of Oriental, particularly Indian, texts. In this chapter, I examine the role that Orientalist philology has played in constructing and popularizing lyric norms through poetic translations, imitations, and literary histories. In particular, I will illustrate how notable examples of this kind of scholarship rewrote ‘Asiatick’ poetic expression in the image of a proto-European ‘Adamic moment’ thus combining the popular trends of landscape painting with emerging conceptions of a comparative lyric model.<sup>22</sup> As such, my research argues that Adorno’s employment of landscape painting as an example of how aesthetic forms (like *lyric* poetry) achieve clarity *through* history is not uncoincidental; the development of landscape painting was neither “analogous” nor “autonomous” to the elaboration of ‘lyric’ poetry, as Adorno suggested, but rather the two aesthetic forms have reinforced and underwritten one another throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-century.

In particular, this chapter examines how the *idealization of nature* that is so emblematic of British Romantic lyric poetry, developed significantly in India. In fact, even as it performed an almost nativist fascination with ‘origin’ and ‘soil’, the valorization of ‘nature’ was easily one of the most *mobile* and reproducible trends of modern literature. As the scholarship of Valerie

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<sup>22</sup> By ‘Adamic moment’, I’m gesturing to a perspective of original and universal gaze that was uniquely popular in Romantic prospect painting and poetry. James Heffernan discusses this idea in his book *The Re-Creation of Landscape: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable and Turner*. Heffernan writes, “These questions about romanticism and history arise with special force when we realize that much of the romantic literature and art embodies the radically revolutionary desire to annihilate the past... hand in hand with this repudiation of the past goes the rediscovery of landscape as a prehistoric paradise unscarred by battle and unmarked by monument, a pristine spectacle never even represented before in any of the arts. Wordsworth strives to look at nature as if he were her first-born birth” James A. W Heffernan. *The Re-Creation of Landscape: A Study of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable, and Turner*. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1984).



Ritter and Karatani Kôjin demonstrates, the ‘landscape’ form, that largely brings to mind British, German, and American Romanticism, was a far more global phenomenon, rather than a simply European one.<sup>23</sup> The *naichral shā’irī* (natural poetry) movement that took place in late nineteenth-century North India, is a particularly revealing example of this global trend for the ways in which its proponents sought to remedy the perceived artifice of Urdu poetry through a *return* to more ‘natural’ and naturalistic poetic imagery. In the writings of these Urdu modernists, the emergence of the modern Indian Landscape aesthetic is tightly interwoven with the ideal of poetry as a form of authentic self-expression.<sup>24</sup> Their scholarship, thus, ultimately betrays an intimate relationship between the eighteenth and nineteenth-century landscape form and the ‘lyric’ form. A critical assessment of this movement is understandably important for modern Urdu literary studies. It also illuminates the fields of Romantic studies and lyric theory more broadly. While neither Ahmed, Azad, nor Hali use the term ‘lyric’, I argue that their scholarship prepares the grounds for ‘lyric criticism’ in Urdu by receiving and elaborating the necessary conventions of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Romantic Historiography. In particular, Azad and Hali’s reading of ‘nature’ betrays the extent to which the *Adamic* perspective of landscape thinking could transfigure into the lyric ideal of a universal speaking subject.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Both *Kama's Flowers: Nature in Hindi Poetry and Criticism, 1885-1925* by Valerie Ritter and *The Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* by Karatani Kôjin how the landscape aesthetic becomes a global phenomenon. I must thank Rob Wilson for recommending Kojin’s scholarship to me at the Poetics conference held by Boundary 2 at UCLA in 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Valerie Ritter. *Kāma's Flowers: Nature in Hindi Poetry and Criticism, 1885-1925*. Albany: State U of New York, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> For more on Adamic perspective, see James A. W Heffernan. *The Re-Creation of Landscape: A Study of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable, and Turner*. Hanover: Published for Dartmouth College by University Press of New England, 1984.

## ii. The Ghazal as a Lyric

Even though the term lyric does not appear in the writings of Azad or Hali, it nonetheless arrives and develops considerable currency in Urdu literary scholarship.<sup>26</sup> If we intend to trace the thread of lyric theory within Urdu literary scholarship backward towards its moment of entry, this unravelling is made more challenging by the fact that our thread is always fraying; what Urdu litterateurs mean by the term lyric is never definite. Most often, the term ‘lyric’ is used in descriptions of the ghazal as a ‘love-lyric’. It is also often employed as a category that combines the Urdu ghazal (a poem of rhymed couplets) with forms that seem influenced by the ghazal’s convention such as the Urdu *naẓm* (another verse genre). In their 1984 article ‘Lyric Poetry in Urdu: Ghazal and Nazm’, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi and Frances Pritchett assert that “Urdu has had a particularly long and rich tradition of lyric poetry, and at the heart of that tradition has been the ghazal”.<sup>27</sup> They go on to “defin[e] and compar[e]” the ghazal and the *naẓm* which they conceive as “two lyric modes”. The article never explicitly gives a definition of ‘lyric’ and only vaguely gestures towards attributes considered lyrical such as a “subjective, introspective, deeply emotional poetic stance” and poetic imagery borrowed from the natural world. In another article published in 1991, “Lyric Poetry in Urdu: The Ghazal”, Pritchett, again, categorizes the ghazal as a lyric. But in more recent years, both writers (and Faruqi especially) about-turn on the idea of Urdu lyric poetry, demonstrating deep skepticism if not outright rejection of the ‘lyric’ label. In

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<sup>26</sup> Two noteworthy examples of such scholarship include Geeta Patel’s book *Lyrical Movements, Historical Hauntings: On Gender, Colonialism, and Desire in Miraji’s Urdu Poetry* and Aamir Mufti’s chapter “Towards a Lyric History of India” in *Enlightenment in the Colony*

<sup>27</sup>Shamsur Rahman Faruqi and Frances. W. Pritchett. “Lyric Poetry in Urdu: Ghazal and Nazm”. *Journal of South Asian Literature* 19.2 (1984): 111–127. Web

his article “Conventions of Love, Love of Conventions,” Shamsur Rahman Faruqi addresses this practice of nomenclature directly:

The ghazal is often described by West-oriented Urdu critics as a “lyric,” and the main quality of the ghazal as “lyricism.” ... There are serious flaws in the proposition that a *ghazal* is a lyric, and that a rose by any other name, etc. While there is no one, hegemonic, seamless image of the lyric in Western poetics, the lyric is generally understood there to be a poem in which the poet expresses “personal” emotions and “experiences,” and does not, in the nature of things, assume an external audience for his poem. Both these assumptions are false for the *ghazal*. ... since the *ghazal* was intended to be recited at musha‘iras and public gatherings, and was in any case largely disseminated by word of mouth, the whole proposition of the *ghazal* as a “personal-private-no-audience-assumed” text becomes ridiculous.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike more deconstructive approaches to lyric poetry, Faruqi’s skepticism towards the application of ‘lyric’ to Urdu poetry relies on a stable meaning of the term. Faruqi supplies the qualities he associates with lyric poetry before proving its invalidity for describing Urdu ghazals.<sup>29</sup> Yet, as the scholarship of numerous historians of British and American (particular lyric) poetry have insisted, the idea of ‘lyric’ as a distinct genre has only solidified over time and initially held a more fluid and vague implication. The shift in Faruqi’s assessment of Urdu Lyric poetry—from 1984 where his use of the terms *lyricism* and the adjective *lyrical* far outnumbered the employment of lyric as a noun, to more recently where his rejection of ‘lyric’ relies on a clearer understanding of the term—in fact parallels shifts in the usage of ‘lyric’ in Anglophone poetry too. In their introduction to *The Lyric Reader*, Yopie Prins and Virginia Jackson offer a

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<sup>28</sup> Shamsur Rahman Faruqi. “Conventions of Love, Love of Conventions: Urdu Love Poetry in the Eighteenth-Century.” *Annual of Urdu Studies*, 14 (1999), 7-8

<sup>29</sup> Faruqi writes, “While there is no one, hegemonic, seamless image of the lyric in Western poetics, the lyric is generally understood there to be a poem in which the poet expresses “personal” emotions and “experiences,” and does not, in the nature of things, assume an external audience for his poem. Both these assumptions are false for the *ghazal*.” *Ibid.*, 8

succinct outline of the shifts that ‘lyric’ theory undergoes from the eighteenth-century to contemporary literary studies:

William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge had signaled ... toward the abstract literary lyric in their *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), but the term remained adjectival rather than nominal.. In the 1820s and 1830s, ... Hegel’s was an idealized version of the lyric indeed, especially in comparison to the enormous variety of verse genres in active circulation in the nineteenth-century: ... The immense social currency of so many verse genres seem to have inspired nineteenth-century thinkers to imagine a transcendent poetic genre ever more abstracted from that currency, a genre ever more a perfect idea rather than an imperfect practice... what began in the nineteenth-century as an aspiration became in the twentieth-century a real genre – indeed, became not only the genre to which poetry aspired but the genre so identified with poetry that poetry became another name for it. In this progression, the lyric first became an abstraction that could include various verse genres, then poetry became a genre that could include lyric.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to providing a historical review of the lyric category, Prins’ and Jackson’s scholarship on contemporary poetic norms calls to question the very stability of ‘lyric’ as a qualification of text by implicating the process of reception within the construction of lyric poetry, hence the idea of a ‘lyric *reading*’. Faruqi’s eventual rejection of ‘lyric’ as a category of Urdu poetry relies, instead, on an ontological understanding of the term. This mode of rejection which seeks to restore the ghazal back to its authentic (pre-colonial) reading ignores the scholar’s own shifting sense of this term and treats both the ‘lyric’ and the ghazal, as historically stable and unchanging genres.<sup>31</sup> Were we to examine, instead, shifts the employment of ‘lyric’ in Urdu literary scholarship, we could unpack the unfolding and varying iterations of this term in Urdu poetic practice. Such a reconceptualization of ‘lyric’ as a reading practice would allow us to think about the influence that the notion of ‘lyric’, however mercurial, has had on the Urdu

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<sup>30</sup> Virginia Walker Jackson and Yopie Prins, eds. *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U, 2014), 3.

<sup>31</sup> There is, of course, immense variety within the ghazal tradition too and the differences in ghazal production across different language, dialects, and historical periods has been the object much literary criticism.

poetry without getting paralyzed by the question of whether such a practice is ‘authentic’. Indeed, conceptions of authenticity seem to be at the heart of both modern Urdu littérateurs’ adoption of ostensibly ‘lyric’ standards as well as more recent interventions by scholars like Faruqi and Pritchett to reject the term. Where Azad and Hali meant to restore *aslīyat* (authenticity or originality) to the Urdu ghazal by supplanting artful wordplay with *genuine* emotion, Faruqi rejects the employment of such a theory of poetic expression, possibly for the reason that its origins are British.<sup>32</sup>

The ghazal is often described by West-oriented Urdu critics as a “lyric,” and the main quality of the ghazal as “lyricism.” Modern Urdu critics invented even a new term *taghazzul* (ghazal-ness) to describe this quality. It comes as a surprise, if not an incredible and unpleasant shock, to modern students to be told that the term *taghazzul* does not occur in any work or document extant to us from before 1857, the time when a great discontinuity began in our literary culture through colonialist interventions.

In Faruqi’s writing, the entrance of ‘lyric’ (and lyric influenced readings in Urdu literature) constitutes a rupture of the Urdu tradition.<sup>33</sup> While Faruqi does not explicitly mention the role of

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<sup>32</sup> As many scholars have pointed out, the *naichral shā’irī* criticism of the ghazal as an overcomplicated and abstract form should be more accurately understood as a critique of the *Sabk-i Hindī* style, in particular. We find similar critiques of this style of ghazal poetry from writers in present-day Iran. Kevin Schwartz, who examined the corpus of *Bāzgasht-i Adabī* (literary return) criticism in his doctoral dissertation, writes, “The *sabk-i Hindī* style, better known to its practitioners at the time as *shīvah-yi tāzah* (fresh style) or *tāzah-gū’ī* (fresh speak), was particularly known for its intellectualism, challenging imagery, and intricate metaphors... In this narrative, poetry defined as *sabk-i Hindī* is negatively viewed as abstract, abstruse, and overly complicated. The predominance of the supposedly deleterious *sabk-i Hindī* style in the Persianate world is offered as the *raison d’être* for the Iranian poets instigating a “return.” I analyze the parallels between these two movements in the next chapter. Kevin Schwartz. “Bāzgasht-i Adabī (Literary Return) and Persianate Literary Culture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Iran, India, and Afghanistan.” University of California, Berkeley, 2014. 6

<sup>33</sup> There’s no denying that Delhi paid a heavy price when the East India company revenged itself on the city after the failed sepoy rebellion of 1857. In *Nets of Awareness*, Frances Pritchett portrays the *naichral shā’irī* movement as a program in which writers and intellectuals sought to reform Urdu poetry as a means of restoring the city and its society. If the *naichral shā’irī* movement grows from the ashes of Delhi’s devastation (1857), we can fairly deduce that any “discontinuity” introduced to Urdu poetry would likely implicate these very critics.

the *naichral shā'irī* critics in integrating 'colonialist interventions' into Urdu writing, the timing of this "great discontinuity" leaves precisely the *naichral shā'irī* critics open to accusation.<sup>34</sup> I will presently suspend my argument of exactly how and to what degree the *naichral shā'irī* movement can be attributed with laying the groundwork for lyric reading in Urdu poetry. Yet, I confess that it is not my intent to ever answer the question of whether 'lyric' theory *should* have any place in Urdu criticism. Indeed, the qualification of the ghazal as a 'love-lyric' has been debated widely but I suggest that the question worth tracing is not whether it is accurate to describe the Urdu ghazal or *nāẓm* as 'lyric' but, rather, *when* such a phenomenon gains traction. We can learn much about the advantages and pitfalls of this term when we consider its historical proliferation.

In Pritchett and Faruqi's 1987 essay, for example, it is the very elastic understanding of 'lyric' which allows them to assert that "the ghazal is ... one of the preeminent genres of lyric poetry, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in the world." The lyric category is so expansive that it carries with it the potential for both 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' comparative analysis. And so it is the ghazal's *lyric currency* that allows literary critics of a relatively minor language, like Urdu, to participate in literary discussions of a "world" scale; this was once considered an advantage, if only for the literary critics working in these languages. The problem begins when we realize that this term was not only introduced by British literary criticism but was deeply ingrained in British discourses of empire that modeled themselves on a Classical past. The term 'lyric', of course, begins in the Ancient Greek poetic tradition. Even the employment of this term in twentieth-century Urdu criticism still bears signs of the classical nostalgia that extended the use of this terminology throughout British reading, and particularly the British empire. For

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<sup>34</sup> Faruqi, "Conventions of Love, Love of Conventions", 5.

example, in their writing, Faruqi and Pritchett reassert Muhammad Sadiq's evaluation that "Bacchus and Eros are the twin deities that preside over the ghazal".<sup>35</sup> It is hard to imagine Urdu literary historians using such overtly roman references anymore. Rather than bury the trace of this classicism in Urdu scholarship, I'd like excavate and remember eighteenth-century discussions of 'Lyric' poetry that demonstrate how the memory of Ancient European Empire served in the design and aspiration of the British Empire.

Undoubtedly, the inaugural moment of Urdu's integration into the 'lyric empire' of eighteenth-century European poetics begins with the work of British colonialist and philologist, Williams Jones (1746-1794).<sup>36</sup> Jones was one of most influential translators of Indian literature in the eighteenth-century; his essays on, and translations of, 'Asiatick poems' offer a matchless view of this inaugural phase of world literature that was at once enamored with the differences to be found in 'Islamicate' literature but motivated, nonetheless, to provide universal frames for the interpretation of foreign literature.<sup>37</sup>

To better highlight the trends of landscape painting and pastoral historiography that underpin Jones' scholarship, I will compare Jones' oeuvre with the writings and paintings of the company landscape painter, William Hodges. While numerous literary histories and travelogues

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<sup>35</sup> Muhammad Sadiq. *A History of Urdu Literature*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 28.

<sup>36</sup> This chapter follows the lead that M. H. Abrams provides in *The Mirror and The Lamp* when he notes the role played by William Jones in instituting 'lyric' as a global poetic norm.

<sup>37</sup> If we consider the global interest in 'natural' expression in eighteenth and nineteenth-century, its clear that such a poetics is a phenomenon of 'world literature' that produces 'locality' as its object not only to celebrate the similarities across human-kind but the differences too. Celebrating difference, of course, is a tricky yet indispensable process for the participants of world literature and more specifically, for its producers. For if such a rhizomatic process such as 'World Literature' could be said to have a central interest or logic, one key drive would certainly be to make difference palatable i.e. delectable as consumption: On a concrete level, this meant that market of world literature had to provide parameters and theories of conversion alongside the more obvious products of translation. Literary 'difference' had to be made digestible through the paraphernalia of literary commentaries, histories and explanations; this is precisely what Jones' scholarship offered.

of the late eighteenth-century period conveyed theories of linguistic origin and aesthetic convention as a kind of natural history, this cross-study of William Jones and William Hodges is particularly important because of the role that both men played in public discourses surrounding the governance of Indian territory. Hodges' paintings and writings would come to play a key role in the trial against his patron and de-facto governor-General of India, Warren Hastings, while William Jones served as a judge in Calcutta until his death.<sup>38</sup> In many ways Jones naturalist approach towards Asian literary history is mirrored in Hodges' landscape paintings of India. Seen together, their work gives an exemplary sketch of the imperial ambition shared by early Romantic lyric criticism and landscape painting. We could say that these qualities of Jones' and Hodges' work illustrate salient aspects of eighteenth-century British intellectual culture and, more specifically, its colonial varieties by offering a window into the culture of Fort William where both Hodges and Williams spent significant time and which was the center of Company Rule in Calcutta.

### **iii. William Jones: Nature as Universal Poetic Theory**

By all accounts, William Jones had a natural talent for languages and practiced numerous at a young age.<sup>39</sup> After graduating from Oxford at the age of twenty-four, Jones published his first piece of 'Asiatick' scholarship: a translation of Mirza Mehdi Khan Astarbadi 's *Histoire de Nader Chah*, from Persian to French that was commissioned by King Christian VII of Denmark. In 1783, Jones made his first voyage to India where he would serve as the puisne judge to the Supreme Court of Judicature at Fort William, Calcutta until his death. No less than four months

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<sup>38</sup> Although the scholar and painter do not appear to have been in correspondence, we often find mention of William Jones in scholarship on Hodges; the inverse is not as common.

<sup>39</sup> Yet some accounts of Jones' tenure in India shed quite some doubt on exactly how proficient he was in Persian.



after his arrival, Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, a group that, over time, flourished into a remarkable intellectual community of Indology enthusiasts. In the “Third Anniversary Discourse to the Asiatic Society” (1786), Jones articulated what would later be lauded as his most enigmatic idea: that ancient Persian and Sanskrit were both linguistic descendants of the same ‘Aryan’ origin and, thus, shared a common Indo-European ancestor. Ten years after his arrival in India, at the age of forty-eight, Jones died in Calcutta (1794). He remains buried there in the iconic South Park Street Cemetery.

Notwithstanding Jones’ significant contributions to the debates surrounding Sanskrit and its genealogy, much of Jones’ earlier scholarship focuses on the Persian language and literatures that flourished throughout Central Asia, South Asia, and the Ottoman empire. In fact, much of the literary terminology and apparatus that both Western and non-Western readers still use to envision ‘Islamicate’ literature stems from Jones’ early attempts to explain ‘Asiatic’ literature. Most notably, Jones was one of the first *littérateurs* to transcribe the ghazal as ‘lyrick’, just as he often relied on transposing Arabic and Persian genres into Western forms, or, as he describes it, to present “genuine compositions of Arabia and Persia in an English dress.”<sup>40</sup> Given the relative youth of vernacular English publishing at the time of Jones’ comparisons, he also routinely explained the significance and social function of ‘Asiatick’ literature in terms of older European models. For example, following the trends of Classical education in eighteenth and nineteenth-century European culture, Jones’, unsurprisingly, finds equivalents to the great *epics* and *lyricks* of Arabic and Persian in European antiquity. Jones, similarly compares Ferdusi’s ‘epic’ poem to the Iliad, describes Hafiz’s ghazals as Shakespearean sonnets, presents Persian poems (in general) as precursors to the Petrarchan sonnet, and likens the pre-Islamic poet Lebid’s *qasīda* to

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<sup>40</sup> Jones. “Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues”, 5

the writings of Virgil.<sup>41</sup>

The heroick poem of Ferdus might be versified as easily as the Iliad, and I see no reason why the delivery of Persia by Cyrus should not be a subject as interesting to us, as the anger of Achilles, or the wandering of Ulysses. The Odes of Hafez, and of Mesihi, would suit our lyrick measures as well as those ascribed to Anacreon; and the seven Arabick elegies, that were hung up in the temple of Mecca, and of which there are several fine copies at Oxford, would, no doubt, be highly acceptable to the lovers of antiquity, and the admirers of native genius<sup>42</sup>

We see in Jones' scholarship, then, an obvious attempt to create a shared vocabulary with which to discuss world poetry. In its fullest development, this strain in Jones' scholarship gives some evidence to how the eighteenth and nineteenth-century 'lyricization' of poetry, that contemporary Anglophone scholars especially decry, was not simply a phenomenon of world literature but, rather, a key *tool* for Orientalists (and the earliest proponents of 'World Literature') to expand the territories of their professions.

Interestingly, it is largely through the rubric of 'nature' that Jones constructs a primordial essence and universal history of poetry, going even so far as to describe the *Mu'allaqāt* (or seven hung *qasidas*) that are some of the oldest examples of Arabic poetry and which form the corner stone of Arabic literary history, as eclogues.<sup>43</sup> In fact, much of what Jones has to commend Asiatick poetry for is its apparent proximity to the 'permanent' forms of nature:

Arabia, I mean that part of it, which we call the Happy, and which the Asiaticks know by the name of Yemen, seems to be the only country in the world, in which we can properly lay the scene of pastoral poetry; because no nation at this day can vie with the Arabians

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<sup>41</sup> Jones writes "The ode of Petrarch was added, that the reader might compare the manner of the Asiatick poets with that of the Italians, many of whom have written in the true spirit of the Easterns: some of the Persian songs have a striking resemblance to the sonnets of Petrarch; and even the form of those little amatory poems was, I believe, brought into Europe by the Arabians: one would almost imagine the following lines to be translated from the Persian," Jones, "Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues", 83

<sup>42</sup> Jones, "Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues", 5

<sup>43</sup> Eclogues are a form of Classical pastoral poetry

in the delightfulness of their climate, and the simplicity of their manners.<sup>44</sup>

Jones expertise in ‘Arabic’ script languages, paves the way for a lengthy, and admittedly creative, history of the regions that would comprise a geo-literary ‘Asiatick’ zone and the relationship of this geography to Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit literature. Despite Jones’ enthusiastic recommendation of ‘Mohammedan’ literature, his scholarship often betrays a methodology that is more akin to anthropology than philology.<sup>45</sup> He writes that “the Asiaticks excel the inhabitants of our colder regions in the liveliness of their fancy, and the richness of their invention.” And following his own assertion that “every nation has a set of images, and expressions, peculiar to itself, which arise from the difference of its *climate*, manners, and history” Jones elaborates especially, and obsessively, on the geographic conditions of Arabic writing, rather than elaborating any of its key hermeneutical practices.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the individual

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<sup>44</sup> Jones, “Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues”, 79

<sup>45</sup> Talal Asad’s essay “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam” is a particularly illuminating article for its’ discussion of representations of the pastoral in Islamic anthropology. Asad writes, “It is too often forgotten that “the world of Islam” is a concept for organizing historical narratives, not the name for a self-contained collective agent. This is not to say that historical narratives have no social effect-on the contrary. But the integrity of the world of Islam is essentially ideological, a discursive representation. Thus, Geertz has written that “It is perhaps as true for civilizations as it is for men that, however much they may later change, the fundamental dimensions of their character, the structure of possibilities within which they will in some sense always move, are set in the plastic period when they were first forming.” But the fatality of character that anthropologists like Geertz invoke is the object of a professional writing, not the unconscious of a subject that writes itself as Islam for the Western scholar to read.” Talal Asad. “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam.” *Qui Parle*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2009, 1–30.

<sup>46</sup> Jones, “Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues”, 77, 80  
Jones’ emphasis on the nature and climate in ‘Asiatick’ literature was not missed by his readers. In a letter written to James Beattie 5th September 1772, Elizabeth Montagu describes her reading of Jones scholarship almost as a retreat into warmer terrain “one is curious to see the manner of thinking of a people born under so different a climate, ... There is a gaiety and splendour in the poems, which is naturally derived from the happy soil and climate of the poets, and they breathe Asiatic luxury, ... The descriptions are so fine, and all the objects so brilliant, that the sense akes at them, and I wished that Ossian's poems had been laying by me, that I might sometimes have turned my eyes, from the dazzling splendour of the eastern noonday, to the moonlight picture of a bleak mountain.” Jamies Beattie’s reply to Elizabeth Montagu (30th September) echoes the same conventionalized interpretation of nature but with far less admiration. He writes “I have never seen Mr. Jones's imitations of the Asiatic poetry. ... [but] I cannot sympathise with passions I never felt; and when objects are described in colours, shapes, and proportions quite unlike to what I have been

anecdotes and examples that Jones uses to construct his ‘naturalist’ literary historiography are not only refutable in terms of their content but their application too since such a deterministic social theory of poetry held little significance in eighteenth-century Arabic/Persian and even Urdu poetic reception. The following extract is one of many such moments in Jones work:

notions of felicity are taken from freshness, and verdure... it is a maxim among them that the three most charming objects in nature are, a green meadow, a clear rivulet, and a beautiful woman, and that the view of these objects at the same time affords the greatest delight imaginable: Mahomet was so well acquainted with the maxim of his countrymen, that he described the pleasures of heaven to them, under the allegory of cool fountains, green bowers, and black-eyed girls, as the word Hourī literally signifies in Arabick; and in the chapter of the Morning, towards the end of his Alcoran, he mentions a garden, called Irem, which is no less celebrated by the Asiatick poets than that of the Hesperides by the Greeks...it was, probably, a name invented by the impostor, as a type of a future state of happiness.<sup>47</sup>

The reference to ‘Irem’ in *Sūrah al Fajr*, the Quranic chapter which Jones’ translates as the chapter of ‘The Morning’—but which would more accurately be translated as ‘The Dawn’—is astonishingly sparse. The beginning verses of *Sūrah al Fajr* mention a number of cities, peoples and civilizations that were once emblems of power but since lie in ruin.<sup>48</sup> Thus, in the context of the rest of the chapter, Irem is recollected as a once reputable city now in disrepair and there is

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accustomed to, I suspect that the descriptions are not just, and that it is not nature that is presented to my view, but the dreams of a man who had never studied nature. What is the reason, madam, that the poetry, and indeed the whole phraseology, of the eastern nations (and I believe the same thing holds true of all uncultivated nations) is so full of glaring images, exaggerated metaphors, and gigantic descriptions? Is it, because that, in those countries, where art has made little progress, nature shoots forth into wilder magnificence, and everything appears to be constructed on a larger scale? Is it that the language, through defect of copiousness, is obliged to adopt metaphor and similitude, even for expressing the most obvious sentiments? ...Or is it, that the passions of those people are really stronger, and their climate more luxuriant? Perhaps all these causes may conspire in producing this effect.”

William Forbes. *An Account of the Life and Writings of James Beattie LL.D.* Vol. 1. (London, 1824), 291.

<sup>47</sup> Jones, “Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues”, 77

<sup>48</sup> The direct quote from the Quran reads as follows “Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with 'Aad—[With] Iram—who had lofty pillars, The likes of whom had never been created in the land?” (89:6-8)

no mention of its gardens.<sup>49</sup> In fact, it is inscrutable how anyone could read Irem's mention in *Sūrah al Fajr* and mistake it as a 'type of future happiness' rather than an example of God's punishment. Perhaps we may say that in his desire to produce nature as the primary aesthetic principle of Asiatick culture, Jones' sometimes manipulates the sources of his information.<sup>50</sup>

Notwithstanding the liberty with which Jones lays his claims, there are certainly moments of literary criticism which suggests that the central tenants of Arabic, Persian Turkish and, ultimately, Urdu literature were at least partially derived from the geographical circumstances of their writing. While the relationship between poetry and nature is discussed and debated widely in classical Arabic and Persian literary treatises, Jones' execution of this 'naturalist' historiography betrays what little knowledge of language and literary hermeneutics it requires to explain literature in terms of the unique qualities of climate, soil, topography and season. The overwhelming degree to which Jones looks to these 'natural' conditions as a compass in reading Islamic literature is perturbing because it erases both the range and *development* of Arabic,

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<sup>49</sup> Yet, as Shadab Ahmad notes, Irem is, indeed, remembered for its gardens in more poetic scholarship. He writes, "Iram of the Pillars [iram dhāt al-'imād]" is invoked in Qur'an 89:6 al-Fajr as a corrupt people who were destroyed by God. It became widely accepted that these people lived in the city of Iram, which was famous for its magnificent gardens. The phrase 'garden of Iram' became standard in Persian, Ottoman and Urdu poetry. It is worth noting that the city in which Ḥāfiẓ lived and wrote, Shiraz, itself has to this day a famous garden, built in the eighteenth-century, called 'The Garden of Iram' (Bāgh-i Iram)." See Shahab Ahmed. *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic*. (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 65-66.

<sup>50</sup> It's possible that Jones reading of Irem as an allegory for future happiness sounds like it could be referring to *janat ul-firdaus*. While Jones does not bring up this term, it's possible that this could have been what he originally meant; it would certainly be more accurate reading of the Quran than Jones' translation of *Irem*. Another rather erroneous piece of information that Jones narrates to his readers is that after his conversion to Islam, the poet Lebid "was afterwards extremely useful in replying to the satires of Amralkeis, who was continually attacking the doctrine of Mahomet." Considering that Imru-al Qais died before the advent of Islam, it's more likely that Jones meant a different poet. *Ibid.*, 80.

Persian, North Indian, and Turkish hermeneutics.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the concept of ‘nature’ *itself* emerges as a kind of hermeneutical tool that fractures literature through the lens of geography in its process of deciphering literary otherness.

Though ‘nature’ certainly offers one approach to conceiving ‘local’ literature, it says little—and erases much—of the hermeneutic grammar of distinct literary traditions, especially those that were overwhelmingly cosmopolitan. The ghazal form, which flourished across numerous languages and continents, was an undoubtedly cosmopolitan, rather than ‘rustic’, tradition. Jones’ literary essays actively erase the degree to which the shared literary forms and practices of the Asiatick literature were products of Persianate literary culture that spanned multiple geographies and empires.<sup>52</sup> Instead, Jones treatise suggests that literature emerging from city centers had already lost what seeming virtue ‘Asiatick’ literature otherwise exhibited:

It is true that many of the Eastern figures are common to other nations, but some of them receive a propriety from the manners of the Arabians, who dwell in the plains and woods, which would be lost, if they came from the inhabitants of cities<sup>53</sup>

Jones then goes on to describe even the ‘principle cities’ of Yemen as pastoral-scapes:

Its principal cities ... Aden, surrounded with pleasant gardens and woods, ... It is observable that Aden, in the Eastern dialects, is precisely the same word with Eden, which we apply to the garden of paradise: ... Yemen itself takes its name from a word, which signifies verdure, and felicity; for in those sultry climates, the freshness of the shade, and the coolness of water, are ideas almost inseparable from that of happiness; and this may be a reason why most of the Oriental nations agree in a tradition concerning a delightful spot, where the first inhabitants of the earth were placed before their fall.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> In fact, we could argue that pastoralist historiographies of ‘Asiatick’ literature castigate urban and civilizational development by portraying it as a trajectory towards corruption and decline.

<sup>52</sup> For more scholarship on the urban history of Indo-Persian poetry see Sunil Sharma. “The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24.2 (2004): 73–81.

<sup>53</sup> Jones, “Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues”, 176-8

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 75

For Jones, Aden, thus, does not only serves as the origin point of human-kind but of poetry too. Nevertheless, this elevation of Aden to Eden is, of course, a double-edged gesture; in his telling, the cities of Yemen return to an imagined pristine and natural condition of verdure and idyllic tranquility: we do not hear the bustle of vendors or delight at the products of local trade and industry, we are told of no architectural monuments, nor do we, most importantly, encounter the inhabitants of these cities. Just as Yemeni ‘cities’ are themselves erased in Jones historiography, so too the role of trade, commerce, and socio-political activity *between* different Asiatick cities is expunged by Jones’ insistence on reading forms and features of ‘Asiatic’ poetry in terms of their natural geography.

Jones’ ‘erasure’ of ‘Oriental’ cosmopolitan life, by design, makes space for a pastoral historiography of ‘Asiatick’ literature. Such a move towards localized and indigenous theories of language, of course, gained significant momentum in later, proto-national standardizations and constructions of Indian vernacular. But the Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit that Jones traced were not vernacular in the context of his reading. Instead, Jones’ *vernacularization* of Indian lingua franca through this ‘naturalist’ reading creates a template by which India can be read as a province – and, specifically, a province of Europe. Given colonial attitudes of European superiority and Romantic constructions of the folk—in which ‘hinterland’ is the heart, rather than the periphery, of culture—this provincialization of India may seem generous. But as W.J.T. Mitchell compellingly explains in his essay “Landscape and Power,” it is precisely under the guise of *prioritization* that the landscape form performs its quiet violence.<sup>55</sup>

Mitchell’s essay also gestures specifically at the intimate relationship between the landscape form and the project of empire; in this regard too, Jones’ historiography proves the

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<sup>55</sup> See W. J. T Mitchell. “Imperial Landscape”, 13-17

point. Of course, Jones' attempt to create a universal history of poetry (or at least proto-European poetry) is a primary example of how the proliferation and standardization of aesthetic practices was primary to integrating colonial markets of literature into the empire. More so, in converting products of a cosmopolitan Persianate writing network into transcripts of a rustic proto-European literary practice, Jones' pastoralization of Persian literary history betrays how aesthetic values like 'rustic' and 'sublime' informed and abetted strategies of authority and governance, both in the colonies and in the British metropole.<sup>56</sup>

The ideological bridge between representations of natural landscape and British imperial ambition is exposed more still by the way that British writers and painters either cast and/or erased signs of the Mughal Empire. Jones scholarship simultaneously projects a fascination with 'Mohammaden empire' even as it construes its disappearance. Considering Jones' linguistic genealogy of proto-European language, there is something cannibalistic about the way that objects of Persian literary empire are consumed by, and into, colonial historiographies of empire. Of course, this is not dissimilar to the role that Classicism (and reconstructions of the Roman empire, in particular) played in eighteenth and nineteenth-century British culture, and modern European scholarship more broadly. Stathis Gourgouris charts this "remarkable convergence of two otherwise unlike formations: Philhellenism and Orientalism" in his article "Derealizations of the Ideal":

Philhellenism was characterized by an adoration of an imaginary Greece, which may have indeed existed once as a social- historical entity, but even if it had, it was adored precisely as non-existent. What was adored were "the Greeks [who] step out of the circle of history" in Wilhelm von Humboldt's succinct phrase, or "the Greeks who were dead" in François- René de Chateaubriand's inimitable manner, typical of his general cultural necrophilia. This ideality was thoroughly absorbed by Europe's chief national- colonial

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<sup>56</sup> Sara Suleri's scholarship on the 'Indian Sublime' in the writings of Burke is a notable example of such scholarship. See Sara Suleri. *The Rhetoric of English India*. Repr. (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1996)



discourses (English, French, German) ultimately as a gesture of self-determination. European modernity was enabled by the appropriation of Greek antiquity as intrinsic resource, which signified in effect the effacement of Greek antiquity as a real social-historical space ... The contemporary inhabitants of this ideal land were interpellated as Oriental subjects—Orientalized by virtue of their alleged renunciation of the ways of this ancient ideal. In this very sense... Philhellenism in name was in reality anti-Hellenism.<sup>57</sup>

Although it is modern Greece that plays the part of ‘Oriental’ in Gourgouris’ formulation, his characterization of eighteenth-century European Classicism as a kind of necrophilia helps illuminate eighteenth-century Indology too which, as the adoption of Sanskrit into Classical studies demonstrates, construed ancient India as an alternate source of Classical knowledge. Sheldon Pollock’s scholarship on Sanskrit records the immense geographical range of this cosmopolitan language as well as the concerted effort with which eighteenth-century European Indologists tried to explain archaeological signs of an Indo-Greek dialogue as a means to expand on the perceived continuities between these two ancient cultures.<sup>58</sup>

#### **iv. Classical Nostalgia into Indian Ruin:**

In addition to offering Ancient India as an additional source of ‘Classical’ epics and lyrics, classical models of empire (particularly the Ancient Roman Empire) served as models of

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<sup>57</sup> Stathis Gourgouris. “Derealizations of the Ideal”. *Boundary 2*. 39:2 (2012)

See also, Stathis Gourgouris. *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 122–54.

<sup>58</sup> Pollock gives a number of examples of this kind of nineteenth-century scholarship that hypothesized the relationship between Ancient India and Ancient Greek in his essay “The Alternative Classicism of Classical India”. Some of the scholars include German Indologist Albrecht Weber, who indulged on the resemblances between Indian epics (Ramayana) and Homer, and Indologist Johannes Bronkhorst, who hypothesized that “the very conditions of possibility of Indian philosophy are found in interactions with Indo-Greeks.” Pollock writes, “Greece and India may have exchanged ideas, motifs, cultural styles, and so on, or drawn them from a common pool. And it is no longer entirely clear why we should care which was the case ... except to the degree the question of origins of such cultural goods enables us to assess the transformations introduced by people in each sphere [which] helped create particular kinds of classicity.” Sheldon Pollock. “The Alternative Classicism of Classical India.” *What We Knew: A Symposium on Knowledge in and of India's Past*. India Seminar, Web. 18 Jan. 2016.

colonial power for British imperialism. In his infamous “Minute on Indian Education,” Thomas Macaulay conceives the consecration and ultimate ‘export’ of British ‘education’ (both scientific and literary) to India in terms of an imperial power’s ‘duty’ to ‘enhance’ and ‘enrich’ its colonies:

[At the time of] the great revival of letters among the Western nations at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century... almost every thing that was worth reading was contained in the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Had our ancestors acted as the Committee of Public Instruction has hitherto acted; had they neglected the language of Cicero and Tacitus; had they confined their attention to the old dialects of our own island; had they printed nothing and taught nothing at the universities but Chronicles in Anglo-Saxon, and Romances in Norman French, would England have been what she now is? What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India.<sup>59</sup>

Macauley attributes British ascendancy, in part, to the willingness of British public officials to learn from the language of renowned Roman orators, Cicero and Tacitus; Of course, what Macauley casts as an open-hearted admittance of Roman literature into British instruction entails, not simply, looking beyond parochially ‘British’ texts, but also that the colony (*Provincia Britannia*) learn from, even feed on, the knowledge of its colonial occupier. In this formulation, India is to Britain what Britain once was to Ancient Rome. In his writings on the representation of Britain in Roman culture, James Grout suggests “Britain [was] less a geographical entity than an ideological counterpoint, its barbarity a foil to Roman civilization. Almost immediately, certain literary convention or topos begin to emphasize the difference between Rome and this other place”<sup>60</sup>. While there are certainly many accounts of India serving as an ideological counterpoint to Britain, the coordinates of this relationship were hardly static. For example, unlike Britain’s relationship to Rome, India was such as financially lucrative colony that

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas Macauley. "On Empire and Education." Internet History Sourcebooks. Web. 19 Jan. 2016.

<sup>60</sup> James Grout. "Roman Perceptions of Britain." *Encyclopedia Romana*. University of Chicago, Web.

Victorian discourse often betrays Indian centrality – the jewel in the Crown – rather imperial *distance*.<sup>61</sup> The telling parallel, however, is not between representations of Britain in Roman writing and India in Imperial British writing, but rather the representation of Greece and Roman ruins against Mughal ruins in eighteenth-century British writing.

Just as William Jones' treatise portrays Asiatick literary history through the pastoral as a chronotype, the landscape paintings and writings of British painter, William Hodges (1744-1797), perform a distinctly *historical* scene in their portrayals of Indian landscape and Mughal ruin. William Hodges was, by both contemporary and eighteenth-century standards, an exceptionally well-travelled man – among his many travels, Hodges made voyages to India, the Pacific Easter Islands, and Antarctica. In 1778, Hodges began a six-year long residency in India where, under the patronage of Warren Hastings, he documented the sights and sounds of Company rule through both writing and painting. In 1793, after his return from India, Hodges published an illustrated account of this time in India, *Travels in India During the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, & 1783*. In her study *Mimesis across Empires*, Natasha Eaton examines the exchange of artistic practices between British Colonial and Indian Art between the years 1765 to 1860; her chapter on the work of William Hodges is particularly masterful in sketching the ambiguous role that landscape painting played in British colonial discourses of Empire. In particular, Eaton charts the relationship between William Hodges and his patron, Warren Hastings.<sup>62</sup> Not only did Hasting's patronage demonstrate the kind of imperial ambition that landscape painting captured and contemplated, Hodges' paintings and writings on India became

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<sup>61</sup> "The Jewel in the Crown" was the title of a popular television series that aired in 1984 and was based on the novel series "The Raj Quartet" by Paul Scott.

<sup>62</sup> Natasha Eaton. *Mimesis Across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860*. (Duke University Press, 2013: 105-151)

the primary evidence in Hastings defense during his trial for impeachment (1788-1795). Indeed, the Hodges-Hastings relationship demonstrates how *Indian* landscape painting, in particular, was fundamental to Imperial and local British culture and politics.

Eaton's assessment of Hasting's impeachment trial focuses on how his defense sought to justify the governor-general's record based on the ascribed precedent of Mughal despotism; Hastings notorious departure from 'Georgian' procedures was to be understood in terms of the sites and societies that he inherited – a characterization of Hasting that would be met with derisive caricatures of Hastings dressed as an Oriental despot. The occasion of Hastings' impeachment trial accordingly brought to fore discussions of both British legal and moral principles as well as Indian history; the very qualification of Mughal rule as despotic was called into question by immanent scholars like Anquetil-Duperron, Alexander Dow, and William Bolts and forcefully rejected by Edmund Burke, who insisted in the prosecution against Hastings that India was governed by "natural law".<sup>63</sup> In fact, Hodges writings portray an uneven narrative of Mughal despotism which we may reasonably suspect Hastings shared too. Hodges historiography of Mughal rule idolized Akbar as the enlightened and secular Mughal ruler under whom India experienced a golden period and after whom India suffered a sharp and consistent decline, particularly under the rule of Aurungzeb.<sup>64</sup> While this particular portrayal remains a uniquely popular, yet highly problematic, reading of Mughal history, it was especially

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<sup>64</sup> To give an example of this kind of historiography, here is Hodges writing about Aurungzeb's inheritance of Mughal architecture: "Jehanguire, the son of Acbar, highly decorated with painting and gilding; but in the lapse of time it was found to be gone greatly to decay; and the Emperor Aurungzebe, either from superstition or avarice, ordered it to be entirely defaced, and the walls whitened. From this hall, through a similar arch to that in the front, we descend into the garden; and the whole of the tomb displays itself through an avenue of lofty trees." Hodges, *Travels in India During the Years 1780, 1781, 1782, and 1783*, 114

problematic in its implementation by Company rule; in Hodges' work, the colonial gaze projects itself as the inheritor of 'Akbarian rule' while erasing the biological inheritors of a Mughal empire. For Eaton, Hodges' paintings of India accomplish this representational coup-d'état by "fetishiz[ing] ruins [and]... will[ing] architectural collapse rather than merely recording decay."<sup>65</sup> We may think back, again, to Gourgouris' discussion of the necrophilic impulse in Victorian constructions of Classical decline. Eaton's reading of "Tomb and Distant View of Rajamahall Hills" illustrates how Hodges landscapes maintain an utmost pastoral tranquility at the expense of betraying the East India Company's numerous struggles to quell rebellion. The Picturesque paintings cast Mughal monuments as ruins, thus projecting what the East India Company was actively killing as not only already dead, but resting in peace.<sup>66</sup>

One of his most Claudian oil compositions, *View of Rajamahall Hills* visualizes the pastoral component of governmentality. The prospect is framed by the classically educated, Orientalist gaze of Hastings or Cleveland, whose eyes travel swiftly to the carefully mapped horizon then return to the shaded remains of Mughal culture, a tomb and a *dargah* (Islamic tomb or shrine), before surveying the signs of cultivation that punctuate the middle ground... As elsewhere, Hodges' "spirits of place" (orientalized shepherds, soldiers, mourning widows, conversing scholar-priests, mothers and children, travelers) facilitate his viewers' imaginary identification with their sentiments but even more so with the moral aura of the prospect. Here the figure watches over his herd but also faces the tomb, thus exciting the viewers melancholic contemplation of the Mughal past, or, from the stance of *ego fui in Arcadia* (I too once dwelt in Arcadia), of a primordial existence that for these "aboriginal" tribes is supposedly not so distant.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860*, 105-151

<sup>66</sup> Natasha Eaton write "Hodges' writings and images reach their most pathetic in relation to those sites he believed to be infused with the charisma of the "liberality and humanity" of Akbra's reign. This culminated in his descriptions of Akbar's mausoleum in Sikandra ... and his former capital Agra: "[Filled} with ruins of ancient grandeur ... this fine country exhibits in its present state a melancholy proof of the sequences of bad government, of wild ambition, and the horror of attending civil dissentions ... [where once it] must have been a perfect garden, but now all is desolation and silence." Hodges' nostalgia pivots on the recurrent trope of the "perfect garden," which figure as a moral trope, even as a metaphor for the state in both English and Indo-Islamic, philosophy, palace design, and painting." Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860*, 105-151

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-151

What Hodges' work—and the reception of his work by the East India Company, the British Public, and British Political life—reveals is that even as Mughal monuments are portrayed in decline, so too is India portrayed as an occasion to (re)member and resuscitate both political and aesthetic Classical forms. Hodges even goes to the lengths of studying and superimposing Classical architectural motifs into his paintings of India. Eaton's writes:

to meet the challenge of representing such a sophisticated imperial history, [Hodges] reflected on the works of his master, Richard Wilson ... After spending several years in Rome, Wilson returned to England and Wales, where he set about representing Britain's own roman imperial past... England as the imperial subjected or subjugator was a recurrent theme in Wilson's worlds ... although several of Hodges' Indian paintings cite assuages from Wilson, his own style is much looser and his reference to the Roman School more tenuous, as he omitted some of the human activities, painterly details, and the suggestion of depth associate with classical landscape's rendition of the ideal, in favor of a closer focus on Mughal architectural structures— which, after all, were now subject for European art.<sup>68</sup>

Hodges paintings—and the arguments that they eventually buttressed in Hasting's impeachment trial—point to a fixation with classical forms of government and architecture. The ideological underpinnings of Hodges' pastoral landscapes also willfully echo Classical representations of arcadia. In fact, Hodges' aim to introduce a British readership to forms of Indian architecture is as much vested in landscape architecture; topography is so central to Hodges' theory of architecture that he summarizes his travel memoirs as a “hiatus in the topographical department of literature”.<sup>69</sup> Yet time and again, when explanation and translation alone cannot suffice, the consistent frame of reference that Hodges offers his reader is to conceive of India in terms of Ancient Greece. For instance, the city of Calcutta, Hodges explains, gives “to the eye an appearance similar to what we may conceive of a Grecian city in the age of Alexander.” The

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-151

<sup>69</sup> Unsurprisingly, one of the many Indian terms that Hodges translates and explains to his readers is *jungle*, which Hodges translates as “*close woods*”.

writer is equally delighted to find that many buildings he encounters are “surrounded by colonnades or arcades, which give them the appearance of Grecian temples”. At times the architectural glimpses of Ancient Greece remain in only the smallest ornamental details such as a “Grecian scroll” on a column or, what was likely, a *trishula* which “perfectly resemble[s] the trident of the Greek Neptune”.<sup>70</sup>

It is certainly curious to observe most of the ornamental parts of Grecian architecture appearing in a building centered on the plains of Hindostan. I was indeed much struck with this circumstance, and led to reflect upon it so frequently, that I was at length tempted to commit to paper a few thoughts on these different styles of architecture, which, in the form of a pamphlet upon the subject, was accompanied by two large plates engraved from pictures, entitled, Views of the Gate leading to the Tomb of Acbar at Secundii, and the Mausoleum of the Emperor Shere Shah at Sajjeram<sup>71</sup>

Just as Shiva’s trident can translate so easily into Neptune’s trident, both ‘Mohammedan’ and ‘Hindoo’ socio-religious customs get conveyed through images and tropes from Classical Europe. Muslim burial-sites and mourning practices are compared to Ancient Greeks rituals and Hodges wonders if metal statutes of ‘Hindoo mythology’ are not less than attentive to “perfect beautiful form” in comparison to Grecian states because of their primarily “symbolical character”.<sup>72</sup> When a tribe of what were likely *adivadis* celebrates the arrival of Lord Clive into their village with the sacrifice of a cow, Hodges is so alarmed by their mode of revelry that he grows eager for “the rites of Bacchus” to end.<sup>73</sup>

Like William Jones, Hodges’ larger intent seems to be to encourage British readers to appreciate the variety of forms that world architecture has to offer and to encourage British

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<sup>70</sup> Hodges, *Travels in India During the years*, 62, 94.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 114

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 153

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 93

readers to understand that, like poetic forms, architectural forms are “modified by the nature of the climate and materials, as well as by the habits and pursuits of the inhabitants”. Though not disputing the “very eminent beauties and perfections” of Greek architecture, Hodges cannot “admire it in an exclusive manner; or, [remain] blind to the majesty, boldness, and magnificence of the Egyptian, Hindoo, Moorish, and Gothic, as admirable wonders of architecture, [or] unmercifully blame and despise them, because they are more various in their forms, and not reducible to the precise rules of the Greek hut prototype, and column”.<sup>74</sup> Yet even as Hodges encourages a global palate, his theory of architectural form returns consistently to imagine the Greek hut as the *exemplar* of a universal style. Towards the end of his text, Hodges envisages the “Kings of Ithaca and Britain” retiring to wigwams in the “thick foliage of the forest[s]” and imagines the evolution of the ‘wigwam’ across various climates and populations.

The hollow tree, and the thick foliage of the forest, into which even Kings of Ithaca and Britain have retired, are fitter for occasional than for permanent resident. They appear evidently imitated in the wigwams of the torpid, wretched, unsettled Pecheraiis on the frozen coast of Terra del Fuego; ... THESE wigwams, nearly the same every where as to form, differ in various countries only in the nature of the materials... What this is, or may be, in architecture, we see with admiration exemplified in the old Greek and Roman architecture, which is the thatched wooden hut, metamorphosed by genius into a marble edifice, and yet expressing its original parts in such proportions as are consistent with the nature of stone and marble... How far all the above prototypes of buildings are improvable, must be left to the future exertions of genius.<sup>75</sup>

While it is the rustic ‘hut’ or ‘wigwam’, rather than Greek architecture, that Hodges cites as the architectural prototype repeated and adapted in different climates and by different societies, the wigwam functions less as the object of historical study and more as an instrument of mediation between Ancient Greek architecture and Mughal Ruins. In much the same way that William Jones’ not only seeks to explain poetic form in terms of natural conditions (climate, soil,

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-69



topography) but also, ‘coincidentally’ finds the most rustic of ‘Asiatick’ poetry as evocative of Ancient Greek, similarly Hodges’ thesis on the architectural forms of India succeeds at unveiling the parallels between Ancient Rome and India best when Mughal monuments are framed within a pastoral setting. This uncanny tendency of ‘natural forms’ to conjure ghosts of a classical imperial past delineates how the pastoral itself comes to signify ruin in Orientalist scholarship. For example, in both Jones’ as well as Hodges’ writing, the *natural* conditions of India are arrived at by erasing and eroding forms of a cosmopolitan North Indian empire. Thus, it seems that pastoral tropes in Orientalist historiography and painting work beyond documenting decline and, in fact, identify room for “future exertions of genius”.

Perhaps the most telling instance of Hodges’ writings about form does not concern architecture at all, but rather human figures. As Hodges’ portraits of native Indians demonstrate, even the ethnographic sub-categorizations of Indians became a kind of form-sketching; the ‘Hindoo’, the ‘Musselman’, and the ‘Mullah’ each becomes a *type* in colonialist rhetoric. As for the situation of Indian bodies in *landscape* paintings, scholars of British colonial art suggest that one of the major challenges of Indian landscape painting was its portrayal of *Indian bodies*. In her study of the Picturesque in Colonial painting, *Underneath the Banyan tree*, Romita Ray suggests that the visibility of the colonial subject was overwhelming and “Calcutta’s multiple topographies compelled the artists in search of the picturesque to cope with the disturbing proximity of the “native” presence. Simply put, “the native body was everywhere”.<sup>76</sup> Like Ray, Eaton suggests that Indian figures prove difficult to integrate into European prospect painting; not only does the presence of bodies in picturesque landscape painting detract from the will to

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<sup>76</sup> Romita Ray. *Under the Banyan Tree: Relocating the Picturesque in British India*. (London: Yale UP, 2013), 22.

Adamic purity but *Indian* bodies, in particular, disturb British landscape painting by refusing to behave as the ideal subject.<sup>77</sup> While misbehaving Indian bodies do, indeed, float like ‘phantasmic’ figures in Hodges’ landscapes, this sense of being ‘haunted’ by Indian bodies can be heard most loudly, not in painting, but in Hodges’ *writings* on India. Hodges’ description of Indian women bathing in rivers as ‘Syrens’ betrays the artists strange condition of delirium where ghostly forms of Ancient Greece appeared in all manner of Indian forms:

In the mornings, at or after sunrise, the women bathe in the river; and the younger part, in particular, continue a considerable time in the water, sporting and playing like Naiads or Syrens. To a painter's mind, the fine antique figures never fail to present themselves, when he observes a beautiful female form ascending these steps from the river, with wet drapery, which perfectly displays the whole person, and with vases on their heads, carrying water to the temples<sup>78</sup>

There is an unmistakably erotic charge to Hodges’ visions of Indian women bathing at a river and/or carrying vases of water on their heads; more than sexual figures of flesh, however, these women are made of myth; It’s unclear which kind of allure Hodges prefers.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the ekphratic quality of Hodges’ description of Indian female forms exposes the extent to which Hodges obsessively viewed with a “painters mind”. For example, Hodges’ use of the term ‘drapery’ divulges the artist’s classical training and painterly habit to convert Indian bodies into occasions for artistic practice.<sup>80</sup> The description of wet clothing as ‘drapery’ also deconstructs

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<sup>77</sup> Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860*, 140

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 33

<sup>79</sup> This specific illustration of Indian women bathing or gathering water at a river/well is arguably one of the most iconic of Indian images and is particularly popular in nineteenth and twentieth-century ‘village scenes’.

<sup>80</sup> Mastering the representation of drapery was, of course, an important skill for eighteenth-century painters and not simply because it was a striking feature of Classical sculpture but also for the status and grandeur that backdrops and clothing of fine fabric endowed to the subjects of portrait painting.

Indian portage to a common denominator of cloth, thus finding a phrase that could apply equally (and, in fact, applied especially well) to forms of Ancient Greek/Roman dress.<sup>81</sup> While the reference to classical art in Hodges' description of 'drapery' is subtle, Hodges' hallucinatory transformation of female bathers into "syrens" is both allegorically and artistically *clear*: it is not so hard for the reader to imagine how wet drapery—what were possibly Saris—wrapping around the legs of female bathers could give the appearance of a single mermaid-like tail. And since sirens are figures of both desire and danger, Hodges' vision of female bathers as Syrens betrays, if only accidentally, his perceived dangers of oriental enchantment. Like Odysseus, if Hodges is to complete his travels safely, he must both keep a safe distance from the "fine antique figures" and stay deaf to their song.

Undoubtedly, part of India's appeal as a destination for colonial artists was its ghostly 'resemblances' to Ancient Greece and Rome. But even as it hypothesized a shared history, this treatment of Indian travel as an occasion for contemplating classical history created *safe distance* from the object of enchantment in a range of ways. Jones' and Hodges' work demonstrates how classical nostalgia played out in India like a fantasy that not only distorted Indian reality, but also diverted attention away from it. More so, articulating India through Ancient Greek and Roman forms was itself a means of creating chronological distance between India and its readers by casting India back in ancient time as British writers wrote from the present. Of course, we can detect a similar rewinding motion in the posture of Adamic innocence that Romantic landscape painting often envisioned. In fact, representations of the pastoral in eighteenth and nineteenth-century British culture performed such noticeably historiographical feats that we should recognise the landscape form, itself, as a chronotype that could be cast as effectively in literary

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<sup>81</sup> For example, we can think of garments like the chiton and himation.

histories (e.g. William Jones) as in painting. These representations of nature paired especially well with discussions of classical form because eighteenth-century conventions of representing the pastoral—that include both historiographies of lyric poetry as well as reconstructions of Arcadia in landscape painting—were themselves derived from Victorian reconstructions of classical aesthetics. Moreover, as the work of William Hodges and William Jones employs the pastoral aesthetic towards the shared effect and ambition of (re)membering Classical European empire, it evidences how pastoralism was not simply an aesthetic trend but also a discursive strategy of colonial governmentality.

Lastly, I'd like to call attention to how Hodges writing and painting discloses the ways in which the landscape form—underwritten as it was with maintaining the voyeuristic perspective of travel—was not only a prism through which to conceive India, but a process of mediation that kept the *traveler* from coming into too close contact with its object of interpretation:

Gentlemen who have resided long in India lose the idea of the first impression which that very curious country makes upon an entire stranger: the novelty is soon effaced, and the mind, by a common and natural operation, soon directs its views to more abstract speculation; reasoning assumes the place of *observation*, and the traveler is lost in the philosopher. . . . the immediate object of the following pages . . . consist[s] of a few plain *observations*, noted down upon the spot, in the simple garb of truth, without the smallest embellishment from fiction, or from fancy.<sup>82</sup> [emphasis my own]

Hodges' portrayal of 'observation' as the opposite of 'speculation hopes to convince his reader that his writings (like his landscape paintings) do not traffic in argument or 'reasoning' – my reading of his work, of course, rejects such a self-narrative. Yet, it is telling that the symptoms by which Hodges identifies a traveler who has stayed in India long enough to become *lost*—'embellishment', 'fancy', 'fiction' abstract speculation—were the same terms routinely used by British colonialists (and, eventually, the natural poetry critics themselves) to describe Indian,

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<sup>82</sup> Hodges, *Travels in India During the Years*, iv.

particularly Indo-Persian, art. Though he was undoubtedly captivated by India's pagodas, jungles and temples, Hodges' trusted only his first impressions of the region as if deeper, more philosophical understandings of India would corrupt the 'Gentle[man]'. This intriguing confession suggests one reason why the landscape form may have appealed so to British colonial artists: its desire to retain the novelty and observatory gaze of the traveler was also a method of protection from Oriental siren-song. We can only 'speculate' whether the quality of pastoral silence, which Hodges and Jones sketched into their renditions of India, was the result of some strategic deafness.

#### **v. Ruining the Indian Metropolis**

In both architectural practice and poetic convention, it was certainly a fashion in nineteenth-century British scholarship to 'note' the likenesses between Classical Greek/Roman form and Indian culture, as the works of two of the most important Indian colonial artists of the early Company period, William Jones and William Hodges, exemplify. This necrophilic trend that reconstructed the heart of British culture from the ruins of ancient Greek and Roman empire was an especially significant phenomenon for colonial India; fantasies of a 'Classical' past not only provided a 'skeleton' against which Sanskrit would be constituted as an alternative classic, but also one upon which some of the earliest imaginaries of British empire took shape. Hodges' painting "A View of Fort William" provides some clues of how Calcutta was transformed into a Classical ideal, both through architecture and on the canvasses of Company landscape painters. Looking at William Byrne's (1743-1805) etching of Jones' "View of Fort William," the eye is pulled up towards the large expanse of clouds and sky—which take up almost two thirds of the view—before grazing along the horizon upon which ships and numerous buildings with Greek columns (some even display a Parthenon-like structure) sit. Were we to judge from the sky-line

alone, it would be impossible to say that this was an Indian, and not a European, city. Instead, it is the garments worn by human figures that give some indication of an Indian location.

Moreover, these figures are so dwarfed by the scale of Jones painting that we see nothing of their features other than the color of their skin and their attire. Right in the center of what seems to be a courtyard, a single white-skinned 'soldier' walks towards columned arches towards the right. He casually rests a rifle on his shoulder. This central figure is the only noticeably British body in sight and he is surrounded by brown-skinned natives, many of whom are seated on the floor or recline against the wall, conversing with each other in a reassuringly relaxed manner. Like the British soldier, the viewers gaze too veers towards the dark columned arches which lead off the canvas and into Calcutta.

Later renditions and representations of Fort William, such as "A View of Calcutta from Fort William" by S. Duburgh Davis (1807) and an Aquatint of view of Calcutta from Fort William by Matthew Dubourg (1807), adopt exactly this site and angle of observation.<sup>83</sup> These complimentary representations of Fort William corroborate much of Hodges' portrayal of Fort William by depicting the same open courtyard, view of the river and white wooden bridge leading to a columned archway. We can ascertain that many of these details were historically accurate. Yet, the distant view of Calcutta offered by these other versions do not depict the same number of 'Greek' buildings that we see in William Byrne's Etching – this contribution is almost certainly from Hodges' fantasy that Calcutta should resemble Ancient Greece.<sup>84</sup> While there is

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<sup>83</sup> Dubourg's Aquatint was produced after a watercolour by William Orme which was itself an original watercolour by Samuel Davis.

<sup>84</sup> In his 'Travels in India', Hodges offers a dramatic recount of his first view of Calcutta as follows "As the ship approaches Calcutta the river narrows; that which is called the Garden Reach, presents a view of handsome buildings, on a flat surrounded by gardens: these are villas belonging to the opulent inhabitants of Calcutta. The vessel has no sooner gained one other reach of the river than the whole city of Calcutta bursts upon the eye....The glacis and esplanade are seen in perspective, bounded by a range of beautiful

much to say about this print – between its portrayal of the British soldier, native Indians and the Calcutta skyline; it is the focus on Classical architecture, both real and imagined that, I suggest, embodies the intellectual culture of Fort William that the East India Company patronized both through landscape painting and the replication of Classical architecture. We might say that the classical architecture of Calcutta, as well as its rendering in Hodges’ landscape paintings, captures some of the *forms of ambition* that Company rule instituted as a precursor to Crown rule.

Hodges’ Calcutta ‘sky-line’ was not alone in reflecting the Classical education of its governors. In his book *Imprison’d Wranglers: The rhetorical culture of the house of commons 1760-1800*, Christopher Reid suggests that, according to his own admission, William Jones so modeled his personhood after the esteemed Roman orator and politician Cicero that Jones intellectual scholarship should be read in tandem with the former’s political conduct

In the manner of ancient ruler in Asia, particularly Cicero the governor of Cilicia, you unite the character of the statesman and the scholar... the compliment may have been more revealing of Jones preferred self-image than of his real opinion of the Acting Governor General. Jones Ciceronianism is frequent and pronounced in his early letters. Sometimes it is phrased in a manner reminiscent of an academic declamation on the choice of life ‘Do you not agree that anyone would prefer to be like Cicero (whom I shall keep before me as a model and a veritable ideal all my life and in all my studies) than like that great scholar Varro or the most profound of poets Lucretius?’<sup>85</sup>

Like Macaulay, Jones’ understanding of Roman history and politics deeply informed his views on Indian governance.<sup>86</sup> Though India was not officially integrated into the British Empire until

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and regular buildings... The general approach to the houses is by a flight of steps, with great projecting porticoes, or surrounded by colonades or arcades, which give them the appearance of Grecian temples; and indeed every house may be considered as a temple dedicated to hospitality.”  
William Hodges, *Travels in India During the Years*, 30-33

<sup>85</sup> Christopher Reid. *Imprison'd Wranglers: The Rhetorical Culture of the House of Commons, 1760-1800*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 120.

<sup>86</sup> Jones was so deeply immersed in the classical education that he even wrote a few essays in Latin and

1858 (when East India Company rule was transferred to the Crown), Jones' scholarship on 'Asiatick literature', nevertheless, set a precedent to Crown rule by demarcating the cultural boundaries of the Empire, with a pen, before they were officially secured with imperial guns. Jones wide ranging scholarship on Persian and Sanskrit literature (including his popular idea that these two languages shared a common, proto-Aryan root) not only offered information on native culture but also a *theoretical map* of the ancient cultural relations that bound Britain with its soon-to-be colony. His application of classical literary genres—most notable, the 'lyrick'—onto new territories of British governance, exemplifies how Classical emulation would *form* the basis of British Empire by, literally, providing the aesthetic formulas through which civility and historical time were calculated.

My cross-study of William Jones' and William Hodges' scholarship has sought to consider how India was promoted to British audiences and absorbed into British culture in the eighteenth-century. In this regard, the scholarship of Hodges' and Jones' both dovetail classical nostalgia with forms of the landscape imaginary: just as Hodges' discussions of world architectural forms composites the Calcutta skyline with studies of Roman Architecture, so too do William Jones' 'naturalist' historiographies install Classical poetic forms like 'epick' and 'lyrick' into the European reading of 'Asian' literature. Yet, however rosy the memory of Ancient Greece may appear in nineteenth-century British writing, its employment in the representations of India and Calcutta were undoubtedly double edged. If the impression of Classical form onto Indian territory was meant as a gesture of admiration and inclusion on the part of British thinkers like Jones and Hodges, the projection of classical poetic form as universal prototype nonetheless entailed bizarre misinformation about, and a advantageous erasure of,

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composed an oratory in imitation of Cicero', titled "Limon."



Mughal culture and civilization. While Hodges' paintings distinctly deteriorate Mughal life in their framing of and focus on ruins, it is somewhat harder to see how Jones' historiography could also be participating in the 'fetishized ruins' and "will[ed] ... collapse" of Mughal Empire.<sup>87</sup> It's important to recognize these differences in tone and quality between Jones and Hodges work; considering both their differences in craft and political associations, it is likely that the two writers often held divergent positions on issues of artistic and political principle. Nonetheless, a robust comparison between the two thinkers is fruitful; once we note how scenes of Mughal ruin complement Hodges' landscape paintings, we can better recognize how Jones' pastoral literary history contains much of the same quiet violence and, perhaps, is simply more effective at veiling it. It is only through a correction of Jones historiography that we can see the kind of ruin his treatise naively romanticized.

In many respects, the fascination with decline and decay in British Colonial representations of India are in keeping with the aesthetic of ruin that was especially fashionable in eighteenth and nineteenth-century British literature. The portrayal of fragment has, accordingly, been a productive subject of inquiry in Romantic Scholarship — Alexander Regier's *Fracture and Fragmentation in British Romanticism*, Marjorie Levinson's *Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of a Form*, Thomas McFarland's *Romanticism and the forms of Ruin*, Kathleen Wheeler's *Romanticism, Pragmatism and Deconstruction* and even Virginia Jackson's *Dickinson's Misery* are but a few examples of this strain in Romantic scholarship. In her book *Victorian Sappho*, Yopie Prins sketches the almost erotic appeal of ruin in Romantic poetry specifically through the figure of Sappho, whose status in Victorian constructions of

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<sup>87</sup> Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis Across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765-1860*, 61

‘lyric’ poetry was so monumental that, so Prins argues, popular conceptions of a ‘lyric tradition’ still betray the Victorian reception of this Greek poetess:

the reconstruction of Ancient Greek fragments attributed to Sappho contributed to the Construction of Sappho herself as the first woman poet, singing at the origin of a Western lyric tradition. . . . While Greek fragments attributed to Sappho were collected and translated from the Renaissance onward, the recovery of “new fragments” of Sappho in the course of the nineteenth-century coincided with a Romantic aesthetic of fragmentation and the rise of Classical philology culminating in the idealization of Sappho herself as the perfect fragment.<sup>88</sup>

Scouring Jones correspondences, we find that this same fantasy of ‘fragment’ deeply influenced his own poetic and scholarly process. Like many British writers of his time, Jones employed the Greek ‘fragment’ as an object of inspiration. So, while a scene of ‘ruin’ or decay may not be as overtly visible in Jones’ literary treatises, the idolization of ancient fragment was already a latent feature of his poetic criticism. We may understand why an almost archaeological impulse behind Victorian constructions of a lyric tradition served especially well for British travel writing, in which the feature of documenting ‘discovery’ was especially favored. Victorian constructions of the lyric tradition, thus, shaped the colonial appetite for Indian *ruin* and imagined ‘ruined’ colonies as spaces of literary recovery, rather than discovery.<sup>89</sup>

While Jones’ scholarship imagined the lyric as a universal form, it was in truth more effective in sketching the beginnings of a ‘lyric empire’. We may think of this as the geographic zone within which British colonial aesthetics (and particularly poetics) circulated. As the

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<sup>88</sup> Yopie Prins. *Victorian Sappho*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999), 3.

<sup>89</sup> We find this a particularly clear example of this fascination with decay in “Reflections on Viewing The Mausoleum of Sheershah, at Sasseram: In a Poetical Epistle to a Friend” By Thomas Law in *The Asiatic Miscellany*. Jones, W., Chambers, W. (1787). *The Asiatic miscellany: consisting of translations, imitations, fugitive pieces, original productions, and extracts from curious publications*. London: Re-printed for J. Wallis ; and sold by Lewis Bull, at Bath, and J. Binns, at Leeds.

lingering presence of the term ‘lyric’ in ghazal scholarship suggests, Indian poetry is still very much embedded in this literary-economy.<sup>90</sup> While the integration of Indian poetry into ‘lyric’ ideals largely depended on conceiving Asiatic literary history as a pastoral, Jones is unable to avoid completely the images of cosmopolitan splendor that Persianate poetry contained. If signs of ruin, fragmentation, and Mughal decline are fainter in Jones historiography than in Hodges’ painting, Jones translations of ghazals (which he terms lyrics) betray something of the violence, devaluation, and impoverishment that Mughal literary culture was to experience in its encounter with British colonial reading. However benevolent these British writers imagined their scholarship to be, the process of converting Persian ghazals into ‘lyrics’ was quite *devastating* for nineteenth-century Urdu writers. Before I turn to the representation of this quiet violence in Urdu writing, I’d like to offer one such example of Jones ghazal-lyric.

#### **vi. Philological Plunder: Gold for Rhetorical Flowers**

Despite Jones’ theory of the natural, almost primitive, quality of ‘Asiatic’ literature, any serious scholar of pre-modern Persian poetry knows perfectly well that the spread of both Islamicate and Persian literary tropes was the result of commercial and artistic trade: the ‘Asiatic’ literary zone that Jones seeks to understand through geography consisted of various territories of literary exchange. The centers of patronage within this literary terrain were largely within urban and semi-urban territories.<sup>91</sup> As one of the oldest and most widely practiced poetic

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<sup>90</sup> My next two chapters address the late nineteenth-century scene of Urdu writing in which writers such as Azad, Hali, Syed Ahmad Khan, and Nazir Akbarabadi were aware, quite painfully, that Urdu was now very much in an age of Anglophone supremacy. These writers sought rethink Urdu poetic practice in light of philosophical, ethical, and financial issues of literary representation when it became clear that the centers of literary power and patronage had shifted.

<sup>91</sup> Sunil Sharma’s essay “The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape” is a particularly effective in charting this cosmopolitan culture of Persian ghazal poetry in India.

form, the remarkable linguistic and geographic range of the ghazal has been the source of much scholarship, and even pride, in ‘Islamicate’ scholarship. It goes without saying, then, that the ghazal had been (and continues to be) a cosmopolitan literary genre for centuries before its encounter with European poetics. While there was no hegemonic standard across the various milieus that produced and consumed ghazal poetry, many writers were quite conscious, if not celebratory, of the vast geographic range encompassed by the ghazal’s literary empire. The following couplet begins a widely celebrated ghazal by the Persian poet Hafiz:

*Agar ān turk-i shīrāzī ba-dast ārad dil-i mā rā  
Ba-khāl-i hinduvash bakhsham Samarqand u Bukhārā rā*

That beautiful Shirazi Turk, took control and my heart stole,  
I'll give Samarkand & Bukhara, for his Hindu beauty mole.<sup>92</sup>

The full ghazal makes mention of a number of different sites, as well as a number of different ethnicities: Hafiz characterizes Zuleikha (from the Islamic and Biblical story of Yusuf Josef) as ‘the Egyptian Girl’, while Yusuf himself is simply referred to as the ‘Hebrew Boy’. It is easy enough to read the interweaving of all these various cities and ethnicities as some kind of salute to a multi-cultural readership however, the significance of each of these figures undoubtedly (perhaps exclusively) accrues interest *through* literature. The ghazal’s ability to address, cite and amass tropes from such various contexts was testament to the strength and vibrancy of the *literary tradition* more than a symptom of actual social harmony between Arabs, Turks, Indians and Persians.

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See Sunil Sharma. “The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24.2 (2004): 73–81.

<sup>92</sup> Hafiz. Trans. Selim Kuru. "Convertible Images: Adventures of Gazel in Anatolian Turkish." *India and Anatolia as Persianate Lyric Frontiers: Poetry, Power and Ethnicity Between the 12th and 17th Centuries*. 27 May 2015. Reading.

Jones' translation of this ghazal has been criticized for taking unnecessary liberties at a number of important junctures. Of particular note, Jones' translation of the beloved as a female, rather than the gender-neutral lover which the original Persian grammar connotes, has been read as indicative of the challenge that the ghazal's versification of eros posed for European readers. Stranger still is Jones' complete remake of the Beloved, a 'Turk' from Shiraz who has an enchanting Indian Beauty mole which the Ghazal's lover would gladly trade Samarkand and Bokhara for.<sup>93</sup> When Hafiz's lover offers to exchange these two cities of tremendous cultural and historic significance for the small mole of his beloved, by the logic of the classical ghazal's reading, this gesture in no way devalues Samarkand or Bokhara. The hyperbolic assertion of the Beloved's primacy is to be expected. It is Samarkand and Bokhara, instead, that acquire fame and honor in this utterly impossible and as such wholly emblematic transaction. How does one, after all, exchange cities for a mole?

Jones' offers a more concrete valuation of the two cities, no doubt in an effort to convey their significance to an audience that might not be familiar with their history. In the English translation, the trade/comparison is not between the beloved and Samarkand/Bokhara but between a 'Sweet maid' and all the 'gold' and 'gems' that the two cities contain.

SWEET maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,  
And bid these arms thy neck infold;  
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,  
Would give thy poet more delight  
Than all Bocara's vaunted gold,  
Than all the gems of Samarcand.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> In fact, "Turk", or any of the ethnicities mentioned, need not suggest an actual ethnic Turkish figure but rather connotes 'a character type' here. I thank Alexander Jabbari for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>94</sup> Hāfiz. *Hāfiz, the Prince of Persian Lyric Poets*. Trans. William Jones. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes), 1.

As the poetic currency of the ghazal (evidenced by the linguistic and ethnographic range of its vocabulary) is erased in Jones translation to be supplanted with the more universally accepted currency of gold, we might understandably see a specter of plunder already looming in Jones translation. Emily Apter's thesis of mistranslation as a kind of "diplomatic breakdown" and "a concrete particular of the art of war, crucial to strategy and tactics" is fitting reading of Jones' translation considering the destitution and impoverishment that colonial powers would impose on ghazal-reading communities.<sup>95</sup> It is, nonetheless, more helpful to note that the particular 'violence' of Jones' mistranslation is embodied by the transvaluation of the ghazal (and the ghazal's own literary 'empire') in colonial reading. What are poems, particularly poems of a foreign culture, *worth* to British readers? This is undoubtedly a question that underpinned (and fueled) Orientalist scholarship, just as it inevitably came to inform—and trouble—the Urdu literary reformation. Notwithstanding his admiration of Hafiz's "Persian Songs," Jones returns to double-edged stereotypes of the Orient in order to render 'Samarkand', and the ghazal, readable. The irony of this particular stereotype is that 'opulence', which was so condemnable to Orientalist critics of Eastern (and particularly 'Islamicate') literature, was not only a source of fantasy, but a source of income for British writers and philologists who traded in the 'richness' of Indian literature.<sup>96</sup>

Even as some of its practitioners valued the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, literary production and literary studies has always been (and continues to be) a form of commerce,

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<sup>95</sup> Emily S Apter. *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006), 15.

<sup>96</sup> The intricate and artful imagery of the classical Urdu ghazal has often been described as 'opulent' by post eighteenth-century critics. The reformist critique of Mughal and urban *ashraf* culture credits the 'sterility' and 'ineffectual' quality of premodern Urdu poetry to the decadence of feudal society. I will address the implications of this language on Urdu writing in the subsequent chapter.

business, and enterprise. Just so, Jones sought to convince British readers of the worth and value of Indian literature by outlining British *interest* both as intellectual intrigue and as potential profit from British investment:

if the principal writings of the Asiaticks, which are repositied in our publick libraries, were printed with the usual advantage of notes and illustrations, and if the languages of the Eastern nations were studied in our places of education, ... we should have a more extensive insight into the history of the human mind, we should be furnished with a new set of images and similitudes, and a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light, which future scholars might explain, and future poets might imitate.<sup>97</sup>

Jones presents ‘Asiatick’ literature as a commercial opportunity, a new territory for British literary expertise and a kind of intellectual import. Saree Makdisi articulates this quality of Jones scholarship quite lucidly in *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*:

For Jones's Orient .. contained vast intellectual treasures, knowledge of which could, in his view, be "exchanged" for European ideas and scientific concepts. ... What Jones proposed to do, through the agency of his Asiatick Society of Calcutta, ... was to establish an intellectual analogue to the extraction of material wealth from the Orient, and from India in particular, in the discovery and then the translation and circulation, not only of European knowledge about the East, but above all of the indigenous cultural, literary, artistic, and scientific productions of the Orient "itself."<sup>98</sup>

Perhaps the more ‘valuable’ outcome of studying ‘Asiatick’ literature, for Jones’ own professional work and political affiliation, was the insight it gave into the best practices for governing India through law and administrative policy.<sup>99</sup> As both Gauri Viswanathan and

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<sup>97</sup> William, *Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues*, 85

<sup>98</sup> Saree Makdisi. *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge UP, 1998), 106-107.

<sup>99</sup> Jones devoted much of his scholarship to learning about local Indian legal culture as it was always his belief that India should be governed by Indian laws. Some publications on this topic include *Mohammedan Law of Succession to Property of Intestates* (1792), *Mohammedan Law of Inheritance* (1792) and, *Institutes of Hindu Law*, or *The Ordinances of Manu* (1794).

Makdisi suggest, this employment of Indian learning for colonial control sought “to contain the threat of otherness not by transforming it but by reproducing it in a controlled system”.<sup>100</sup> The proper application of Indian knowledge—i.e. the integration of Indian culture, custom and law into colonial law—could withhold Indian rebellion by disarming the need for it “from within.”<sup>101</sup>

Notwithstanding the role that Jones scholarship played in colonial subjugation, he was still one of the few colonialist writers to champion Indian customs and to truly mourn the harsh treatment of its natives.<sup>102</sup> Compared to subsequent colonial administrators and commentators, such as James Mill and Thomas Macaulay, who were quite assured of the inferiority of Indian culture, Jones was undoubtedly an admirer and ‘well-wisher’ of India. Makdisi is careful to note the variances between these different players and different phases of colonial enterprise. He suggests that the difference between Jones and Burke, who romanticized India, and Mills, who

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<sup>100</sup> Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism*, 107

<sup>101</sup> It should be noted that in both Jones’ writing and Burke’s argument in the trial against Warren Hastings, this reason for governing India by its ancient ‘natural law’ is portrayed as an issue of morality rather than as a strategy of control.

<sup>102</sup> Jones believed so fervently in the moral right of Indians to be governed by Indian laws that he prepared to write a heroick poem about the founding of Britain, *Britain Discovered*, in which he would portray this issue. While Jones did not begin to write this poem before he died, a detailed outline of the story, and its influences, survives. In the poem, Hindu deities initially play an adversarial role against the poem’s Hero, Tyrian. In book ii, Jones intended to portray Hindu Gods convening on Mount Cailas, where the goddess Ganga would warn other gods of the cruelty that later generations of Britons would inflict upon India. Jones writes, “The goddess Ganga announces the views and voyage of the Tyrian hero; expresses her apprehensions of his ultimate success, but advises the most vehement opposition. to him; declaring, that his victory will prove the origin of a wonderful nation, who will possess themselves of her banks, profane her waters, mock the temples of the Indian divinities, appropriate the wealth of their adorers, introduce new laws, a new religion, a new government, insult the Brahmens, and disregard the sacred ordinances of Brahma”. Once the hero is successful in his endeavor and marries ‘Albion’, a presiding Druid, that had guided Tyrian through much of the poem, “recommends the government of the Indians by their own laws.”

J. Shore Teignmouth. *Memoirs of the life, writings and correspondence, of Sir William Jones*. 6th ed. (London: Printed for J. Hatchard, 1815), 484-487.



was unreservedly disdainful of Indian culture and philosophy, is not so much oppositional as dialectical; the former in some ways prepare the grounds for the latter.

If Jones' employment of philology and literary pursuits as an "intellectual analogue to the extraction of material wealth" seems innocuous in comparison to attitudes that Macauley and Mills would soon demonstrate, one wonders if this was not simply a more effective and sophisticated execution of colonial ambition. Perhaps Jones' was so convinced by his own admiration for India, that he failed to notice the damage that this admiration produced: his contortion of 'Asiatick' literary history into a pastoral narrative is primary example of such moments in his scholarship. In what was arguably one of his most popular and successful works of original poetry, "Damsels of Cardigan," Jones, again, betrays the violent consequences of his scholarship that is, otherwise, so well veiled. The poem reads like a song, an instrumental feature for the poem's nostalgic remembrance of Wales. In fact, this poem was so successful in romanticizing Welsh country-life that, in 1809, Beethoven used the poem for the libretto of a *Walisische Lieder* (Welsh folksong) in his collection of Welsh, Irish, and Scottish folksong arrangements.<sup>103</sup> The verses in this song try to celebrate various forms of success and contentment ("prospects ... odors... Muses... friendship... learning... honors) but the chorus returns, always, with the single-minded and love-sick line "Come, smile, damsels of Cardigan;/ *Love* can alone make it blissful to live". While the following verse from Jones' original poem is absent from Beethoven's lied, it is simply too revelatory to be missed in this study:

Admit that our labors were crowned with full measure,  
And gold were the fruit of rhetorical flowers,  
That India supplied us with long-hoarded treasure,  
That Dinevor, Slebeck, and Coidsmore were ours;

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<sup>103</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven. "The Damsels of Cardigan", WoO. 155 (26 *Walisische Lieder*) no. 16 (1809-10).

Yet weak is our vaunt while something we want  
More sweet than the pleasure that riches can give:  
Come, smile, damsels of Cardigan;  
Love can alone make it blissful to live.<sup>104</sup>

In Jones poem, India ‘supplies’ her long hoarded treasure so quietly and easily to the Welsh émigré that it almost appears as a voluntary gifting. We know, of course, that this wasn’t the case. We know that Fort William was attacked by the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj ud Daula, in 1756 and that the East India Company went to cruel lengths to extract taxes from regions in Bengal and that, quite soon, political-life in London would be transfixed by the trail of Warren Hastings precisely for these brutal policies of the East India Company. And yet, the labor that is “crowned full measure” and which bears the “fruit” of “gold” resembles that of a writer. After all, who else produces and trades in “rhetorical flowers” if not for the colonial philologist himself.

### **vii. At the Edge of an Anglophone Empire**

For all his championing of Asiatick literature, Jones’ writing often resembled a defense and operated within long tradition of ‘defenses’ (and defensiveness) in poetry studies that goes back to Aristotle. Contrary to the posture of vulnerability that these defense may appear to perform, such ‘apologetics’ were written within a context of poetry’s rising importance, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century.<sup>105</sup> Jones avid argument for the benefits of Asiatick literature foreshadows the ‘language debates’ that would convene between Anglicist and Orientalist factions several years later. Gauri Viswanathan covers this period of literary factionalism

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<sup>104</sup> William Jones. Ed. Teignmouth, J. Shore. (1815). *Memoirs of the life, writings and correspondence, of Sir William Jones*. 6th ed. London: Printed for J. Hatchard.

<sup>105</sup> Virginia Jackson. “American Poetry in Public”. Barbara L. Packer Lectures. April, 2015.

brilliantly in her book *Masks of Conquest*.<sup>106</sup> As the language debates around colonial education reveal, literary education became the very corner-stone of a debate that was, not simply, about governance and morality, but the *business* of empire too. Macaulay's infamous program for the cultivation of a *class* of Indians that might aid and abet in the bureaucratic colonial governance as civil servants was, in some respects, a strategy of managing and maximizing the potential of Indian labor. Of course, Macaulay framed his advocacy of 'English education' for Indians as a policy designed with the best interest of Indians in mind. As the age of a global Anglophone ascendancy was already evident, English was to be the doorway through which Indians would enter the World-stage. The contemporary climate of global politics only proves Macaulay right. The next two chapters examine the portrayal of Anglophone ascendancy in Urdu writing as an issue of both patronage and genuine political possibility. For if the translation of ghazal to lyric in Jones writing (and in ghazal studies subsequently) was about legitimatizing the British empire through producing a shared linguistic-literary history between the empire and its colony, Urdu litterateurs participated in this new poetic discourse not simply out of the need to survive in a new economy of British patronage, but also out of the ambition to wield poetry as a social tool—and even a weapon—as the British themselves had done.

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<sup>106</sup> Gauri Viswanathan. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1989),

**Its Garden is the Landscape of Nature:  
Naichral shā'iri and the Reorientation of Poetic Perspective**

“Wherever I wander, my steps take me back into the circle  
How has this [compass-like] circular movement come to my feet?”<sup>107</sup>

“...in history, as in law, we must not follow streams, when we may investigate fountains”<sup>108</sup>

**i. From Circles to Streams**

Even eighty years after his death, William Jones’ scholarship was still resounding on matters of Indian culture and Indian governance within British public opinion. His writings on Hindu and Mohammedan law, in particular, came to inform a central dilemma of nineteenth-century British political thought: its relationship and duties towards its colonies. Jones’ scholarship is not without detractors, however. In fact, as Saree Makdisi argues in *Romantic Imperialism*, a later generation of British historians and administrators was particularly critical of the exceptionalism Jones’ attributed to Indian civilization. Though Jones scholarship paved the way for this latter phase of colonial orientalism, Makdisi nonetheless notes “a fundamental political and epistemic shift from an Enlightenment ‘discourse’ of otherness to a more properly modern and evolutionary one: a rupture symbolically marked by the contrast between, on the one hand, Burke and Jones, and, on the other hand, Mill and Macaulay (read as exemplary figures).”<sup>109</sup>

Jones remains relevant to the nineteenth-century discussion of Indian rule, though not in

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<sup>107</sup> Shaikh Imam Bakhsh Nasikh, as quoted in Muhammad Husain Azad. *Āb-e Hayāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*. Trans. Frances W. Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi. (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 231.

<sup>108</sup> Excerpted from William Jones ‘On Asiatick History’ in Javed Majeed. *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s The History of British India and Orientalism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 37.

<sup>109</sup> Saree Makdisi. *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 117

the manner he intended but as “residual afterglows”. In more literary respects, I contend that although Jones scholarship gets reinterpreted and reshaped, its influence is more than just an afterglow. In particular, Jones’ mode of translating literary difference through the lens of ‘nature’ was highly influential to succeeding nineteenth-century trends of depicting of ‘nature’ as the authentic origin point from where local knowledge and culture was to be found. As Javed Majeed notes in *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism*, the practices and theories of translation that underpin Jones’ lexicographic and philological scholarship were also quietly conversant with more ‘administrative’ concerns.<sup>110</sup>

Jones expressed again and again the need to learn Sanskrit in order to curb the legal power of pandits and maulvis. His main purpose was to undermine what he perceived to be the legal authority of the sacerdotal classes of Bengal. British power could only be safely secured in the administration of justice if the power of the pandits and maulvis was curbed. ... So for Jones, the apparent monopoly of a form of indigenous knowledge by certain classes could only be broken through translation<sup>111</sup>

If Jones’ observations on the role played by “pandits and maulvis” in the “administration of justice” portrays the native scholars more as obstacles than as intermediaries, such a characterization of elite culture is complicated by the fact that Jones, nonetheless, focused on the languages and literary *texts* that were the domain of these “sacerdotal classes”. Starting with the work of John Gilchrist in early nineteenth-century, the preference of Indian linguists and philologists had already shifted heavily towards the study of vernacular language. As I will further sketch in the third chapter, this shift was largely motivated by a utilitarian demand to

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<sup>110</sup> Javed Majeed’s *Ungoverned Imaginings*, which traces the refraction of Jones scholarship in Mill’s *History*, is an invaluable source for scholars interested in the eighteenth-nineteenth debates around utility and imagination.

<sup>111</sup> Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed. *Hali’s Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*. (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) SOAS South Asian Texts, 20.

extract the knowledge of vernacular language and local custom necessary for effective administration and governance. In this way, it was a revised application of Jones' recommendation that "in history, as in law, we must not follow streams, when we may investigate fountains." Majeed explains this allegory as follows:

Thus, the imagery of springs and fountains in the hymns to Hindu deities points to Jones' own desire to tap the sources of a pure 'orient knowledge', both to undermine the authority of the sacerdotal classes and to redefine the ancient constitution of India which he believed had been fragmented and dispersed for centuries.<sup>112</sup>

Majeed's analysis suggests (and I agree) that Jones' allegory of streams and fountains is not simply a passing metaphor: it discloses the paradigms through which Jones conceived of pure and corrupted knowledge. The literate classes (maulvīs and pandits) can offer Jones knowledge of culture at the 'downstream' point within the stream. Jones' prefers to set in search for the ancient 'fountain', where the steam originate and the water is unadulterated. This allegory embodies the *paradigm* of nature that inflects Jones criticism on 'Asiatick' literature and which, by the late nineteenth-century, also inflected how Urdu reformists considered their own literary heritage. I am referring here in particular to the poems, poetic criticism, and historiographies produced by the *naichral shā'irī* (natural poetry) critics. Broadly speaking, the *naichral shā'irī* movement largely refers to the work of three figures: Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Altaf Hussain Hali, and Muhammad Hussain Azad. As it is (largely) through the collaboration and interactions with British colonialists and institutions that these intellectuals received and disseminated ideas about 'nature', we may also expand our analysis of this movement to the colonial institutions and administrators that supported them. For the purpose of this chapter, my main objects of analysis will be the writings of Azad and Hali, both of whom employ the conception 'nature' as a strategy of *return* to authentic expression— thus, abandoning the running river of current literary practice

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 38

in search of the original “fountain”.

## ii. *Naichral shāi'ri* : Natural Poetry

The Urdu poetic reform movement of the late nineteenth-century is a difficult moment to characterize. In some accounts, the chief architects of this movement appear as committed and well-intentioned contributors to the dilemmas of their age and in others they are little short of appearing as native informants. No doubt, their coordination with British administrators and reception of British aesthetic trends gave fuel to critics, many of whom did interpreted this collaboration as motivated by opportunism and/or intellectual desperation. For example, the influence of British writing is visible in Altaf Hussain Hali's *Muqaddamah-e Shi'r o shā'irī* (*Introduction to Poetry and Poetics*), where he describes the ‘natural’ style of writing as *sādah* (simple), *aslīyat par mabnī* (founded on truth ) and *josh se bhara hua* (filled with passion)—terms which numerous Urdu critics suggest must have been borrowed from John Milton's qualification of poetry as simple, sensuous, and passionate.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Muhammad Hussain Azad's tazkirah, *Āb-e Hayāt* (*Water of Life*), begins with reference to new scholarly insights gleaned from “the European scholars, who track down the source of everything even to the depths of the underworld”.<sup>114</sup> Finally, the very public figure Syed Ahmad Khan, who founded the Aligarh School (Anglo-Oriental College for Muslims) and projected himself as a representative of Muslim concerns, also articulated his efforts towards cultural reform in terms

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<sup>113</sup> It should be noted that in Milton letters where this phrase appears, Milton uses these qualities to describe poetry in comparison to ‘logic’ and ‘rhetoric’ (rather than poetry in general). Frances Pritchett offers a detailed analysis of Hali's use of this phrase in the chapter “Light from English Lanterns” in *Nets of Awareness* and suggests that it is clear Hali is paraphrasing Macauley's citation of Milton. See Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, 148.

<sup>114</sup> Muhammad Husain Azad. *Āb-e Hāyāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*. Translated by Frances W. Pritchett, and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 58

that echo the much-vilified dictum by Thomas Macaulay which I discussed in the previous chapter.

The aim of the [Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental] college was to form a class of persons, Muhammadan in religion, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, and in intellect.<sup>115</sup>

There is already a wealth of scholarship that attempts to sketch and understand the *naichral shā'irī* movement's position between the British colonial powers that employed them and their allegiances to Indo-Persian culture, which they sought to renegotiate in the wake of Mughal decline. Inarguably, one of the most important studies of this period is France's Pritchett's seminal study *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*, which presents a compelling portrait of the *naichral shā'irī* movement through the examination of the literary and cultural reform that these litterateurs advocated.<sup>116</sup> While Pritchett certainly considers what these writers might have meant by their use of the term 'nēčar', this does not become the overwhelming concern of the book.<sup>117</sup> Valerie Ritter's study *Kama's Flowers: Nature in Hindi Poetry and Criticism, 1885-1925* takes a more concentrated approach in this regard. While Pritchett underlines the influence of Victorian sensibilities and British romanticism in nineteenth-century Urdu reform, Ritter describes this same intellectual moment as a kind of landscape poetics.<sup>118</sup> I will expand on the ideas offered by Pritchett and Ritter by *further* analyzing the employment of *nēčar* in

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<sup>115</sup> Excerpted from David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 207.

This statement echoes Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education."

<sup>116</sup> Frances W Pritchett. *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*. (New Delhi: Katha Books, 2004), 132, 147- 48, 166- 67.

<sup>117</sup> In some respects, this is because Pritchett refuses to get fixated with the term, nature, itself. Instead, her approach to the reformist movement is to identify the central tenants of this body of scholarship both through, and against, the terms these scholars used. The semantics of nature is thus only one facet of her research and appears somewhat understated in comparison to the argument furthered by Valerie Ritter.

<sup>118</sup> Ritter, Valerie. *Kāma's Flowers: Nature in Hindi Poetry and Criticism, 1885-1925*. (Albany, N.Y.; Bristol: SUNY Press; 2012), 39.



the *naichral shā'irī* movement.

Overall, there's little doubt that the discussion of *nēčar* in nineteenth-century Urdu criticism borrowed from European, particular British, literary and aesthetic trends. Yet, when we try to map the *naichral shā'irī* movement to specific British equivalents, the matter is complicated by the wholly *translated* nature of this intellectual atmosphere.<sup>119</sup> Hali, for example, was not fully versed in English, yet 'nature' is still heavily contemplated and operational in his work and it is clear from the many references to English literature in *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics* that he was nonetheless actively partaking in British intellectual culture.<sup>120</sup> So what did these scholars mean by the term *nēčar*? Why was it preferable (or simply distinctive) to concepts already available in Urdu such as *fīrat* (human nature) and *qudrat* (cosmos)? And what *effect* does their use of the term produce in contemporary scholarship? In this chapter, I will elaborate how, on a formal level, one of the primary valences of *nēčar* in reformist writing is that it carries a redemptive and, as such, historiographic logic: In fact, the *naichral shā'irī* critics were far more effective and successful in producing forms of literary criticism, and particularly *literary history*, than in poetry, per se. For instance, when these writers participated in a series of poetry recitals (*mushā'irah*) organized by the Company Director of Public Instruction in Lahore (Colonel William Rice Moreland Holroyd) and the Principal of Government College, Lahore (Dr. Gottlieb

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<sup>119</sup> M. Asaduddin uses the term "translated sensibility" when describing the advocates of '*nai roshnī*' (new light), I find this description to be perfectly apt and, so, have borrowed it.

See M. Asaduddin. "The West in the Nineteenth-Century Imagination: Some Reflections on the Transition from a Persianate Knowledge System To the Template of Urdu and English". *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, 52

<sup>120</sup> See Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, 145-154.

In his article "Urdu Vernacular in Punjab", Tahir Kamran also suggests "Hence, it was his quest for employment which led Hali to Lahore and he took up a job with Punjab Government Book Depot as Assistant Translator. His assignment was to go over the translated works from English and to edit them and check them for mistakes. That was where Hali acquired "a general feeling for English literature, and somehow or other my admiration for Eastern - and above all Persian literature - began gradually to diminish."

Tahir Kamran. "Urdu Migrant Literati and Lahore's Culture." *Journal of Punjab Studies* 19.2 (2012), 184

Wilhelm Leitner) through the *Anjuman-e Punjab* along more ‘natural’ themes , the results of this literary experiment were apparently disappointing.<sup>121</sup> In some respects, the kind of literary reform that the *naichral shā’irī* advocated was most contrary to the genres of poetry that their criticism targeted, the ghazal. While other forms of Persianate writing, such as the tazkirah (poetic anthology) and *mussadas* (an epic poem in which each stanza contains six half-verses) that I will analyze in this chapter, were far more adaptable and appropriate for the functions of literary representation that they were pursuing. Thus, even though *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* is not a ghazal, my subsequent reading of the poem contextualizes its revolutionary impact as one iteration in a broader effort to transform Urdu poetic practice *through* reengineering and reorganizing the ghazal, both as a form and in terms of its role in the wider literary order.

### iii. The Teleology of Nature: From Poetry to Literary History

Arguably the most poetically inclined of the Aligarh reformists, Altaf Hussain Hali was author to two of the central texts that Urdu scholars turn to repeatedly in their examination of modern Urdu poetry, *The Flow and Ebb of Islam (Mussadas-e Madd o Jazar, 1879)* and *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics (Muqaddamah-e shi ‘r o shairī, 1893)*. Hali also wrote and recited poems on nature at the (in)famous, *Anjuman-e Punjab* poetry recitals (*mushā’irah*) held in Lahore.<sup>122</sup> In her thorough biography of the scholar and his most famous works, Laura Steele

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<sup>121</sup> Tahir Kamran. “Urdu Migrant Literati and Lahore’s Culture.” 173-192

<sup>122</sup> Tahir Kamran describes Hali’s participation in the Lahore Mushairas as follows, “During four years of his stay at Lahore, Hali participated in four Mushairas and recited his poems, which were in masnavi form. The themes of his poems were Barkha Rut (The Rainy Season), Nashat-i Ummid (Pleasures of Hope), Hubb-i Watan (Patriotism) and Munazara-i Rahm-o-Insaf (Dialogue between Clemency and Justice). Hali’s poems were extolled and he was eulogized as “the only glory of these gatherings.” In one of the Mushairas, when he presented his poem on hub-i watan (patriotism), people in attendance listened to Hali ‘all ears’. In these Mushairas, Hali seemed to have eclipsed Azad. The latter’s poetry was found wanting and in need of islah or ‘correction’. Hali’s stealing the limelight did not sit well with Azad, which

suggests that to understand Hali's scholarship, his position within the *naichral shā'irī* circle and within this scene of Urdu writing, we must understand Hali's relationship to tradition itself.

Steele's portrait of Hali is both thorough and compelling: Hali was born to a respected, genteel family in Panipat, 1837. His education and training in letters followed the traditional route taken by young men from genteel Muslim families until it was compromised when Hali was orphaned at an early age and left in the care of elder siblings. When his elder siblings arranged his marriage, Hali felt keenly that his education would suffer if he complied. Unable to negotiate such constrictions of conservative family life, Hali ran away to Delhi in 1854, at age seventeen, with little material comfort or support. Steele portrays this episode as an escape from 'provincial' Panipat to the 'big, modern city':

Then Altaf Husain took the only action that was available to him in an environment in which direct confrontation was dangerously divisive: he ran away. Delhi was his goal as a center of learning and as now the psychological focal point of Islamic India. The time was 1854, and the city had its poetic assemblies and princes; the aristocrats of the eclipsed Mughal empire maintained a cultural life rooted in political sand. It was a city that had the power to attract hopeful provincials. For Altaf Husain, forsaking his family for Delhi was a fateful decision.<sup>123</sup>

It was in these first years in Delhi, perhaps inspired by the climate in Delhi, that Hali changes his *taḵhallus* (nom de plume) from to *ḵhastah* (wounded) to *Hālī or* (modern). It's also in this phase that Hali met with the renowned classical poet Mirza Ghalib. The impact of this encounter was significant enough that he later penned a moving biography of the poet, *Yādgār-e Ghalib*. Still, Hali suggests the mentorship he received from the poet Nawab Mustafā Khan Shefta was, in ways, more profound and formative. Hali served as the tutor to Shefta's children from 1861 until

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resulted in some misgivings between the two. Mercifully, the relationship did not deteriorate to an extent of a complete alienation."

Tahir Kamran. "Urdu Migrant Literati and Lahore's Culture", 184

<sup>123</sup> Laurel Steele. "Hali and His Muqaddamah in the Creation of a Literary Attitude in Nineteenth-century India." *Annual of Urdu Studies*. Vol. 1 (1981)

the death of his patron in 1869. During this relationship, Shefta had meaningful influence on Hali's own budding style and taste in poetry. Indeed, much of the rhetoric surrounding simplicity and straightforwardness—which later becomes a mainstay of Hali's criticism—can possibly be attributed to the tutelage of Shefta, whom Hali notes was fond of clarity.<sup>124</sup> Steele writes:

this stance of Shefta's becomes more significant when it is viewed together with Hali's future work and ideas. Hali himself asserts that "His thought affected me and gradually I developed a taste for poetry that eschewed exaggeration." He goes on to say, "in fact, I did not find that the advice of Ghalib was as useful as that beneficial advice I got from conversation with the late Nawab Sahib."<sup>125</sup>

Hali has, of course, famously praised and demonstrated an inclination towards simplicity and lucidity in his own poetry and poetic criticism. In fact, his writing and its reception suggest that the relationship between poetic tradition and simplicity was one of his central concerns. Though Steele notes that "Shefta's support of directness and simplicity [was] no veering away from the tradition [and that] many Urdu poets have expressed their preference for simplicity," the poetic commentary and historiography produced by the *naichral shā'irī* critics betrays an anxiety around this very juncture.<sup>126</sup> Both of Hali's most canonic texts—his formidable essay *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics (Muqaddamah-e Shi'r-o Shā'irī)* and *The Flow and Ebb of Islam (Mussadass-e Madd-o Jazr-e Islam)*—grapple with the role of clarity in poetic representation.<sup>127</sup> In some respects, *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics* is a richer source for analyzing Hali's ideas regarding literary simplicity: it covers a wide range of topics related to

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8

<sup>127</sup> Hali's masnavi for children, *Rotī kyūñkar muyassar ātī hai* (How do we get our Roti), for example, is a particularly sweet example and in choosing such a pedestrian object as its theme (bread), Hali really 'follows through' on the valuation of 'everyday' life in ways that Azad doesn't.

poetics and is more forthright when offering an argument. Beyond its content, *Introduction* is also fascinating in its stylistic and structural qualities. As Steele notes, despite all its arguments towards productive poetry, *Introduction* still retains the ‘ghazal-like’ structure that was particularly problematic for the reformists.

the book appears unfocused and disunified, besides being simply repetitive. Hali never synthesizes nor organizes his statements with a view to their overall progression; at the same time, the loose, three-section structure allows him to contradict himself and change his approaches to the problems as he moves along. In its disregard for progressive argument, and lack of central unity, the Muqaddamah curiously resembles a gazal in nature.<sup>128</sup>

In comparison, *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* is somewhat less intriguing; indeed, it feels *tame* in contrast to the contradictory and argumentative *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics*. *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* offers a distinctively organized and easy to follow ‘history’ of the origins of Islam and its trajectory up to the present day of Hali’s writing. This history is, itself, a kind of argument. Yet, in comparison to the structure-less, ghazal-like *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics*, the narrative of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* is much more pointed, focused, and ‘unified’. Indeed, the very orchestration of ‘Islamic history’ into a singular subject is what allows this effect of ‘unity’. Thus, although the reform that Hali advocated was in large part addressed towards an entire literary culture in which the ghazal was dominant, the asymmetries between his two main texts illuminate the complexities and challenges of such a modernist program. While *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* and *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics* are both recognizably prescriptive, the former employs a blatantly programmatic posture available to essayistic genres while the latter still inflects its instruction through the ‘garb’ of poetry. The genre (or *sinf-e sukħhan*) of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* is actually quite apt for the aims that Hali theorizes in *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics*. The *mussadas* has a rich precedence in the *marsiyyā* tradition

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 18

which, as I will demonstrate, is also particularly inclined towards returning to a moment of origin or, as Jones may have imagined it, the fountain.

As Shackle and Majeed elucidate in their analytical introduction to the 1992 translation of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, the *mussadas* form is mostly employed in *marṣiyā*, “the distinctively Indian type of strophic elegy lamenting the epic suffering of Imam Husain and his companions at the battle of Kerbela.”<sup>129</sup> Notwithstanding the employment of this established form, Hali’s *mussadas* is so strikingly unorthodox in its style and organization that his amendments from the first to the second edition of the poem sought “to diminish something of [the first edition’s] challenging modernity by shifting the *mussaddas* back towards more comfortably familiar poetic territory.”<sup>130</sup> One of the key features of the *mussadas*, which Shackle and Majeed bring to our consideration, is the typographic and spatial organization of the first edition which is,

markedly dissimilar from the dense form that derives from traditional manuscript practices ... Hali's musaddas stanzas [is] in neatly ruled boxes with uniform amounts of space around them, [and also has]... subject headings carefully indicated vertically in the outer margins and numbered footnotes relegated to well-disciplined boxes below. The small size and preciseness of the layout...are less suggestive of those common in contemporary printed books of poetry than those typical of works of popular devotion. But it really resembles nothing so much as an Urdu textbook in the new Victorian style—unassuming, disciplined, and prosy.<sup>131</sup>

What is salient about Hali’s stylistic and organizational choices is the emphasis he places on form and formality. For example, in *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics*, Hali presents naichral poetry as poetry that demonstrates simplicity, clarity, and usefulness; it is these very ideals which

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<sup>129</sup> Shackle and Majeed, citing Muhammad Sadiq. *A History of Urdu Literature*. (1984: 145-63)”, 8

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9

Hali exercised in *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* through his choice of diction, the physical lay-out of the text, and, of course, the choice of genre itself. While the *naichral shā'irī* reformers criticized the ghazal as an embodiment of the worst excesses of a degenerate poetic tradition, they viewed forms like the *naẓm* more favorably, in part, for its ability to streamline poetic utterance into a discernable, teleological narrative.<sup>132</sup> This *organizational aspect* of narrative, that *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* affords, is an improvement from the ghazals seeming discontinuity, or rather 'unproductive' unity.

The ghazal, of course, is not a 'discontinuous' poetic form. In fact, as Frances Pritchett has suggested, it might be more accurate to treat each individual unit of *she'r* (couplet) as a poem and understand the ghazal as a method of 'storing' and organizing multiple poems or *ash'ār* (couplets). The consumption and appreciation of ghazals often takes place through the citation of an individual couplet (*she'r*) rather than a full ghazal – this is usually the case when a couplet is recalled to emphasize, comment on, or punctuate a specific moment<sup>133</sup> However, in many other contexts, especially poetic recitals (*musha'irah*), the ghazal is appreciated in its 'fuller' capacity; in these cases, its 'continuity' hinges on formal features other than narration. The ghazal is composed of a series of couplets (*ash'ār*), each ending with the same *qāfiya* and *radīf*, the combination of which has often been described as a refrain. Although the individual *ash'ār* of a ghazal do not typically refer to each other and can be examined individually, the shared *qāfiya-*

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<sup>132</sup> The Lahore *mushā'irahs*, which I have already mentioned, are a good example of this aspect of the poetic reform since poets were invited to recite poems that addressed particular subjects and thus most poets, like Hali, recited *naẓms*.

<sup>133</sup> We may think, for example, of how themes of poetry are injected into letters, biographies, historiographies, or even everyday experiences, in a citational manner.

*radīf* creates a centripetal force between them.<sup>134</sup> The meter (*bahr*) of the ghazal is another unifying aspect. Lastly, and perhaps most conspicuously, the constellation of metaphors and themes that are conventional to ghazal poetics also provide coherence to this form.<sup>135</sup> This quality of ‘formal’ or ‘technical’, rather than narrative, organization is key to the mechanics of ghazal performance and reception.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, we can be sure that in the pre-print and, thus, primarily oral contexts in which the ghazal thrived, these organizational methods would have been especially effective not only as mechanisms of entertainment, but as tactics of memorization. In short, the many forms of continuity demonstrated in the ghazal can hardly be read as ‘lack’. What we may notice, instead, is how the ghazal’s formal continuity does not accumulate meaning the way that narrative does: ghazal practice depends on the repetition and refinement of conventionalized images and metaphors.

It seems that Hali read this combination of rehearsed, conventionalized tropes, and lack

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<sup>134</sup> The ghazal has often been described as a string of pearls or gems since each couplet can be thought of as an individual pearl and yet, strung together with a *qāfiya-radīf*, the ghazal is also admirable as a necklace. For a detailed analysis see, Frances Pritchett. “Orient Pearls Unstrung: The Quest for Unity in the Ghazal.” *Edebiyāt*. 4 (1993): 119–135.

<sup>135</sup> Frances Pritchett gives a thorough and detailed account of *ma ‘nī āfirīnī* (meaning creation) and *mazmun āfirīnī* (metaphor creation) in chapter eight of *Nets of Awareness*. I am only gesturing to this poetic practice as it would be a major digression from the purpose of this chapter to try and explain these terms in full.

<sup>136</sup> Especially in poetic recitations the *qāfiyā/radīf* is a primary mechanism of reception. Since the audience can expect every couplet to end with the same refrain, experienced audiences often anticipate the second line, or *misra*, before it has been read out. This interaction between the poet/reciter and the audience is well appreciated and, in fact, primary to the experience of ghazal recitals. Consequently, it is common practice for ghazal reciters to read the first line of a *she ‘r* (couplet) and then pause, allowing the audience to mull over the first *misrā*. It is during this short recess that audience members try to guess the second *misrā*, based on the meter and *radīf* of the ghazal. The first *misrā* is then read again, followed by the second *misrā* and the audience can finally see the relationship between the first and second line, which they may or may not have already guessed. This anticipation is central to the pleasure of poetry readings. In addition to the *radīf*, the *bahr* (meter) of a poem also allows audiences to preempt the ending phrases of a *she ‘r* based on the syllables that can be expected. As such, the meter (or *bahr*) is not only important to the musicality of the ghazal but also acts as a unifier between *ash ‘ār*, making the ‘guessing game’ of the mushaira for both composers and listeners yet more intricate and precise.



of narrative trajectory as a repetitive, disorganized, and unpurposeful writing. As such, Hali's introduction to *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* portrays the writers experiment with the new style of writing as an 'awakening' from the pointless poetics of the ghazal and a shift towards more 'natural' writing. The poet confesses that he has been "going round in circles to no point or profit," and further ridicules Urdu poetry's dependence on repetition and reiteration by caricaturizing its themes as exaggerated and tired.<sup>137</sup> He writes,

Falling martyr again and again to the eyebrows' sword, I was again and again revived by a kick, as if life were a garment which could be taken off and put on at will. I had frequently traversed the plain of the day of resurrection, and often made visits to heaven and to hell. When it came to wine-drinking, I would quaff flagon upon flagon, and yet remain unsated<sup>138</sup>

If the introduction of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* presents itself as a moment of realization, it is telling that this moment is encapsulated as a shift from going "blindly round and round" in circles to looking ahead towards the vista in front of him. This shift in perspective seems to embody a larger shift in disposition from an individual that lives inside his own head to one who is engaged with, and driven outwards into, the physical world he inhabits.

From the age of twenty until my fortieth year I went on blindly round and round in the same circle, like the proverbial oilman's bullock, but I imagined that I had traversed the entire world. When my eyes opened, I realized that I was still exactly where I had started from... When I looked up, I saw a broad plain stretching all around me, with open roads leading in all directions, imposing no restrictions on the imagination.<sup>139</sup>

I argue that this self-conscious shifting of the authorial gaze from the 'imagined' world towards the "broad plain stretching" around him, must be understood as a defining moment of Hali's

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<sup>137</sup> Hali. *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, 91

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 89

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 91

landscape aesthetic. While landscape' is most often conceived of as a particular view or natural scene, W. J. T. Mitchell's essay, "Imperial Landscape" argues that 'landscape' should be understood beyond simply "fixed genres (sublime, beautiful, picturesque, pastoral) [and/or] fixed media (literature, painting, photography)" and instead recognized as, "a medium ... a focus for the formation of identity."<sup>140</sup> As numerous eighteenth and nineteenth-century examples, including *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, demonstrate, commentators of the landscape aesthetic go beyond simply advocating a specific style of representing nature and, instead, offer valorizations of a 'naturalistic' style that is, in fact, often portrayed as a non-style. This remove from 'artifice' is often perceived as a transcendence from literary convention altogether and a return to 'authentic expression':

Thus, the history of landscape painting is often described as a quest, not just for pure, transparent representation of nature, but as a quest for pure painting, freed of literary concerns and representation. ... The desire for this certificate of the Real is clearest in the rhetoric of scientific, topographical illustration, with its craving for pure objectivity and transparency and the suppression of aesthetic signs of "style" or "genre." But even the most highly formulaic, conventional, and stylized landscapes tend to represent themselves as "true" to some sort of nature, to universal structures of "Ideal" nature.<sup>141</sup>

Mitchell's dislocation of 'landscape' from the specificities of visual mediums helps in revealing how "narrative typologies such as the pastoral, the georgic, the exotic, the sublime, and the picturesque" operate in literature and, particularly, literary histories.<sup>142</sup> Hali's *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, for example, portrays his realization of the cultural malady that ghazal writing embodied as a viewing of the landscape around him. Moreover, such a gaze enables the opportunity for 'forward motion'. Such a posture of 'progression' and direction is, in fact, quite

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<sup>140</sup> Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape", 2

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, "Imperial Landscape", 2, 13, 15

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, "Imperial Landscape", 1

common to ‘landscape thinking.’ Mitchell describes it as the quality of ‘focus’. If in landscape painting we can imagine such a posture to be assumed into the *horizon oriented* gaze of the painting, in nineteenth-century Urdu literary reform, this same effect can be traced through the representation of ‘progress’ as a teleological narrative. What we may gather, then, from Hali’s implementation of the landscape gaze in *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* is how the new, “disciplined and prosy” Victorian style employed the rubric of nature as an organizing principle; Hali’s landscape moment is meant to embody the shift from the old, disoriented, and unproductive movement of iterative poetic practice to the streamlined and purposeful narrative of ‘natural poetry.’<sup>143</sup>

Thus, contrary to the organic, but unkempt, associations we might expect of representations of the wilderness, Hali’s nature entails order and performs a distinctly disciplined gaze. I have described this effect as stemming from an emphasis on ‘organization’ but, again, it is more important to qualify Hali’s method as one *type* of organizational strategy. A number of studies related to the reformist movement of this period qualify this intellectual movement as ‘utilitarian’.<sup>144</sup> I too suggest that the kind of organizational strategy we see in Hali’s work highlights the importance of clarity for the sake of achieving a desired social effect. The ‘utility’ and usefulness of literature is, thus, brought to fruition by redesigning poetic and textual form. Again, we may think of Hali and Azad’s characterizations of the Urdu ghazal as a counter point to their prescribed utilitarian style.<sup>145</sup> It’s important to note, however, that the reformist portrayal

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<sup>143</sup> Shackle and Majeed, *Hali’s Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, 9

<sup>144</sup> See Javed Majeed. *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill’s The History of British India and Orientalism*. (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-10

of the Urdu ghazal is an exaggerated parody of the *sabk-e hindī* style that was particularly inclined towards poetic-wordplay of numerous varieties.<sup>146</sup> Enthusiasts of this style valued poetic ambiguity and its poets thrilled in challenging the interpretive dexterity of their listeners/readers. Especially within such a poetic culture that valued poetic wit, ghazals are most ‘successful’ when their formally repetitive structure of *qāfiya-radif* is counterbalanced by evoking the same refrain to gesture towards *varieties* of meaning. Hali’s *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, in contrast, is more didactic in aim and effect. From his use of footnotes—which were later converted into a glossary in the second edition print—to his delineation of subtitles for each new section, Hali takes active measures to shepherd readers towards the intended deductions and conclusions of his poem. Even the layout of the text bespeaks the priority of ‘clarity’ when compared to other manuscript and print publications of the period. This is one reason why Majeed and Shackle ascertain that *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*’s, “physical format modestly suggest[s] the utilitarian functions of an educational text”.<sup>147</sup> I suggest that in keeping with these other discernable organizational techniques, the streamlining of poetry into a ‘teleological’ narrative is yet another means by which *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* organizes poetic material towards didactic and educational purpose, thus fulfilling the demands of ‘utility’ that the *naichral shā’irī* advocates so admired.

We may further deconstruct the narrative style of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* by noting how the allegory of *mauj* (or waves) that is contained within the title, performs a structural function for

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<sup>146</sup> For a fuller account of this poetic culture, see Paul Losensky. *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal*. (Costa Mesa, Calif: Mazda Publishers, 1998).

<sup>147</sup> Shackle and Majeed. *Hali’s Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, 9

the narrative by offering a frame—the zenith of an Islamic golden period and the nadir of 1857—within which the drama of Hali’s poetic subject unfolds. Again, we can compare the organizational function of these narrative moments to the priority of *framing* the scene in landscape painting. In both instances of landscape (literary history and painting) a ‘frame’ helps discipline the gaze towards a particular and focused perspective. In *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, the birth of Islam and the loss of Muslim power in North India are two historical moments which serve as narrative bookends, containing and organizing the poem by delineating two distinct points between which the narrative must move. Mitchell, too, suggests that the paradigm of ‘rise and fall’ is characteristic, if not definitive, of the landscape form; while often articulated quite directly in textual historiographies, it makes its way into the reception of landscape *painting* through popular commentaries and historiographies of this genre. Mitchell argues that the landscape’s ambiguity,

is temporalized and narrativized. It is almost as if there is something built into the grammar and logic of the landscape concept that requires the elaboration of a pseudohistory, complete with a prehistory, an originating moment that issues in progressive historical development, and (often) a final decline and fall. The analogy with typical narratives of the "rise and fall" of empires becomes even more strong when we notice that the rise and fall of landscape painting is typically represented as a threefold process of emancipation, naturalization, and unification.<sup>148</sup>

Hali’s employment of the ‘wave’ frame, again, embodies qualities that Mitchell insists are germane to landscape thinking; a ‘pseudohistory’ of Islam is packaged within the “narrative of rise and fall”. While this quality is quite distinctly popular across a variety of nineteenth-century historiographies, and I will argue particularly adaptable to the rubric of nature, it’s important to note, as Guriqbal Sahota does, how this quality of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* also mimics the narrative structure of a much older and incontestably vernacular form of poetry, the *marṣiyā*.

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<sup>148</sup> Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape”, 12

Sahota's dissertation suggests that Indian Romanticists applied religious structures of feeling to ostensibly secular topoi and demonstrates the extent to which such a trend was applicable, discernible, and variegated in nineteenth-century Indian writing. Sahota points out how *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* narrates the history of Islam through the template of "redemptive suffering" offered by the *marṣiyā*.

Seeking out the sources of epic sublimity at the turn of the century has turned up the crucial moment of *marṣiyah*, the Shi'a elegies in memory of the suffering of Imam Husain and giving expression to Shi'a theology. This is most evident in Altaf Husain Hali's powerful and quite influential work, *Musaddas: Madd o Jazr-e Islam* (*Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*), ... The fact that the sublimity associated with the *marṣiyā* form resonated to an extent with the unfolding aesthetic ideology of Romanticism is illuminating. What it reveals in particular is that for the neo-epic form produced under the auspices of the new romantic aesthetic ideology, the source is not secular. ... The peculiar sublime associated with [this] religious tradition of Shi'a Islam - replete with notions of redemptive suffering, the clash of good and evil, and future deliverance - can be seen to establish the means for the socially oriented and politically motivated neo-epic form.<sup>149</sup>

Like Majeed and Shackle, Sahota's reading of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* reinforces the traditional values and qualities of the *mussadas* genre, even as it acknowledges the renovations that Hali brought to this established convention. Such an evaluation is important for moderating the assessment of the *naichral shā'irī* movement as a radical rupture from Urdu literature convention, or one that adhered overwhelmingly to a new British aesthetic standard. Yet, in Sahota's analysis, Hali's experiments with *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* are read in terms of its relationship to other 'epic' varieties.<sup>150</sup> The role of the ghazal has comparatively little weight in Sahota's analysis of Hali's literary reformation:

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<sup>149</sup> Guriqbal Sahota. "A Literature of the Sublime in Late Colonial India: Romanticism and the Epic Form in Modern Hindi and Urdu." (University of Chicago, 2006), 197.

<sup>150</sup> While considering the differences between Indian and the Western epic models, Sahota's dissertation is also refreshingly open to analyzing the parallels and confluences between these two modern traditions. As such, Sahota's use of the category 'epic' is understandably flexible and porous as it imagines the modern construction of 'epic' as a cross-cultural, rather than simply European, phenomenon. He writes,

within the Islamicate traditions of writing in Persian and Urdu, a great effort took shape among figures such as Altaf Husain ‘Hali’ and Muhammad Husain ‘Azad’ to rethink the tradition according to the challenges presented by British rule, the terms of modern science and rationality, and the ideals of a new masculinity. Considering the critical pressures placed by these figures on the traditional narrative forms, a whole slew of works called dastan, masnavi, qissah, razm namah and fasanah, all later to be construed as versions of “epic,” were dismissed... Seeing these epics as emblems of a decadent and disempowered civilization, figures like ‘Hali’ and his later adherent Muhammad Iqbal would shun them. In their stead, they would model a variety of works based either on Shi’a elegies or fusions of classical Eastern and Western epic forms.<sup>151</sup>

In my reading, the *naichral shā’irī* movement—and *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* as one of its exemplars—performs a distinct elevation of and preference towards ‘epic’ and ‘prosy’ varieties of poetry, rather than what comes to be defined as the chief ‘lyric’ variety of the Urdu tradition, the ghazal. In this regard, I find the *naichral shā’irī* movement was not so much a wholesale criticism of the Urdu poetic tradition (in favor of British tastes) as it was the (re)organization of the Urdu canon through, in part, the reconfiguration of an established poetic hierarchy. The reassignment of the classical ghazal was but one—though, I argue, the most important—such repositioning. Although the nineteenth-century literary reformation maneuvered the marginalization of traditional narrative forms like the “dastan, masnavi, qissah, [and] razm

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“There is certainly an internally generated specificity and meaningfulness to the epic form and the aesthetic ideologies of late colonial India. This is a meaningfulness that emerged through an interaction with all the contemporaneously existing forms and ideologies of the time. Yet, a sense of that specificity cannot be identified without a grasp of the larger cultural and social constellations in which the epic and Romanticism took shape historically. Indian society had over the millennia produced along regional, linguistic, religious and cultural coordinates a variety of works - written and oral - that eventually could be construed as essentially epic in nature.... No other literary genre conduces so well to mitigating the centrifugal tendencies of time as the epic. Against time, that implacable terror of the Mahabharata, the magisterial weight of epic narrative is meant to hold society and its customs together with moral examples ... It is in this manner primarily that the importance of the epic has endured as something of more than simply historical or aesthetic interest: The epic has become caught up in the politics of modernity. And perhaps nowhere in the modern world has the epic form provided the occasion for the intersection of the aesthetics of the sublime with the politics of tradition more so than late colonial India.”

Guriqubal Sahota. *A Literature of the Sublime in Late Colonial India*, 1-6

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

namah,” we might argue that other genres, like the *afsānā* (short story) actually rose in stature.<sup>152</sup> *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* seems to imagine conforming ghazal poetics to this new Victorian literary climate that preferred, “unassuming, disciplined, and prosy” literature. In fact, it demonstrates the difficulty of valuing the ghazal against such a literary standard.<sup>153</sup>

I have read *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* (and particularly Hali’s introductory image of looking up at the landscape) as a performed taming and streamlining of the aimless, ‘disoriented’ poetic tradition, that the ghazal dominated. Indeed, the distinctly utilitarian logic that accompanies Hali’s criticisms and refinements of the Urdu poetic tradition can be traced through the numerous organizational strategies that I have discussed which amplify the qualities of ‘focus’ and direction in the poetic text. We may think of the sum effect of these strategies as imagining a narrativization of the ghazal tradition. This reorganization of the poetic hierarchy was, in many ways, a symptom of the reorganization of economic circumstances and indeed socio-political hierarchy in nineteenth-century India, as I will illustrate further in chapter three.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> See Aamir Mufti’s scholarship on Manto in *Enlightenment in the Colony*

<sup>153</sup> Shackle and Majeed, *Hali’s Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, 9

<sup>154</sup> Laura Steele offers a slightly similar suggestion in her study on Hali. She writes “The Process of being a poet in those times necessitates accepting, at least on the surface, a narrow subject matter and a set of tight conventions. The poetry was widely popular because the conventions used by the individual poet were integrated with the general population’s idea about poetry. An example of this broad understanding and enjoyment of poetry is demonstrated in the structure of the gazal. The west often sees the gazal as disunified, because it does not progress in a unified manner – each couple in the poem hangs separately. In truth, the nature of the gazal is a symbol of the unity of its audience. The gazal always tells the same “story” using the same, images, and it is all more or less intelligible to its audience. The restricted group of metaphors and allusions allows the poet to develop a most refined and attenuated skill. ...In English poetry, the diverse themes caught in forms that demanded a unified progression emphasize the distances between men and the efforts the poet must make to reach the alienated individual in an industrialized society. The ‘I’ in an English poem in the nineteenth-century is one man, while the ‘we’ of the Urdu gazal is not an individual, but the unified group of poet and listeners. The apparent disunity of the gazal proclaims a Unity of understanding in its audience”. Laurel Steele. “Hali and His Muqaddamah in the Creation of a Literary Attitude in Nineteenth-century India.” *Annual of Urdu Studies*. Vol. 1 (1981), 19



In the next section, I will demonstrate how much of this narrativization of the ghazal, like narrative itself, depended on providing a new teleological frame to poetic material; this kind of narrativization takes place in Hali's *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* and also in the primary literary history of this period, Azad's *Water of Life* through the paradigm of 'redemptive suffering'. Indeed, both texts demonstrate how the rubric of *nēčar* evoked a distinctly teleological and historiographic posture that we may understand as a form of *Landscape* thinking.

#### iv. Narrativizing Poetry

While the ghazal cannot be accused of lacking a teleological premise altogether—*fanā*, after all, is an inherently teleological concept and one which provides the gravitational pull of the ghazal's universe—its lack of narrative continuity was certainly one of the main facets that the poetic reform movement sought to remedy.<sup>155</sup> Narrative, as the analysis of a number of reputed narratologists suggests, is recognizable by (and interpreted through) the employment of a number of formal features; the discernable structure of 'beginning, middle and end' is perhaps most common. In this tripartite sequence, it is the 'end' which is most important—even *primary*—such that the reading of narrative is always already anticipating conclusion and, thus, interpreted in hindsight:

The "dilatory space" of narrative, as Barthes calls it—the space of retard, postponement, error, and partial revelation—is the place of transformation: where the problems posed to and by initiatory desire are worked out and worked through. Barthes makes explicit an assumption common to much thought about narrative when he claims that meaning (in the "classical" or "readable" text) resides in full predication, completion of the codes in a "plenitude" of signification, which makes the "passion for meaning" ultimately desire for the end. It is at the end—for Barthes as for Aristotle—that recognition brings its illumination, which then can shed retrospective light.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> The concept of *fanā* entails sublimation with the object of mystical love and, thus, the eradication of the self. The ghazal lover's desire for union with his beloved is often articulated as a desire for *fanā*.

<sup>156</sup> Peter Brooks. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 92.

Thus, the ‘retrospective light’ of ‘the end’—towards which narrative is always desiring—must be recognized for its role in producing the teleological effect. As Safdar Ahmad’s analysis of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* makes clear, the mythic-historical dimensions of this text are illuminated through a distinctly teleological ‘sensibility’. Indeed, the clarification of an Islamic civilization as historical subject is produced through such a narrativization of Islamic history.

Thus, the teleological historical sensibility of Hali’s poem, which emphasized the Muslim world’s contemporary decline, pointed back to an ideal, universal Islamic civilisation that transcends the realm of historical time. Here, the dialectical relationship between an abject present and better future— which was based, in turn, on the premise of returning to the spirit of an ideal past— brought Hali’s counterfactual and imaginary Romantic vision to the fore. It emerged in the juxtaposition of ages and times in which a causal theory of historical decline was tied to a promise of salvation and renewal. This vision certainly bears the influence of a reified Muslim identity, in which the golden age of Islam, coterminous with the life of the Prophet and his immediate companions, is established as an exemplary paradigm for modern religious life. Furthermore, Hali transferred a notion of the sublime from its former place in traditional religious theology and mysticism to the factual and everyday content of the modern world. Thus, for the numerous Muslim (and non-Muslim) communities across northern India who embraced Hali’s poem, its teleological vision of a process of historical degeneration auguring a renewal of faith catalysed a distinctly modern understanding of religion’s place in society.<sup>157</sup>

What I’d like to contribute to this reading of the teleological sensibility of *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* is that, in addition to the narrative structure of this modern *marīṣyā*, the ‘signs’ of nature also provide clues about the redemptive nature of the narrative. In their analysis on the representation of barren wastelands and gardens in *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, Majeed and Shackle argue that Hali renders civilizational progress through images of natural cultivation. This is a much more complicated representation of *nēčar* than other moments in *naichral shā’irī* criticism where *nēčar* is imagined as the untampered and local environment. In *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, verdure is brought by the spread and ‘proper’ implementation of Islam and, thus,

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<sup>157</sup> Safdar Ahmad. “Literary Romanticism and Islamic Modernity: The Case of Urdu Poetry.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 35. no.2 (2012), 451

operates as a sign of *both* progress and original purity. In this light, the association of pastoral beauty (green) in *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* with *jannat-ul firdaus* parallel the role that ‘Eden’ has held in ‘western’ landscape convention.<sup>158</sup> Majeed and Shackle suggest that this representation of greenery may also be read as a redeployment of *marisyā* convention in which the presence of the prophet’s family could transform the brutal landscape of the desert into ‘moments’ of garden-like beauty.

The significance of these images is that they illustrate the magically transforming presence of the Prophet's family as they await martyrdom. However, since the *marisyā* is also a uniquely Indian genre in Islamic literature, and at the same time, since it is so obviously associated with the Persianate Shiite strands of Islam, the images of exotic gardens in barren deserts might reflect the genre's awareness of its own uniqueness.<sup>159</sup>

Thus, Hali’s representation of nature in *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* mirrors the redemptive paradigm offered in Christian and Islamic representations of Eden as *both* the origin and final destination of righteous souls. This coded portrayal of nature (or verdure) as the promise of Eden must be recognized as providing the ‘clues’ towards a narrative conclusion of redemption. These two literary features—the teleological paradigm of narrative and the metaphoric portrayal of nature—behave as mirror images of each other: where the former offers a diachronic paradigm of redemption, the latter suggests the same ‘promise’ through the synchronic reading of nature as a metaphor.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Shackle and Majeed write, “The use of garden imagery would have had Quranic resonances for Hali’s Muslim readers. The garden in the Quran is used as an image of paradise. The abode of the Just is variously referred to as ‘the Garden’ (al-janna Quran 11:108), or as ‘the Garden of Eden’ (jannat ‘adn Quran 18:32). Paradise is also described as a garden watered by running streams (Quran 2:25, 4:57).” Shackle and Majeed. *Hali’s Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, 60

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 59

<sup>160</sup> Peter Brooks explains this effect, “The very possibility of meaning plotted through sequence and through time depends on the unopposed structuring force of the ending: the interminable would be the meaningless, and the lack of ending would jeopardize the beginning. We read the incidents of narration as “promises and annunciations” of final coherence, that metaphor that may be reached through the chain of metonymies: across the bulk of the has yet unread middle pages, the end calls to the beginning,

Undoubtedly, ‘nature’ is an overcoded term in Hali’s *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*. While Majeed and Shackle outline a variety of its connotations and effects in their study, I have tried to highlight the role of ‘nature’ as a narrativizing strategy. I suggest that the ‘horizon oriented’ gaze that Hali depicts in his introduction to *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* is a form of ‘landscape thinking’ which not only seeks to organize and streamline poetic utterance towards a singular and distinct point of conclusion but which reads all signs of nature (such as greenery and cultivation) as the ‘promise’ of narrative conclusion. Indeed, this was quite a radical diversion from the classical ghazal which offered its consumers a kaleidoscope of images and metaphors that could be endlessly reconfigured into an atemporal diegesis. The nineteenth-century preference towards narrative was, thus, also a preference towards poetry that could account for historical time. As my next analysis of Muhammad Hussain Azad’s tazkirah will demonstrate, this rhetorical effect of ‘nature’ was also particularly effective for narrativizing literary histories.

#### **v. Taming the Tazkira**

Muhammad Hussain Azad’s (1830-1910) stature in contemporary Urdu literary studies is paramount. Writing shortly after the failed rebellion of 1857 and the subsequent sacking of Delhi, Azad’s oeuvre is considered an invaluable window into the climate of post-rebellion Delhi. Perhaps more so than other prominent writers of the *naichral shā’irī* movement, Azad suffered deep and brutal losses in the rebellion. Azad’s father, Muhammad Baqir, was executed by the British authorities for demonstrating loyalty towards rebel forces; although Azad went on

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transforms and enhances it: ... we read only those incidents and signs that can be construed as promise and annunciation, enchaind toward a construction of significance-those markers that, as in the detective story, appear to be clues to the underlying intentionality of event.”

Peter Brooks. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 93-94.

to work with British authorities in a number of different capacities, the impact this left on his scholarship and health is impossible to ignore. Azad suffered numerous bouts of delirium and lost his mind towards the end of his life.<sup>161</sup> Despite this ill health, Azad was prolific and wrote both in Persian and in Urdu. *Water of Life* (*Āb-e Hayāt*) is one of his most enduring pieces of scholarship and, as Frances Pritchett suggests in her introduction to *Nets of Awareness*, Azad's ideas and legacy continue to dominate the existing frames through which Urdu poetic history is conceived. For the purposes of this study, Azad's *tazkirah* is significant for the ways in which it organizes poetic material through the narrative typology of 'rise and fall' that we have already traced in Hali's *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*.

There are some important differences between the portrayals of nature in *Water of Life* and *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*. Firstly, in both texts, the blossoming and thriving of nature coincides with the narrative subject's proximity to authentic expression. Much like the narrative of a 'fall from Eden', this loss of authenticity serves as the temporary *durée* within which the drama of the narrative is contemplated and resolved. However, 'naturalness' means different things in these two texts. Hali's historiography follows a historical subject that is inherently mobile (Islam), therefore the response of 'nature' to this subject is dependent on the latter's observation of its *original* characteristics: as long as the Islamic community emulates the practices associated with the first Muslims—who, it's significant, were Arab rather than Persian—the verdure and charm of nature is able to travel with them. Azad's historical subject is much more geographically fixed. In *Water of Life*, naturalness seems to connote a distinctly vernacular and local literariness than Hali's cosmopolitan and transnational poetic subject. These

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<sup>161</sup> Frances Pritchett. "Everybody Knows This Much" in *Āb-e Hāyāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*. Translated by Frances W. Pritchett, and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13.

differences are quite significant considering the debates around Islam's exotic origin that were so vogue both in Indian and European historiographies that, enamored as they were with the role of origin, sought to accentuate the differences between 'Semitic' Muslim culture and 'Aryan' Hindu culture.<sup>162</sup> Where Azad's literary history makes a case for the local and vernacular origins of Urdu, Hali's *The Flow and Ebb of Islam* portrays the origin of Indian Muslim culture within the deserts of Arabia. Thus the *naichral shā'irī* program's employment of 'nature' was inherently unstable and could carry quite different, if not contradictory, qualities even amongst its core participants. The key, shared effect of 'nature' in both these texts is the way it entails a 'fall' from authentic expression while offering a route of return; the redemptive structure of both texts hinges on their understanding of naturalness as a quality that can be both lost and found. Like *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, *Water of Life* exhibits this effect of nature on a structural level, through the organization (*reorganization*) of the poetic canon. To fully elaborate on this idea, we must understand the conventions of tazkirah writing within which *Water of Life* makes its mark.

*Water of Life* is considered the last tazkirahs of the Urdu language.<sup>163</sup> As a genre of poetic anthology that was primary to the *memorialization* of poets, we can imagine what an extraordinarily significant position this puts *Water of Life* in. The tazkirah is a famously difficult genre to translate, classify, or even describe.<sup>164</sup> It is primarily a Persian literary form but one

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<sup>162</sup> See Aamir Mufti. "Orientalism and the Institution of World Literatures." *Critical Inquiry* 36.3 (2010): 458–493.

<sup>163</sup> See Frances Pritchett, "Everybody Knows this Much."

<sup>164</sup> While the lack of a standardized method of compilation across tazkirah writing may obscure the concrete archival particulars of this genre, historians of the tazkirah suggest that it is precisely its 'uncollectibility' that distinguishes the tazkirah as a fascinating form of premodern record making. Kevin Schwartz' uniquely compelling research provides important data visualizations on the trends of tazkirah writing and contemporary tazkirah holdings in American libraries. Schwartz' notes the particular difficulty American and European archives have had in categorizing this Persianate genre by comparing the different categories within which the library of congress has listed its tazkirah holdings. While the

which was adopted into linguistic traditions that were conversant with the Persian tradition, such as Urdu and Turkish. The common denominators across tazkirah are that they provide samples of poetry from various poets and, oftentimes, offer some biographical information on the writers too – perhaps the closest English equivalent would be a poetry compilation or anthology. Frances Pritchett traces the tazkirah form’s emergence to an even less formal (though especially intimate and personal) literary practice, that of the poetic ‘notebook’ or *bayāz*. In fact, she argues that the most troublesome qualities of the tazkirah, “their individuality, their insouciance, the insistence of each one on defining its own approach to its own group of poets” are derived from their roots in the “notebook.”<sup>165</sup>

Historically, the literary tazkirah grows out of the ubiquitous little ‘notebook’ (*bayāz*) that lovers of poetry carried around with them for recording verses that caught their fancy. A typical notebook would include some verses by its owner, and other by poets living and dead, both Persian and Urdu. ... In a pre-print culture such compilations were of the greatest interest and value, for they were often the only means of preserving and disseminating poetry over time and space... Compilers of notebooks were thus often moved to perform a public service by sharing their work with a wider circle. With the addition of a certain amount- sometimes a very small amount- of introductory or identifying information about the poet, a notebook could become a tazkirah.<sup>166</sup>

We can imagine how the tazkirah’s development from such highly personalized poetic practice, such as the notebook, might produce a form of literary record which is inherently resistant to any strict ‘standard’. Indeed, the poetic notebook and tazkirah both encourage a subjective stance to

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most popular category is ‘Biography’, the Library of Congress also lists tazkirah under the following headings: Dictionaries, Indexes, Poetic Criticism and Interpretation and Correspondence. Like many scholars of Persian writing, Schwartz scholarship points to the variety within tazkirah production and attempts to understand this plurality.

Kevin Schwartz “Mapping the Persian Tazkirah” (paper presented at “The World of the Tazkirah” conference, Irvine, California, Feb 5, 2016).

Available online: <https://prezi.com/vfd7u2isy6pw/mapping-the-persian-tazkirah-1700-1900/>

<sup>165</sup> Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, 65

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 64

the collection and organization of poetic samples. As Pritchett notes, poetry compilers would often include their own poetry within these collections. If this self-aggrandizing task were to be omitted out of a sense of modesty, tazkirah writers were, at the very least, known to promote poets of a similar style, city, or even social circle within their compilation. In this sense, even if individual tazkirah were highly idiosyncratic and personalized, they were equally and inescapably *social*. In fact, what multiple scholars suggest is evident within “the internal dynamics of the text,” as Kevin Schwartz describes, is the *social networking* between poets. Indeed, the tazkirah can be read as a “who’s who” of poetry.<sup>167</sup> The tazkirah puts into written form both the imagined networking between poets—through parallels in style and schools of writing—and the material scene of poetic collaboration that brought poets together through working groups and poetic performances (*majlis*). Just as friendships, alliances, and artistic lineages between poets were recorded in tazkirahs, so were rivalries. Though most tazkirah focused on offering selections of ‘favored’ poetry, many tazkirah would also consciously include poets, or examples of poetry, which the author would deride or devalue. Thus, even the most haphazard and non-hierarchical tazkirah would often convey varying degrees of importance to poets through the difference in volume and quality of poetic samples offered, as well as through the tone of commentary that accompanied these poetic extracts. Even as tazkirah writers downplay the personal and subjective biases inherent to their compilation and organization of poetic material, it is precisely this *personal* touch that betrays the social contours of competition and camaraderie between poets and patrons.

In light of the immense influence that *Water of Life* has had in subsequent studies of Urdu

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<sup>167</sup> Kevin Schwartz. “Bâzgasht-i Adabî (Literary Return) and Persianate Literary Culture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Iran, India, and Afghanistan”, 136



literary history, much of the last decade of scholarship around Azad’s tazkirah has sought to resituate the historiography and poetic theory offered in *Water of Life* into the social context of its production. Carla Petievitch’s masterful study, *Assembly of Rivals*, is particularly attentive to Azad’s portrayal of rivalries and poetic ‘schools’ in Urdu literary history.<sup>168</sup> Frances Pritchett’s *Nets of Awareness* and her introduction to the translation of *Water of Life* also seek to recreate the atmosphere of Azad’s writing as a means to expose his positionality in this venture. It is, perhaps, *because* Azad’s tazkirah is so forcefully articulated as a *history* that the social schisms and poetic rivalries underpinning his writing have been somewhat underestimated by some scholars.<sup>169</sup> Indeed, the historical dimensions of the takirah genre are considerably more pronounced in *Water of Life* than in other tazkirahs, in large part due to its organization through ‘*daur*’, or periods. Such a chronological arrangement of the anthology was by no means necessary, or even most common. Tazkirahs were sometimes arranged according to alphabetical order, the origin of poets, or, even, according to the ‘day-jobs’ of poets.<sup>170</sup> The periodized arrangement of tazkirah was not an entirely foreign concept either. A number of Persian tazkirah were ordered according to a tripartite system of ‘ancient’, (*qudamā*) ‘middle’ (*mutavassitīn*) and ‘later’ (*muta’akhirīn*) poets though, as Alexander Jabbari notes in his article on tazkirah compilation, “some of the chronologically-ordered tazkirahs grouped poets into ‘ancient’

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<sup>168</sup> See Carla Petievich. *Assembly of Rivals: Delhi, Lucknow, and the Urdu Ghazal*. (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1992)

<sup>169</sup> Frances Pritchett certainly frames her reassessment of *Water of Life* as a response to Muhammad Sadiq’s historiography. See Frances Pritchett, “‘Everybody Knows this Much.’” In *Āb-e Hāyāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*.

<sup>170</sup> Kevin Schwartz “Mapping the Persian Tazkirah” (paper presented at “The World of the Tazkirah” conference, Irvine, California, Feb 5, 2016). Available online: <https://prezi.com/vfd7u2isy6pw/mapping-the-persian-tazkirah-1700-1900/>

(qudamā'), 'middle' (mutavassitīn), and 'later' (muta'akhhirīn) periods, but beyond that, narrative about the historical development of Persian poetry was quite limited."<sup>171</sup> The significant quality of *Water of Life* is that it endows the chronologically arranged compilation with a distinct narrative of development (or decline). This organization of poetic biographies, thus, endows the Urdu poetic tradition with a trajectory, a logic, and, we may even argue, a character.

We can also trace the historical nature of the tazkirah within otherwise non-chronological arrangements. The formal etymology of the word 'tazkirah' offers important insight into some of the immediate associations and functions of this archival practice: tazkirah is derived from the Arabic root *dh-k-r* or *dhikr* which means to recall or remember. On a rudimentary level, remembrance features in the tazkirah in the form of recalling and inscribing the best poems (and poets) from the collection into *social memory*. As Marcia Hermansen and Bruce Lawrence note, many of the poets listed within tazkirah were not only deceased at the time of writing, but would also have the date and site of their burials noted alongside their work.<sup>172</sup> In this vein, the role of *dhikr*, or remembrance, in tazkirah was inflected with a sense of reverence and fidelity towards 'old masters' that resonates especially with the practice of *dhikr* as it is referred to in Sufi practice. It is no surprise, then, that "above all, poets and saints who [became] the principal subjects memorialized in Islamic biographical literature generally but even more frequently in the Indo-Persian tazkirahs of South Asia."<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Alexander Jabbari. "The Making of Modernity in Persianate Literary History." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36.3 (2016), 2.

<sup>172</sup> Bruce B. Lawrence and Marcia K. Hermansen. "Indo-Persian Tazkirahs as Memorative Communications." In *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, edited by David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000)

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 151

The Sufi ritual of *dhikr* is a more specialized form of a basic Islamic practice of the remembrance of God through recitation and repetition; its opposite, *ghaflat*, that is, “forgetting” or “negligence,” is both a moral shortcoming in terms of religious piety and a personal affront to the beloved in the tradition of poetic love.<sup>174</sup>

In sketching the role of *dhikr* in *tazkirah* writing, Marcia Hermansen and Bruce Lawrence distinguish between commemorative and memorative recollection, arguing that the *tazkirah* is effectively a "memorative communication".

Although [tazkirah] draw from the past, they are not commemorative; they do not recall the past for its own sake or for the sake of the heroes whom they exalt. They are memorative, relying on memory and remembrance to communicate with the living the legacy of prior Indo-Muslim exemplars.<sup>175</sup>

In more concrete terms, Hermansen and Lawrence elucidate how *tazkirah* compilers would draw on ‘canonic’ or accepted ‘masters’ and integrate poets of lesser renown within this body of more established writers. Accordingly, the role of remembering past poets within a *tazkirah* had more to do with acknowledging their presence within a *living tradition* of poetic practice rather than simply ‘citing’ their past. It is this prioritization of the social, over the historical, function that Hermansen and Lawrence’s distinction between ‘commemorative’ and ‘memorative’ engenders.

Thus, the *tazkirah* served an acutely present-oriented and *social* task: by bringing the masters of old into the lived memory of contemporary poetry, *tazkirahs* enjoined poets from all time-periods into an on-going and timeless gathering, or *majlis*. *Tazkirahs* also (re)membred, rehearsed and reorganized the past in ways that made them historiographic. As a number of studies on modern *tazkirah* writing suggest, this historiographic dimension becomes much more

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 154

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 150

pronounced from the eighteenth-century onwards.<sup>176</sup> Azad's tazkirah, *Water of Life*, is a primary example of the more historiographic tazkirah that reads much like a history (*tarīkh*) precisely because of the focused and linear narrative that its chronology allows. It also reveals how the idealization of 'nature', as a primitive and authentic condition, was particularly fitting in the originalist historiographies, like *Water of Life*, that mobilized projects of modern nation-state building.

### vii. From Sugar to Soil

*Water of Life* is a rich example of the more historiographic variety within the tazkirah genre. In it, Azad divides the history of Urdu literature into five epochs (or *daur*) and, much like *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, the characterization of these 'daur' presents a history of accumulated moral corruption and decay. Accordingly, the site of 'origin' holds primary importance in this sequence and is conveyed as a moment of Adamic purity and simplicity. Azad outlines this theory at length in his introduction to the tazkirah before the poetic anthology performs the effects theorized. Azad's introduction and later discussion of *Braj* are the most salient elements for the purpose of this study.

Everybody knows this much--that our Urdu language has emerged from Braj Bhasha. And Braj Bhasha is a purely Indian language. But it is not a language that came onto the world's stage along with India. It's not more than eight hundred years old, and the meadows of the Braj region are its native land... The European scholars, who track down the source of everything even to the depths of the underworld, have proved through languages and ancient traces that its original inhabitants were different people. ... The name of this people was 'Aryans'.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> See Alexander Jabbari. "The Making of Modernity in Persianate Literary History." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36.3 (2016): 418–434.  
Sara Grewal. "Urdu Through Its Others: Ghazal, Canonization, and Translation." (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2016)

<sup>177</sup> Azad, *Āb-E Hayāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*, 58.

Firstly, it's clear that much of Azad's discussion of ancient history is noticeably drawing from (perhaps even mimicking) European philological trends of the time, particularly the fascination with Aryan history. It is also especially important to note that such historiographies that offered narratives of universal (even mythic) origin have a long precedence in Persian writing too. Khan-e Arzu's scholarship, for example, makes the argument for a shared linguistic source between Persian and Sanskrit well before William Jones' offered this idea.<sup>178</sup> Just as the Orientalist fascination with ancient eastern philology turns to Sanskrit for its own renaissance, so, too, does Azad's account trace the branches of the 'Aryan' linguistic tree ( including the relationship between Ancient Iranian and Indo-Sanskrit), to the emergence of *prakrit* as the formative precursor to *Braj*.

Thus when they [Aryans] had made a complete cordon for the protection of the bloodlines, they reflected that talking, associating, and dealing with the Shudras twenty-four hours a day would bastardize the language of their ancestors. Therefore they said, 'Our language is the language of the gods, and it has come down to us in exactly this form from the age of the gods'... the lofty vision of the victors named the language Sanskrit... Which means 'adorned', 'embellished', 'artistic', 'purified', 'clean', 'sacred'... When the victors' Sanskrit language came among the people here, its intonation and pronunciation must have changed considerably. Thus, in order to converse, in homes and bazaars, district by district, the Prakrit languages must have spontaneously been born, as was Urdu after the coming of Islam.<sup>179</sup>

Since Sanskrit, Azad makes clear, never becomes a highly accessible language, we can deduce from Azad's somewhat casual delineation of linguistic trends that *bhāshā* itself takes form from some variety of *prakrit*. Just as *prakrit* is demonstrated to have evolved from the linguistic 'mixing' of multiple languages and to have functioned particularly within the spheres of

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<sup>178</sup> For more on Khan-e-Arzu's pioneering scholarship in this field, See Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi. "Orientalism's Genesis Amnesia" in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*. Vol. XVI No. 1 (1996)

<sup>179</sup> Azad, *Āb-e Hayāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*, 60

‘everyday’ business, so Azad portrays the creation of Urdu as a parallel process. A number of phrases sketch out this atmosphere of comingling. In multiple occasions, Azad uses the evocative phrasing of “milk and sugar” to signify the dissolving of one language into another. In one lengthy passage, Azad even describes this process as an effect of neighborly affection.

Finally, the beauty and excellence of Braj Bhasha were made manifest ... In this age, what would the Muslims’ language have been like? Obviously it had been a number of centuries since Islam had arrived. Those whose fathers and grandfathers for many generations had arisen from the dust of this land and mingled with its dust, would certainly have been caused by their mutual interrelationships and connections to speak the language of this place, Braj Bhasha.<sup>180</sup>

Passages such as these portray the scene of Urdu’s birth in distinctly social, even urban, settings. It is within the company of heterogeneous ethnic communities, comprised of varieties of local and migrant populations that this language and its literary traditions take shape. The military camp and the bazaar, in particular, appear as the proper sites of Urdu origin.<sup>181</sup> Yet, there is also a slight nativist and, indeed, naturalist lilt in Azad’s descriptions of the potency and appeal of *Braj* that we might consider contrary to this more urban image; time and again, Azad links the vibrancy and power of *Braj* to the immediacy of its relationship to the ‘soil’ and climate of India. Though Azad’s historiography notes and praises the mixing of linguistic traditions, we might be more accurate in describing this process as the assimilation of foreign and exotic language *into* the “dust of this land”. Hence, there is a distinct prioritization of ‘land’ and origin-place in Azad’s writing. This is most visible in his discussion of *Braj* in juxtaposition to Persian.

Looking at these themes, first of all we remember the universal rule that the literature of every country is a picture of its geographic and physical condition--and in fact even a mirror of its customs and habits, and its people's temperament...it seems that just as in the lands of Iran, Khurasan, and Turan the spring season makes hearts blossom, here the

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 66

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 66

rainy season gives rise to relish and desire. There, the nightingale with its thousand tunes appears in spring; here, the koyal and the papiha. The writers of Braj Bhasha depict the pleasures and moods of the rainy season extremely well. Jahāngīr, in his Tuzuk, has rightly said, 'The rainy season of India is our springtime, and the koyal is the Indian nightingale.'<sup>182</sup>

This particular passage illustrates the core criticism that Azad levelled against nineteenth-century Urdu poetry (particularly ghazals): Urdu poetry's conventionalization of foreign geography. In Azad's estimation, Urdu's seeming disregard for vernacular topography produces an absence of authentic feeling. Rather than writing about local flora and fauna (such as the *kōyal* and *papīhā*, two types of native cuckoo birds) Urdu poets versify the nightingale and the cypress tree. Similarly, Urdu poets are censured for ignoring the local season of longing (the monsoon) in favor of the Persian idealization of springtime. In many ways, this problematic has been the central dilemma of Urdu literature from the nineteenth-century onwards. How does Urdu claim and maintain its relationship to Persianate and Arabic literary history while simultaneously addressing the environment of national literature (and ultimately World Literature) that seeks to clarify the correspondence between literary language and geography? The idea that Urdu was a 'foreign' tradition and, as such, less 'natural' than other north Indian literary languages was a primary concern for the Urdu reformists. Such portrayals of the Urdu language (and poetry, in particular) as inherently foreign, dislocated from its locality, and/or simply artificial are typical of British colonial and nineteenth-century Hindustani accounts too. *Water of Life* is a particularly rich variety of such a historiography because of the way it explains this history through a theory of authentic expression that relies on the primacy of 'nature' as an organizing principle. For example, the next excerpt explains Urdu poetry's propensity for hyperbole and artful description as a consequence of its movement away from the 'rustic' *bhāshā*.

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<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 83

metaphors and similes were little used in Bhasha--perhaps because it was not a language of books or literature, or ... Now our ancestors introduced Persian into it, and adorned it with metaphors and similes. ... The excessive use of metaphors and similes destroyed the power to express meanings and represent truth: ... there is a regret always in my heart, that they threw away for no reason a natural flower scented with its own perfume, vibrating with its own color. And what was that [flower]? Effectiveness of speech, and expression of truth. Our people of 'delicate thought' and subtle sight began to create idea upon idea... And it came about that if they try they can write, in the style of Persian, ... But they can't write about a national affair or a historical revolution in such a way that readers could learn how the event took place and how it reached its outcome; .... And it is impossible for them to write a thought ... that would draw people's hearts ... to pledge assent<sup>183</sup>

Indeed, the overall structure and trajectory of *Water of Life* works to prove this very hypothesis: that the *indulgence* in Persianate language and literary convention was a 'veering off' of the proper track. *Braj*, Azad suggests, was rooted in the native Indian terrain while Persian was not. The decline of Urdu literature, as imagined and presented in *Water of Life*, is caused by a neglect of the natural qualities of *Braj* in favor of the abstracted poetics of Persian poetry. Azad draws particular attention to the treatment of flowers and gardens throughout the five epochs (*daur*); the poets of each prove progressively negligent, if not violent, towards the natural condition and state of language. Take, for example, Azad's introduction to the main-text of the second *daur*.

The second era begins. In this season is the springtime of the language's natural beauty. This is the time when the flowers of themes are showing their natural youthful vigor in the garden of eloquence. What is natural beauty? It is an innate charm: if even the name of any fancy adornment came near it, it would reject this as a scar of ostentation, and would wash it away seven times over. Its garden is the landscaping of Nature. If Artifice should graft its own handiwork onto this garden, its hands would be cut off. ... they present whatever is in the heart, exactly as it is. They do not make 'parrots and mynahs' of imagined colors. Indeed, like the parrot and nightingale they have brought pure language and natural melody. In their tunes, they have not taken the trills, variations, reversals, and vibrato from any singer. Just look--with unostentatious speech and straightforward words they will say whatever comes into their hearts, so spontaneously that they will cause a picture to stand before you.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-84

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 112



The shift from this second *daur*, which would correspond to the early eighteenth-century and include writers like Shah Hatim and Khan-e Arzu, to the third *daur* is extreme indeed. Perhaps what is most noticeable is the shift in agent: where the garden of the second *daur* is tended by nature itself, the garden of the third *daur* is tended by humans —and those, too, with little regard for the garden as they “stroll through the flowerbeds” and run “everywhere through the fields around them” in search of new flowers.<sup>185</sup>

When these accomplished ones entered the garden of poetry, they strolled through the flowerbeds arranged by their predecessors. They looked at the flower of eloquence, which was showing the inborn beauty of its youthful vigor in a natural springtime. Because they too had to win the badge of renown, they wanted to strike out and move ahead of their elders. They ran everywhere through the fields around them, but all the flowers had been used. When they didn't find anything before them, then having no choice, they raised their buildings high. Just look--they won't [merely] use themes of height, they'll bring down the stars from the sky. They won't merely get praise from connoisseurs-- they'll get worship! ... But it's a bit regrettable that in this progress, the 'high flight' of their temperament caused them to turn their faces upwards. If only they had moved forward! So that they would have come out from the limited courtyard of beauty and love, and galloped their horses into fields whose expanse knew no bounds, and whose wonders and refinements knew no count!<sup>186</sup>

As the tazkirah progresses, each subsequent period demonstrates its disregard for the original ‘sweetness’ and purity of language through its mistreatment of nature. It’s clear that this motif of gardening privileges more ‘rustic’ varieties of language and, accordingly, *Braj* becomes the “idealized linguistic 'mother'--a language simple, sweet, natural, and entirely Indian”.<sup>187</sup> I argue that, in this regard, Azad’s valorization of ‘nature’ was quite characteristic of wider ‘primitivist’ trends in eighteenth and nineteenth-century scholarship. Through the idealization of *Braj* and the recurring motif of gardening, Azad’s tazkirah portrays *nēčar* and *naichral shā`irī* as the proper

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 228

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 122

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

condition for authentic expression. Thus, much like *The Flow and Ebb of Islam, Water of Life* utilizes nature as a rhetorical device through which to organize and narrativize Urdu literary history. The redemptive quality of nature is key to this narrative since it offers, again, a source of origin and the teleological impulse of a conclusion. Azad's final recommendation to remedy the ascribed decadence and sterility of Urdu's current condition is, thus, to *return* to the natural, spoken and *living registers of language*—much like the original *Braj Bhāshā*.

### viii. The Subject of Progress

I have illustrated, so far, that the Urdu poetry reformists repeatedly rendered 'natural poetry' as 'forward' moving in comparison to its antithesis—the abstracted, cerebral style of old — which is either imagined as 'going round and round in circles' or 'turn[ing] ..faces upwards'.

When they didn't find anything before them, then having no choice, they raised their buildings high. Just look--they won't [merely] use themes of height, they'll bring down the stars from the sky. They won't merely get praise from connoisseurs-- they'll get worship! ... But it's a bit regrettable that in this progress, the \*'high flight' of their temperament caused them to turn their faces upwards. If only they had moved forward!  
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we can see two types of accomplished poets. One who considered it their law and their faith to follow their elders, and who will stroll in those elders' gardens. They'll prune away old branches and yellow leaves and trim them, and make bouquets of new colors and new styles to adorn the vases in the wall niches. The second type is that group of lofty-minded poets who will use the steam of thought to send up the breezes of invention--and will employ them, like fireworks-balloons, to attain a lofty height. They have done great works with this breeze. But alas, they've done something most unfortunate: they never went in any direction in the limitless expanse that lay all around them. From the rooftops, they flew up higher and higher. Thus you'll see that a number of these high flyers will reach such an elevation that the sun will look the size of a star. And some will fly so as to fly away entirely<sup>188</sup>

Both Azad and Hali use a similar image to portray a shift in poetic style; if we interpret this distinction between poetic styles in terms of spatial delineation, we may argue that '*naichral*

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 122, 228

*shā'irī* is 'terrain' oriented and values geographic territory as a space of discovery. While Hali's image emphasizes the importance of linearity over circularity, Azad's image suggests that *naichral shā'irī* is horizontally, rather than vertically, inclined. As argued earlier, such an emphasis on landscape perspective in the *naichral shā'irī* commentary can be understood, in part, as participating in the literary and artistic Romantic trends of the picturesque, the sublime, and the rustic. In fact, we may argue that part of the appeal of *naichral shā'irī* was its ability to produce more imagistic and 'visual' language. Azad, for example, repeatedly describes *naichral* poetry as poetry which is founded on "the universal rule that the literature of every country is a *picture* of its geographic and physical condition" and which endeavors to "cause a *picture* to stand before you".<sup>189</sup> In contrast, Azad's portrayal of the vertical inclination of 'un-natural' poets, mostly through the allusion of height, refers to the hyperbole and exaggeration that the 'High style' (*Sabk-e Hindī*) of ghazal poetry was often accused of.

To turn skywards, however, is often considered a gesture of spiritual devotion. If it was not Azad's intention to bring attention to this valence of the poetic styles which he criticized, it is nonetheless an important context to the classical ghazal which was steeped in practices of Islamic mysticism. I suggest that Hali's 'pre-reform' poetry—that goes round and round in one spot— and Azad's upward looking poetry, echo characterizations of Islamic, and particularly Sufi, thought as 'arabesques'; this representation has often served to explain the disinclination and skepticism towards mimetic representation in Islamic poetry and art.<sup>190</sup> Accordingly, I argue

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 83, 43.

<sup>190</sup> Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth draw the same parallels when they write, "The ghazal represents a particularly characteristic art form of Islamic culture, here comparable to the *muqarnas*, although it is not a religious Islamic art form (apart from its Sufi transformation)." Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth, eds. "Ghazal as World Literature: Transformations of a Literary Genre" in *Ghazal as World Literature*. (Beirut: Ergon Verlag, 2005. Print. Beirut Texte Und Studien Bd) 15.

that the reformist desire for ‘forward moving’ perspective was, in part, a rejection of the mystical (and cerebral) tendencies of ghazal poetry which offered a kaleidoscope of repeating, primary metaphors. According to its critics, the classical ghazal’s fixation with ‘repertoire’ was not only tiresome, it was also too divorced from the lived realities of the ‘common man’. Just so, Azad’s critique of the ‘worship’ of poetic masters by poetic enthusiasts, also condemns an intellectual culture in which the relationship between poetic disciple (*shāgird*) and teacher (*ustād*) could take on the vocabulary of religious devotion. In this regard, Azad’s *broad* understanding of poetic reform entailed the demotion of a generation of valued and respected elders from the proverbial ‘pedestal’. I argue that the reformist reorganization of poetic material mirrored wider shifts towards more egalitarian, rather than hierarchical, social and political structure. As I will demonstrate further in chapter three, such a program *particularly* challenged certain ideological and sociological qualities of nineteenth-century Islamic intellectual culture.

Thus far, I have demonstrated how the *naichral shā’irī* movement conceived of ‘naturalness’ as a style and method of representation that was *consciously* streamlined and ‘focused’ towards progress. It also carried a socio-political thrust that valorized vernacular writing and imagined national history as the primary framework within which to imagine modern self-hood. In order to understand how such a seemingly British (or European) aesthetic trend facilitated the rise of vernacular literature and modern state-hood in South Asia, we must understand that the other crucial dimension of *nēčar* in *Water of Life*, is the claim it makes to proletarian concerns. As the next section of this chapter will sketch, the rise of vernacular literature, particularly within former territories of the Mughal and Safavid empires, was also a moment of increasing significance for a rising class of urban bourgeois intellectuals in each

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context. For example, we may consider how Azad portrays the ‘un-natural’ poets and styles of poetry through images of gem-cutting and scenes of indulgence and luxury.

The Urdu language was at first gold ore; these elders cleansed it much of its dross, and prepared it to be shaped into thousands of necessary embroideries, material for adornments, jewelry for beautiful women, and even crowns and diadems for kings. Although many gem-setters and enamel-workers came afterwards, this priceless garland of pride has remained on the necks of these elders alone.<sup>191</sup>

In contrast, it’s clear that Azad’s ‘natural’ poetry is of a rather folkish and rustic quality. For example, Azad explains that *prakrit* means nature and also signifies a ‘lower’ register of language than Sanskrit.

This also proves that for the people of the royal court and the upper class, speaking Sanskrit was a warrant for respect and pride. And Prakrit was the language of the common people. ... If some common man says something, then he says it in Prakrit ... As you have seen, the meaning of Prakrit is 'nature', and whatever emerges from nature. Thus Hemachandra too, compiler of a Sanskrit dictionary, says this. Moreover, civilized and holy people are called saṅskrit, and uncivilized people are called prakrit<sup>192</sup>

Azad’s portrayal of natural poetic style thus suggests that the unnaturalness of Urdu ghazal writing stemmed from the perceived hermeticism and artificiality of the elite circles of *ashrāf* society within which ghazal poetry was practiced and patronized. Indeed, this portrayal of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Urdu poetry reads like a caricature of feudal culture and, in doing so, echoes some of the colonial depictions of the Mughal elite as ‘despotic’ and corrupt. It also presents Azad’s recommendations towards a return to ‘natural’ expression as motivated by a democratic spirit. Undoubtedly, *naichral shā’irī* was a pivotal moment in the establishment of Urdu as a language of modern nationalism which could be representative of ‘the people’ and endowed with literary customs that were capable of articulating selfhood in communal and individual terms. In this regard, we may even argue that the *naichral shā’irī* critics contributed to

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<sup>191</sup> Azad, *Ab-e-Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*, 122

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 61. See also, Valerie Ritter, *Kama’s Flowers* 39.

the de-establishment of Persianate literary conventions and literary institutions by providing the *justification* of their decline through the kinds of literary history and commentaries we have discussed. Such an exercise in the restructuring and remodeling of Indian society through the reengineering of poetry was, thus, intimately connected to the rise of a bourgeois ideology and aesthetics. The rubric of nature was primary in this entire matrix since it was particularly effective in promoting vernacular literature and ‘simple’ literary styles. Although such a rhetoric seemingly prioritized the ‘common man’ (and his speech), it was wielded by urban bourgeois intellectuals who took the lead in crafting and promoting national sentiment.

In fact, the use of periodized literary histories for the promotion of vernacular literature was a much more global phenomenon. From the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, we see a number of literary histories, similar to *Water of Life*, produced throughout the regions where Persian once functioned as a lingua-franca. For example, we may compare this chapter’s analysis of *Water of Life* to Kevin Schwartz’ research on Muhammad Bahar’s construction of the *Bāzgasht- Adabī* movement or Marc Toutant’s research on the Policies of Turcicization in the Khiva Khanate from the late eighteenth-century to the late nineteenth-century.<sup>193</sup> In each case, the turn away from a cosmopolitan Persian tradition towards more ‘local’ writing (whether understood in terms of vernacular language or a more ‘simple’ style) is often expressed in terms of using more effective, ‘every day’ language. In each of these separate and distinct movements, we can discern the seeds of (proto)national rhetoric that prioritizes the speech of the ‘people’ (*awām*), even if ‘the people’ were not reading the texts that advocated such a shift in literary convention! Marc Toutant suggests that the repeated references to ‘*awām ahli*’ (common people)

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<sup>193</sup> Marc Toutant. “Replacing Persian as the Main Literary Language: Policies of Turcicization in the Khiva Khanate (from the Late eighteenth-century to the Late nineteenth-century)” at *The Epistemological Frontiers of Persian Learning*. April 9, 2016.

in the Turcicization of the Khiva Khanate is more of a *topos* than an indication of the political aspirations of its writers and that this language should be read as a mode of legitimizing the rise to power of a new ruling class. This is a fruitful lens through which to observe the language of poetic utility and ‘everyday people’ that also emerges in *Water of Life*. The rise of vernacular literature, particularly Urdu, in late nineteenth-century India was, indeed, part of a local and state-sponsored effort to produce a new “class of Indians,” cultivated and primed to become the subsequent leaders of their respective nations.

### **Fracturing the Indo-Persian Terrain**

“This difficulty of the final era did not fall on our language alone. In Persian, compare the ancients with the later poets. Or compare the pre-Islamic poets with the later Arabic ones. Although I don't know English, I know this much: that its later poets too lament over this pain. Thus it can be seen that as long as a language remains in the condition of childhood, for just that long it keeps pouring out cups of milk and sherbet. When it attains mature years, then it mingles perfume and essences with them. It seeks out and procures the attar of elaboration. Then simplicity and sweet airs go down into the dust. Of course, the results are cups of medicines that anyone who wants to can drink.”<sup>194</sup>

Although Azad’s citations of foreign literature are sparse (and somewhat difficult to attribute to specific sources), his writing suggests a general familiarity and awareness of wider, global literary and cultural trends. When Azad positions his own literary history of Urdu in a comparative light alongside Arabic, Persian, and English, he astutely acknowledges that the climate of literary reception in Delhi was one shared across the regions that once comprised an ‘Islamicate’ literary zone.<sup>195</sup> We may understand the shared phenomenon of periodization in

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 46

<sup>195</sup> A number of studies of nineteenth-century Persian, Urdu, and even Arabic literary history would suggest that ‘periodized’ writing (and particularly periodized tazkirah organization) was a much wider phenomenon. Literary scholars Sara Hakeem Grewal and Frances Pritchett have analyzed the significance and currency of prominent ‘periodized’ tazkirah compilation in the nineteenth-century Urdu writing. Bou Ali’s presents the canonization of ‘Arabic literature,’ “*al-nahda al-‘arabiyya*”, as a periodization of Arabic literary history with a similar ‘proto-national’ narrative. She writes, “In the Nahda logos, language

Arabic, Persian, and Urdu writing as symptomatic of the porous boundaries between these literary traditions, especially before the twentieth-century. Yet, it also seems that the similarities between these literary reforms may have had as much (or more) to do with the comparative paradigm of ‘world literature’ within which they were reading themselves.

In her doctoral dissertation, Sarah Grewal illustrates how the periodization and narrativization of the *tazkirah* conforms this genre towards ‘history writing’, or *tarīkh*.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, such a shift in poetic anthologies towards more historiographic aims took place within numerous literary traditions and many of these periodized literary histories imbue their work as being driven by (and privileging) the ‘local’ perspective. In particular, we can note that far from being simply observational texts, a number of key literary historiographies from this period *championed* what we may describe as originalist and primitivist conceptions of history and culture. Of the many literary movements and historiographies of this variety against which we can fruitfully compare the *naichral shā’irī* movement, the *Bāzgasht-e Adabī* movement is most important.

*Bāzgasht-e Adabī*, or literary return, is a term that the twentieth-century Iranian intellectual, Muhammad Taqī Bahar, used to describe the ‘style’ of poets writing in Isfahan in the late eighteenth-century. In his doctoral dissertation, “Bāzgasht-e Adabī (Literary Return) and

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and society are tied to one another on a journey from decay to transcendence. In fact, this journey itself comes to be seen as the natural history of language, a narrative that also governs the civilization which language lays claim to... The Arab of past ages is made real through the archiving project of Nahda. Numerous studies proliferate towards the nineteenth-century and the beginning of the twentieth on the Arabs in jahilliya, the Arabs in the dawn of Islam, The Arabic in the Abaasid age, the Arabs in Andalusia. The Arabs are nationalized through Nahda; they become real simply as a national imaginary because they have never existed thus.” See Nadia Bou Ali “Collecting the Nation: Lexicography and National Pedagogy in *al-nahda al-‘arabiyya*” in *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practiced in the Modern Arab World*. (Ashgate,2012), 45-53.

<sup>196</sup> While the Arabic literary scene was undoubtedly influenced by Persian writing, *tazkirahs* were specifically a Persianate form that made few inroads into Arabic literature compared to their role in India.



Persianate Literary Culture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Iran, India, and Afghanistan,” Schwartz charts how Bahar’s literary history is divided into four periods; *Khurasani*, *Iraqi*, *Indian*, and the *Bāzgasht* (return) style. While the first three periods are named after specific geographic locations, they refer to literary styles across the “greater Persianate sphere, and bespeak its literary-cultural cohesiveness.”<sup>197</sup> Ironically, the *bāzgasht* period (which is not nominally associated with Isfahan or Iran) identifies the stylistic elements of this ‘period’ exclusively within Iran:

[Bāzgasht-i Adabī] is a category constructed as pertaining to Iran alone, which has had the effect of skewing understandings of Persian literary culture, both in Iran and elsewhere, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Bāzgasht’s not-so-subtle nationalistic elements of construction, and its genesis narrative- that a collection of Isfahani poets rescued Persian poetry from decline and revived it in accordance with the classical masters while the rest of the Persianate literary world stagnated-- have had two major effects. First, the narrative has shrouded important aspects related to the literary history of Iran in the Safavid and early-Qajar period, and has obscured how the movement known as bāzgasht came to emerge. Second, such a narrative, privileging trends in nineteenth-century Iran, has ignored critical elements of Persian literary culture outside Iran at that time.<sup>198</sup>

Thus, the *Bāzgasht-e Adabī* movement is not only a good example of the modern trend in Indo-Persian tazkirah writing towards periodized literary history, it also demonstrates how such a structure has been effective in privileging ‘local’ styles. This is a particularly important issue for a literary culture that once spanned multiple locales. The Persianate literary world, of course, extended far beyond the terrain of contemporary Iran and even beyond the territories of Safavid Persia and Mughal India. Persian functioned as a lingua-franca across North India, the Deccan, Central Asia, and the Ottoman empire. Yet, the styles/territories of ‘India’ and ‘Iran’ come to

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<sup>197</sup> Kevin Schwartz. “Bāzgasht-i Adabī (Literary Return) and Persianate Literary Culture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Iran, India, and Afghanistan” (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2014), xi

<sup>198</sup> Kevin Schwartz. “Bāzgasht-i Adabī (Literary Return)”, 134

serve as the crucial polarities for Bahar's historiography: The Indian Style, or *Sabk-e Hindī*, comes to embody the 'high style' of poetry (particularly ghazal poetry) from which an Iranian 'return' is reconstructed. As the phrase 'literary return' that *Bāzgasht-e Adabī* connotes might suggest, these nineteenth-century literary histories offered a literary timeline in which the reign of *Sabk-e Hindī* embodied the incremental culmination of corruption in Persian writing. The remedy to this decline was to return to the style of Persia's 'golden period'.<sup>199</sup> This portrayal of India as the antithesis to an original 'Iranian' style may echo of the rivalry that is sometimes suggested to have existed between the Safavid and Mughal courts.<sup>200</sup> Indeed, litterateurs and artisans did migrate from Persia to India, lured by the patronage and political climate that Indian courts offered. Yet, if we read Bahar's historiography in light of the global trend towards vernacular language and localized literary history, it seems less likely that Bahar's model was inspired by a sense of historical rivalry between these territories.

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<sup>199</sup> Schwartz describes the style and representation of *Sabk-e-Hindī* as following: "The *sabk-i Hindī* style, better known to its practitioners at the time as *shīvah-yi tāzah* (fresh style) or *tāzah-gū'ī* (fresh speak), was particularly known for its intellectualism, challenging imagery, and intricate metaphors... In this narrative, poetry defined as *sabk-i Hindī* is negatively viewed as abstract, abstruse, and overly complicated. The predominance of the supposedly deleterious *sabk-i Hindī* style in the Persianate world is offered as the *raison d'être* for the Iranian poets instigating a "return." Kevin Schwartz. "Bāzgasht-i Adabī (Literary Return) and Persianate Literary Culture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Iran, India, and Afghanistan" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2014), 6.

<sup>200</sup> Mana Kia challenges this historiography. She writes, "The dominant proto-nationalist narrative employment of this conflict poses the enmity between Hazīn and his Hindustani-born detractors as iconic of the state of Persianate culture, casting into shadow Hazīn's Irani-born detractors, as well as the nature of more commonplace friendships and collaborations. The assumption is that Irani Persian scorn of Hindustan was muted so long as material resources existed to provide Irani migrants with exalted positions and material wealth. As soon as these opportunities became limited due to the decline of the Mughal center and competition from local Persians, innate Irani prejudices and chauvinisms were expressed in all their vitriol, with Hazīn as the example par excellence. Such narratives elide the possibility of social and political ties based on a shared sense of community as they assume the nucleus of national identities governing the sense of commonality." Mana Kia, *Contours of Persianate*, 189

We must also recall that much of the literary ‘reform’ advocated by Azad and Hali also denigrated the stylistic features associated with *Sabk-e Hindī*. In fact, many scholars agree that Azad’s qualms with the pre-modern ghazal were in fact particular to the *Sabk-e Hindī* style.<sup>201</sup> Yet, in Azad’s historiography these very deteriorations and corruptions of poetry are attributed to *Persian* influence! In much the same way that the *Bāzgasht-e Adabī* writers are seen as rejecting *Sabk-e Hindī* to ‘return’ to more authentic ‘Persian’ style, Azad laments that Urdu poetry’s loss of naturalness is a result its Persian influences. Everything that the *Bāzgasht-e Adabī* Persian writes attributed to an ‘Indian’ style, Urdu writers saw as being a result of Persian influence on their own authentic, natural style. This comparison between *Water of Life* and Muhammad Taqi Bahar’s construction of the *Bāzgasht-e Adabī* movement, thus, illustrates some of the vital parallels between these historiographies: both employ a tripartite model of history that entails a golden period which is followed by a long decay and then remedied through a moment of cultural revitalization. They both also demonstrate how the periodized arrangement of the tazkirah was effective in elaborating nativist paradigms of literary authenticity and, thus, participating in the balkanization of what was once a more interrelated and multilingual poetic terrain.<sup>202</sup> Yet, the shared trends of historiography between this modern Persian and modern Indian context suggest that even behind this fracturing of the Indo-Persian literary terrain, we may find important socio-political parallels. Indeed, I argue that there are social parallels behind the more formal correspondence of a shared ‘narrative arc’ that begins with an age of purity and concludes at the moment of a literary reformation. As David Perkin’s writes in his study *Is*

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<sup>201</sup> See Shamsur Rahman Faruqi. "A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of Sabk-I Hindi." *In Critical Theory: Perspectives from Asia*, edited by Naqi Husain Jafri. (New Delhi: Creative Books, 2004)

<sup>202</sup> See Paul Losensky. *Welcoming Fighani: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal*. Bibliotheca Iranica: Literature Series. (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998).

*Literary History Possible*, this particular narrative of decline and reawakening was popular throughout the nineteenth-century.

The advantages of nineteenth-century literary histories were manifold and enormous. ... With the unfolding of an idea, principle, suprapersonal entity, or Geist as its subject, a literary history became teleological. It acquired a plot, could assume a point of view, and might generate considerable narrative interest. ... The possible plots of narrative literary history can be reduced to three: rise, decline, and rise and decline. The reason for this is that the hero of a narrative literary history is a logical subject—a genre, a style, the reputation of an author—and the plots are limited to what actions or transitions can be predicated of such heroes.<sup>203</sup>

This idea of the inherent teleology of periodized literary histories is what Sarah Grewal also suggests imbues literary history with ‘narrative’. Grewal’s analysis of *Tabaqāt-e Shū‘ara-i Hind* (1848), provides another significant example of the trend towards periodized tazkirah.<sup>204</sup>

It is precisely the introduction of origin and telos that I understand as part of the process of what I am calling here the narrativization of tazkirah. We may see evidence of this move toward chronological narrative in Karimuddin’s adaptive translation of De Tassy’s *Histoire*, especially given how each of these authors organizes their respective texts with regard to historical time.<sup>205</sup>

Both Perkins and Grewal convey through their discussion of ‘narrativization’ that key literary histories participated in imagining and articulating a national subject who, in the process of (re)finding his ‘voice’, retraced and revitalized the moment of mythic origin. Though he notes the nativist politics of *Water of Life*, Shamsur Rahman Faruqi is also keen to point out that

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<sup>203</sup> Perkins, David. *Is Literary History Possible?* Johns Hopkins paperbacks ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993), 5

<sup>204</sup> Grewal’s reading is built on a fascinating cross-reading of two “midnineteenth” tazkirahs, “one in French by Garcin De Tassy and another in Urdu by Karimuddin... each claims [to be] a translation of the other, and both of which translate the tazkirah genre into the burgeoning genre of literary history.” Sara Hakeem Grewal. “Urdu Through Its Others: Ghazal, Canonization, and Translation.” (Unpublished PhD. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2016), 39

<sup>205</sup> Sara Hakeem Grewal. “Urdu Through Its Others: Ghazal, Canonization, and Translation.” (Unpublished PhD. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2016), 130

contrary to the posture of ‘local’ tradition that it produces, such a practice of literary history was undoubtedly borrowed from British models of historiography.<sup>206</sup>

The main point, [Azad] says, is that the poetry of each different country reflects the geography and culture and customs of its country of origin... The naiveté and falseness of these statements needs no analysis; nor do we need to trace the origin of these ideas in English literary theory. ...First, Azad’s agenda here has a nativistic tilt; it is also a subtle attempt to wean Indo-Muslim literary producers away from Iran (and Arabia). Second, it satisfies the demands of the westernization project by making a remark about ‘English writing’ that is, in fact, almost a duplicate of Azad’s earlier remark about poetry in Bhasha. Third, it strikes a blow in favor of simplicity, non-abstractness of expression, emotion-rousing effect, and ‘realism’ in poetic discourse.<sup>207</sup>

If, indeed, such a model of historiography was influenced by English writing, we may wonder what *possibilities* it offered Urdu and Persian writers. How do we understand the participation of native writers in a form of knowledge production that, in narrating the decline of an Indo-Persian literary community, effectively guaranteed such a vision? Articulating this literary reform as an effect of ‘the westernization project’ can detract from recognizing the other major ‘identity’ markers of this exchange, namely the *class* dimensions of this reform movement. The employment of periodized literary history by proto-national writers (like the *naichral shā’irī* critics) points to how the myth of linguistic origin, which exacerbated identitarian fractures within North India communities, was also a mobilizing narrative for native bourgeois (rather

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<sup>206</sup> Frances Pritchett also finds Azad’s literary program to be heavily influenced by British tastes. She writes “Azad felt that Urdu had to change or die... he had begun to call for an Urdu literature that drew its ‘jewelry and robes of honor’ not from Persian but from ‘the storage-trunks of English’. In Azad’s eyes, emulating English was quite consistent with recapturing the simplicities of ‘Bhasha’, because English literature too was governed by a naturalistic poetics that aimed above all at transmitting emotional reactions from writer to reader.”

Frances Pritchett. “‘Everybody Knows This Much...’”, 22

<sup>207</sup> Shamsur Rahman Faruqi. “Constructing a Literary History, a Canon, and a Theory of Poetry” in *Ab-e-Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*. Trans. Frances Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, 42

than courtly) intellectuals.<sup>208</sup> In fact, the *tazkirah* always offered a slightly more ‘democratic’ perspective of historiography (and indeed archival practice) than the forms and practices of historiography that were typically sponsored by royal courts e.g. histories written by court historians.<sup>209</sup> As Lawrence and Hermansen note, “The urban notables who abound in the pages of Indo-Persian *tazkirah* are rarely rulers, sometimes religious scholars, but more often urban intellectuals”.<sup>210</sup> The class dimension adds a necessary layer to our understanding of the shift in modern *tazkirah* compilation from encyclopedic to historiographic schema. David Perkins and Karl Mannheim suggest that while encyclopedic anthologies convey the kind of disinterested perspective we may associate with a politics of the ‘status quo’, the teleological perspectives of narrativized literary histories tend to betray the ambitions and expectations of an emergent class.

To emphasize that historical reality is an array of particulars, heterogeneous and unstructurable, is typical of postmodernist cultural criticism. It is also an extreme version of a mode of historical perception that, according to Karl Mannheim characterizes a politically dominant class.

“A class which has already risen in the social scale tends to conceive of history in terms of unrelated, isolated events. Historical events appear as a process only as long as the class which views these events still expects something from it .... [With] success in the class struggle . . . there appears a picture of the world composed of mere immediate events and discrete facts. The idea of a "process" and of the structural intelligibility of history becomes a mere myth.”<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> The pursuit of colonial philologists to track indigenous languages down to their origin undoubtedly fed into the communalization of native populations in India through colonialist policy, numerous scholars have discussed this phenomenon particularly with regards to the bifurcation of Hindi and Urdu. See Shamsur Rahman Faruqi’s *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*.

<sup>209</sup> See Kalpana Dasgupta. “How Learned Were the Mughals: Reflections on Muslim Libraries in India” in *The Journal of Library History*. Vol. 10, No. 3 (Jul., 1975), 241-254.

<sup>210</sup> Lawrence and Hermansen. "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications", 151

<sup>211</sup> Perkins, *Is literary history possible?* 59.

Azad’s tazkirah—which moves away from the encyclopedic style of previous generations towards *tarīkh* or historical narrative—understands the larger reforms of the *naichral shā’irī* movement as a means to reorient poetry towards the ‘average’ reader and away from a class of people used to ‘luxury’.<sup>212</sup> Numerous records, in the form of correspondences and poems, corroborate the view that the climate of poetic production in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries was drastically affected by changing socio-economic parameters.<sup>213</sup> In the next chapter, I will attempt to situate some of the questions and dilemmas addressed in nineteenth-century poetic criticism *through* the rubric of *nēčār* in terms of the shifting social and economic contexts of literary practice. In fact, as the next chapter will argue, part of the ideal of ‘*nēčārī*’ poetry was that it was imagined to have a more immediate relationship to its ‘material’ conditions and, accordingly, more poised to produce desired social and political effects. I argue that, in large part, such a commentary reflects the shifting values of literary labor from a *nawābī* (courtly) to an *ashrāfī* (bourgeois) intellectual culture. By examining the ‘material’ conditions of poetry and the *representation of materiality* in eighteenth and nineteenth-century poetic culture, I demonstrate how the hermeneutic strategies and social-theories of poetry associated with ‘nature’ were influenced by changes in material circumstances, such as improvements to print technology and the rearrangement of institutions of poetic patronage.

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<sup>212</sup> Muhammad Hussain Azad. *Ab-e-Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*. Trans. Frances Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, 103

<sup>213</sup> See Pasha Mohamad Khan’s writing on the *shahr āshob* of late eighteenth-century Delhi “The Lament for Delhi” which discusses the representation of social and economic turbulence in poetry.

**Between *Dīn* (religion) and *Dunyā* (the world):  
The Currency of Metaphysical Poetry in a Material(ist) World**

*For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives  
In the valley of its making where executives  
Would never want to tamper*

- W. H. Auden, In memory of W. B. Yeats<sup>214</sup>

*pēt masrūf hē klerkī mēñ  
dil hē īrān aur turkī mēñ*

The stomach is busy with *clerkī*  
The heart is in Iran and Turkey  
-Akbar Illahabadi<sup>215</sup>

The following chapter diverges from the previous two chapters in some striking regards: the discussion of ‘nature’ is extremely light and the mention of ‘landscape’ is all but vanished. Instead, borrowing from Jamal al Din Afghani’s translation of *nēčārī* ideology as an essentially ‘materialist’ philosophy, this chapter outlines the role and representation of *materiality* in eighteenth-century poetic culture and the reformist criticism that followed it. This shift in terminological emphasis—from ‘nature’ to materiality—allows us to better trace the opposition to *nēčārī* reform by which I mean, not simply, its detractors (such as Afghani) but rather the very poetic culture that was typified by the eighteenth-century ghazal and vilified by its nineteenth-century reformists. What were the qualities of this literary tradition that spelled artificiality and ‘unnaturalness’ in the eyes of reformists? I argue that, in large part, reformists viewed the *other-worldliness* of eighteenth-century poetry as its chief aberration from ‘natural expression’; this

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<sup>214</sup> W. H. Auden. "In Memory of W. B. Yeats." *Another Time*. New York City: Random House, 1940. Poets.org. Academy of American Poets. Web. 16 Dec. 2016.

<sup>215</sup> Akbar Allahabadi. *Kulliyāt-I Akbar Allāhābādī: Ma ‘rūf Bih, Lisān Al-‘Aṣr*. Lahore: Sang-i Mīl Publīkeshanz, 2008. 579



included forms of ambiguity and rhetorical complexity, as well as a distinct investment in metaphysical contemplation. Of course, eighteenth-century literariness understood its own ‘separateness’ from the world quite differently. By examining some of the Indo-Persian poetic conventions (as well as the material conditions that produced it) we may go beyond, simply, examining the eighteenth-century Indo-Persian ghazal through terms offered by nineteenth-century reformists and, instead, imagine what kind of counter-argument the ghazal offered in response to ‘*nēčārī* ideology’.

In many respects, this chapter corroborates Afghani’s assessment of the *nēčārīs* (naturalists) as materialists, though I do not intend such a designation as a slight. I argue that, in addition to the effects we traced in the previous chapter, the reformist representation of ‘*nēčār*’ also implied an increased emphasis on the versification of material and physical reality. In fact, these critics were so undoubtedly concerned with rethinking and reengineering Urdu poetry’s relationship to its material conditions that the discourse of *nēčār* was, itself, implicated in their social theories of poetry.<sup>216</sup> Moreover, just as the hermeneutical strategies of the eighteenth-century Indo-Persian poetry were embedded in the material circumstances of its eighteenth century production, I read the very discourse of *nēčār*’ as highly symptomatic of the new bourgeois literary values of the nineteenth century. I suggest that pronounced shifts in print

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<sup>216</sup> When scouring the corpus of nineteenth-century Urdu poetry, it is undoubtedly tempting to consider how the predominant tones and moods of verse correspond to this period of sociological, political and economic tumult. It has, of course, been an ongoing and worthy debate within Urdu poetry studies for the past several decades whether poetry, and particularly poetry of a para-colonial Indo-Persian tradition, can provide any stable and reliable sociological information about the environment of its formation. The polarities of either side of this debate are unconvincing; neither can poetry (generally speaking) stand alone as some sort of proof or index of a particular situation nor is it compelling to suggest that poetry (generally speaking) betrays no sign or evidence of the climate of its creation. In practice, few critics ascribe stringently to either of these positions/philosophies; it is always a question of the *degree* to which we may read the particulars of verse as indicative of their worldly context.

technology and institutions of poetic patronage in the nineteenth century, precipitated a new market for literature and, thus, new cultures of textuality and reading.

### **i. Loyalty, Labor and Poetic Representation**

Unlike other verse genres, such as the ghazal or the *masnavī*, the poetic satire for which Akbar Allahabadi (1846-1921) is remembered, is rarely accused of being too ‘removed’ from reality. Instead, the sardonic quality of Allahabadi’s writing has been read as reflective of the Urdu writer’s witty resilience in the face of colonial subjugation. Allahabadi’s abovementioned couplet (*she ‘r*) can also be read as dramatizing what were, arguably, the central concerns of this period in terms of a contest between the stomach and the heart. The stomach, that is busy with the work of clerkship, behaves as an organ responsible for the body’s nourishments should: it busies itself in the face of hunger to meet the base needs of the body. The heart, as always, behaves (or misbehaves) by operating in contradiction to the stomach: its location in Iran and Turkey points to the philosophical and political, rather than physical, distance between these two terrains of writing. As the etymology of *clerkī*, from clerkship, might convey, the unarticulated but resonant detail of this *she ‘r* is that the stomach’s employer is likely the British colonial government. Where the writerly labor of a clerkship sustains the body, the heart is committed to its conventional role within poetry: to demonstrate loyalty (*wafā*) to its Beloved against the tests of time. The heart is not simply upholding the image of a poetic self that is conventionalized in the ghazal—loyal, devoted, and stubbornly committed to contemplating a *dūsri jahān* (alternate realm)—it is attesting fidelity to literary conventions that connect the poet with Iran and Turkey as a labor of *love*. Though the *she ‘r* portrays a splitting of the writers’ body (and self) between these two points of rhyme, ‘*clerkī*’ and ‘turkey’, the contest is not simply between work and

poetry, or an amateur poet's writing and his day job. Rather, the conflict is between two disparate writerly modes, each with its own culture of penmanship and each pertaining to distinct literary conventions and *hermeneutic empires*. Allahabadi's *she'r* thus versifies a geo-political confrontation between British colonial and Persianate institutions of writing; both represent specific regimes of reading and imagine a distinct society of letters that would demarcate the geographic range of its audience. More poignantly, the couplet also offers a figuration of the dwindling currency of courtly, Indo-Persian poetics in a literary-economy. When Allahabadi's *she'r* places this contest of 'global', even civilizational, scale within the very person of the poet, it both highlights the worldly context of this verse's production and *refracts* this situation through the poetic principles of the ghazal.<sup>217</sup>

Allahabadi's *she'r* portrays the crucial tensions of nineteenth-century poetic production as emanating not, simply, from the philological differences between British Victorian poetry and Indo-Persian Poetry, but also the shifts in economic conditions. By attending to the changes in poetic patronage and employment opportunities for litterateurs, most notably with the arrival of colonial literary institutions and improved print technologies, this chapter highlights how material and sociological dimensions of poetic production shaped the ideological and aesthetic features of *both* the ghazal *and* the nineteenth-century program to reorient this tradition to a more common reader. The *naichral shāi'ri* critics, of course, deemed Urdu poetry too removed from the daily concerns of common people and incapable of rousing people towards political action. The ghazal was, in fact, deeply imbedded in the socio-political ideologies of its courtly context and we can even trace the ghazal's language of 'mad-love' in a number of non-elite (common)

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<sup>217</sup> We might even read this couplet as a representation of *jihad-e nafs* or struggle against the ego.

political movements of the colonial period too.<sup>218</sup> Still, the *naichral shāi'ri* critics were certainly justified in recognizing that, by the standards of modern national literature, the metaphysically-inclined ghazal was far too 'other-worldly'. Thus, reformists of this period felt strongly that the 'modernization' of the Urdu ghazal depended on redirecting the ghazal's attention to more 'material' and 'common' concerns. Their writing even suggests that such a shift was precisely what could make Urdu poetry, finally, natural. In this regard, nineteenth-century literary production in North India betrays some of the same 'primitivist' notions of authenticity that were popular across much of the globe, and particularly in Western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries. While the intellectual culture of this period exhibited an admiration for 'elementary' literature, particularly in the form of songs, the poetic commentaries that valorized this 'rustic' language were largely written by bourgeois literati. In poetry, this trend was exemplified by the collection of folk songs and folk poems across Europe, the Americas, and in colonies such as India.<sup>219</sup> In addition to collecting such cultural artifacts, poets, litterateurs, and musicians imitated these samples of the simple, unspoiled beauty of 'common' expression. Arguably, one of the most influential and prominent of such poetic experiments was William Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). In the advertisement to this collection, Wordsworth writes,

The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, ...[will] struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to enquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. ... such readers, ... should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the

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<sup>218</sup> I will discuss this more in chapter four.

<sup>219</sup> For an example of Indian 'folk songs' see *The Oriental Miscellany* collected by William Hamilton Bird.

answer be favourable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision.<sup>220</sup>

Wordsworth's inclinations towards more 'rustic' language might already be discernable through the very title, *Lyrical Ballads*; the ballad was, of course, a center-piece of eighteenth-century Anglo-American fascination with folk culture. Wordsworth's commentary highlights how the impulse to repopulate poetry with plebian vocabulary was seen as a project of revealing the "natural delineation of human passions...characters ...[and] incidents." The primitivist idealization of non-elite poetry was, as in this instance, often underwritten by a kind of universalist humanism. Thus, Wordsworth's radical departure from "gaudiness and inane phraseology" towards the "language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society" was not understood as a shift from one *particular* (elite) linguistic register to another *particular* register, but as a reorientation from the narrow confines of an elite scope to the broadest representation of humankind. The *naichral shāi 'rī* movement, as I have already discussed, also mobilized some of these primitivist perceptions of authenticity, particularly in its promotion of 'everyday' and common speech.<sup>221</sup> In fact, the reproof towards aristocratic sensibility that we might discern in Wordsworth's commentary is all the more amplified in the Urdu reform movement. For the Urdu reformists, it was precisely Urdu poetry's "removal from the bustle and commotion of life" that had to be rectified. Accordingly, disassociating the ghazal from the elite *nawābī* culture within which it had previously flourished became a primary concern.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge. *Advertisement to Lyrical Ballads*. (1798)

<sup>221</sup> For more information on Ballad historiography see Patricia Fumerton, Anita Guerrini, and Kris McAbee, eds. *Ballads and Broad-sides in Britain, 1500-1800*. Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010.

<sup>222</sup> This quote "removed from the bustle and commotion of life", is taken from Adorno's essay "On Lyric

## ii. Realms of the Ghazal

My earlier reading of Allahabadi's couplet briefly gestures to one such metaphysical quality of the ghazal. Allahabadi's dilemma of divided loyalties between *clerkī* and Turkey can be understood as a new face of the established convention of contemplating reality in ghazal poetry through the trope of multiple *jahāñ* (realm) or *ālam* (universe). The discussion of *ālam* or *jahāñ* (worlds/realms) in the ghazal often brings attention to the dream-like and temporary nature of the world. For example, in each of the subsequent *ash'ār* by Ghalib, the 'realm' in question is portrayed as inherently unstable.<sup>223</sup> The first *she'r* can be read as declaring the pleasures of this world to be insignificant as dust, or literally as 'dust'. In the second *she'r* the *āshiq* sees the world as footprints of his beloved which transform into the flowerbeds of Irem.<sup>224</sup> In the final *she'r*, although Ghalib is already discussing a 'world' of rhetoric (*ālam-e taqrīr*), this too dematerializes further when it evades the nets of 'hearing'.<sup>225</sup>

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Poetry and Society" in which the Frankfurt school critic characterizes lyric poetry with much of the same anti-social properties that we might argue germinate in nineteenth-century British and Urdu Romantic movements towards making poetry more representative of 'the people'. Yet, Adorno's model of the lyric is also unlike Wordsworth's in many respects. Most importantly, while Wordsworth's experiment with 'lyric' poetry is imagined as a more democratic direction in writing, Adorno's 'lyric' is inversely *symptomatic* of the alienated subject of late capitalism.

See Theodore Adorno. "On Lyric Poetry and Society" in *The Lyric Reader*.

<sup>223</sup> This is but a small selection of verses; readers can scan a wider selection of such verses by 'search' terms *jahāñ* and *ālam* on online poetry repositories like Rekhta.com.

<sup>224</sup> The visage-mirage like quality of the gardens is emphasized by the fact that these are the flowerbeds of *Irem* which, as we discussed in chapter one, is mentioned in the Quran as a city that was vanquished by God. In Orientalist and Persian accounts, the gardens and city of *Irem*, only appear to select travelers in flashes of sight that serve as reminders of the lesson that the city (and its king, Shaddad) represents.

<sup>225</sup> The following examples and translations are derived from Frances Pritchett's online compilation of the Divan of Mirza Ghalib. Pritchett offers a much more detailed and nuanced interpretation of each couplet on her website.

*maze jahān ke apnī nazār meñ khāk nahīñ  
sivā-e khūn-e jigar so jigar meñ khāk nahīñ*

the pleasures of the world, in [my] own view, are but dust  
except for the blood of the liver, there's nothing in the liver but dust<sup>226</sup>

*jahāñ terā naqsh-e qadam dekhte haiñ  
khiyābāñ khiyābāñ iram dekhte haiñ*

Where we see your footprint  
We see flowerbed upon flowerbed of Iram<sup>227</sup>

*āgahī dām-e shanīdan jis qadar chāhe bichhā 'e  
mudda 'ā 'anqā hai apne 'ālam-e taqrīr kā*

Let intelligence spread the net of hearing to whatever extent it might wish  
the intention/meaning of my world of speech is the Anqa<sup>228</sup>

As I elaborate in this chapter, this convention of shedding doubt on the nature of reality was one of the many ways in which ghazal poets contemplated and commented on the metaphysical and philosophical dimensions of mystic love. The next *she 'r* by modern poet, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, is one of the most popular variations of this theme in modern Urdu poetry.

*Donoñ jahāñ terī mohabbat mai hār ke,  
Wo jā rahā he koi shab-e ḡham guzār ke*

Having lost out both worlds in his love for you  
Having spent a night of sorrow someone bids adieu<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Khan, Mirza "Ghalib" Asadullah Baig. "Ghazal 114, Verse 1." *A Desertful of Roses: The Urdu Ghazals of Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib*. Trans. Frances Pritchett. Web. 16 Dec. 2016.

<sup>227</sup> Khan, Mirza "Ghalib" Asadullah Baig. "Ghazal 96, Verse 1." *A Desertful of Roses: The Urdu Ghazals of Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib*. Trans. Frances Pritchett. Web. 16 Dec. 2016.

<sup>228</sup> Pritchett explains *Anqa* as "A bird from Arabic story tradition, whose single defining trait is his not-there-ness. Whenever you try to catch him, he's gone."  
Khan, Mirza "Ghalib" Asadullah Baig. "Ghazal 1, Verse 4." *A Desertful of Roses: The Urdu Ghazals of Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib*. Trans. Frances Pritchett. Web. 16 Dec. 2016.

<sup>229</sup> Faiz Ahmad Faiz. "Donoñ Jahān Terī Mohabbat Meñ Hār Kē." *Rekhta*. Web. 16 Dec. 2016.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz’s mention of ‘both’ realms articulates an important subtext of this wider discussion of reality—that the ghazal (and its characters) are almost always working across two planes of reference: *ẓāhir* and *bātin*, the worldly and the transcendent, the visible and the hidden. This is perhaps most widely evident in the *hāl* or state of the *āshiq* who is brought to the brink of financial, social, and even spiritual destitution by the torture of love. Perhaps what is most pleasurable about Faiz’ *she’r* is that while the ghazal’s protagonist is usually a ‘loser’ of sorts—socially and, even, morally destitute—these failings usually pertain only to the physical realm of life. The seasoned ghazal reader knows that the *āshiq*’s ‘failure’ is purely illusory. The *āshiq* (and the advanced reader) see beyond the material, surface reality of things, lifting—as it were—the *veil* of poetry to recognize that his demonstration of loyalty allows the *āshiq* to achieve victory in the higher and ultimate realm. When Faiz’s *āshiq* loses in *both* realms, this does not subvert the ghazal’s logic so much as it exaggerates the effect and extends the metaphor, thus outdoing all other *āshiq*’s and all other ghazals. In fact, in many instances, the *āshiq* is jubilant and ecstatic in the face of his own infamy. What his detractors see as ‘madness’ is, in fact, a transcendent knowledge which, according to some Sufi practices, can be arrived at through renunciation (*zuhd*) and poverty (*faqr*).<sup>230</sup>

Although the ghazal habitually adopts a logic that we may describe as anti-materialist, the role that poetry played in the demonstration of gentlemanly conduct was also paramount in elite Indo-Muslim sociability. By studying poetry, young men of learning were expected to master the

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<sup>230</sup> This program of *zuhd* and *faqr* is particularly associated with the Suhrawardī Silsilā, but, I would argue, is resonant in a much broader capacity too. See N. Hanif. *Central Asia and Middle East*. 1. ed. New Delhi: Sarup, 2002. Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis, 2. 472 and Erik S. Ohlander. *Sufism in an Age of Transition: ‘Umar Al-Suhrawa’dī and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008. *Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts* v. 71.137-187



craft of verbal eloquence and linguistic competence. This endeavor was also a primary means through which to learn and develop the proper *akhlāq*, which we may understand as the ethical, moral, and virtuous temperament. Mana Kia gives a thorough purview of this ethical scope of gentlemanly education in her article “Adab as Ethics of Literary Form and Social Conduct: Reading the Gulistān in Late Mughal India”.

Just as *adab* and *akhlāq* were interlinked through their shared stake in moral virtue, *adab* itself had dual valences, the literary and the social, which have been described as “both polite learning and its uses: the improvement of one’s understanding by instruction and experience... results in civility and becomes a means of achieving social goals.” The *adīb* was an individual with “a knowledge of history, poetry, ideas, proverbs, parallels, precedents and the correct and pleasing use of language,” which was “the social and intellectual currency of the elite and of those who aspire[d] to be a part of it.” In early modern India, its acquisition was significant socially and politically for both men of learning and men of power, who were sometimes one and the same, as something to produce, practice, or patronize. In the broader context of Islamicate societies, men of learning saw “themselves as architects of civilization and guarantors of its survival in the teeth of political upheavals.”<sup>231</sup>

In light of the class dimensions of poetic practice, we must acknowledge that there is a profound irony in how a familiarity with the ghazal’s conventionalized language of social marginalization could, in fact, be socially advantageous. In some regards, this is an important corrective to the reformists critique that ghazal poetic convention was unproductive and futile; to the contrary, if social currency depended on demonstrating one’s exclusivity, the uniquely imaginative scenarios and hermeneutic complexity of Persianate poetic convention were *effective* in creating the challenges that would maintain the selectness of learned society. In this regard, the third volume of Shibli Nomani’s influential study *Poetry of the Persians (She’r ul Ajam)*, demonstrates how elite *class* norms might have inflected the very ideals of *akhlāq* and how poetic education

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<sup>231</sup> Mana Kia. “Adab as Literary Form and Social Conduct: Reading the Gulistan in Late Mughal India” *Columbia University Academic Commons* (2014). 282

configured in the transmission of these socio-cultural values. In a section devoted to ethical poetry (*aḵhlāqī sha‘irī*), one subsection of particular interest is titled “the ills of servitude and employment” (*mulāzmat aur naukrī kī burai*):

The primary reason for the destruction and ruination (*tabāh aur barbād*) of *aḵhlāq* is employment and servitude (*naukrī aur mulāzmat*). It was impossible to maintain the dignity of ego (*naḡs*) when employed at the Asian courts, this is why poets would express the ills (*burāiyāñ*) of employment with extreme abundance (*nihāyat kasrat*) and through multiple poetic techniques (*mukhtalif shā‘irānā iarīqoñ se*).<sup>232</sup>

Nomani then proceeds to relate several poetic verses of Omar Khayyam, Jaami, Ibn Ameen, and Sauda in order to convey the underlying principle that it is preferable to survive on the barest means and harshest conditions, if this spares one from having to serve another. The example of a *hikāyat* from the reknowned poet Farid ul-Din Attar is particularly interesting:

One day Asm‘ai was riding a horse when he saw an honest worker (*halāl-ḵhōr*) who kept doing his work and saying to himself “oh ego (*naḡs*), I was always mindful of your dignity (‘*izzat*)”. Asm‘ai said, “What could be more degrading work (*dhalīl kām*) than cleaning horse manure.” The (*halāl-ḵhōr*) replied, I may clean horse manure (*najāsat*) but, at least I am not anyone’s employee (*kiṣī kī naukrī to nahī kartā*).<sup>233</sup>

In this instance, *ḵhōrī*’ refers to the consumption of money and *halāl-ḵhōr* signifies one who *earns* through permissible (*halāl*) means. There is no definitive list of conditions that might makes one’s income *halāl*. The phrase ‘*rozī halāl karnā*’ (to make one’s income *halāl*) functions mostly as a foil to its opposite, ‘*harām kī kamaṯ*’ which may be used to describe any dishonest or immoral form of employment. If the previous excerpts from Nomani’s *She‘r ul Ajam* simply suggest that *mulāzmat* (servitude) forces an individual to compromise his ethical and moral standard, we may wonder what kind of possibility this leaves for individuals hoping to ‘serve’ as

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<sup>232</sup> Shibli Numani. *Shi‘r al-‘ajam*. 5 vols. Azamgarh: Ma‘arif Press, 1920. 198  
<http://www.archive.org/details/shiralajam00shibuoft>

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 201

educators or litterateurs; what kind of relationship can there be between *akhlāqī* knowledge (transferred through *adab*) and income. We may argue that the socio-economic limitations projected on such an ideal of the *adīb*—whose status as gentleman is compromised by serving in the employment of another—reinforces the values of a class whose income was largely derived from the management of feudal land through taxation.<sup>234</sup> The extreme suspicion towards ‘employment’ that this *hikāyat* exhibits can be read as privileging moral virtue over the ‘base’, ‘stomach-oriented’ issues of sustenance and, as such, of aligning with the marginalized yet resolutely ‘loyal’ position of the ghazal’s protagonist. Yet, in the very next section, Nomani seems to even castigate the indirect and (sometimes) non-monetary forms of literary patronage that were practiced in *nawābī* culture through performative and voluntaristic practices of ‘*khidmatguzārī*’.

Because person-worship (*shakhs-parastī*) had exceeded its limits in Asia, people considered serving (*khidmatguzārī aur naẓr-o niyāz pēsh karnā*) the friends of god (*ahl-e kamāl*) their good fortune (*sa ‘ādat*). This exceeded up to the point that every nobody (*har kas-o nākas*) got the taste of it and slowly slowly free eating (*muftīkhōrī*) became the custom (*rivāj*). Sufis, artists, poets, kings and elites would subsist on donations (*aytiyāt*) and awards (*in ‘āmāt*) and this was not considered a fault (*‘eib*).<sup>235</sup>

It’s important to note that Nomani’s anecdotes do not offer explicit recommendations on ethical conduct. They simply illustrate scenarios in which the relationship between employment and socio-ethical dignity are contrasted. If there is any prescription of proper gentlemanly conduct, it is left understated and vague. The interpretative labor required to ascertain the lessons and truths of such didactic texts is, thus, challenging. Such ‘veiledness’ of poetry and ethico-didactic texts was, accordingly, a primary concern for reformists. If Nomani’s text simply sketches a sense of

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<sup>234</sup> See Irfan Habib. “Classifying Pre-Colonial India.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 12.2–3 (1985): 44–53.

<sup>235</sup> Nomani, *Shi‘r al-‘ajam*, 203

compromise between matters of finance and moral-virtue for its audience of educated gentlemen, it is important to recognize how such material diverges from late nineteenth century didactic novels like *Mirāt-ul ‘Urūs (The Brides Mirror)*, in which habits of frugality and financial responsibility are visibly connected with moral virtue.

The non-portrayal of economic necessity is, perhaps, dismissive of and negligent towards the more basic concerns of a poet’s existence. Alternatively, another way to understand this seemingly paradoxical ‘anti-materialism’ of elite poetic culture is to read its renunciative rhetoric not as a romanticization of poverty, but as a gesture of relinquishing *personal* aspiration in favor of the most resolute fidelity towards the Beloved. As Mana Kia outlines in *Contours of Persianate Community, 1722-1835*, eighteenth and nineteenth century Persian *adab* construed *friendship* and *loyalty* as the most primary of virtues. After all, rivalries and alliances were a constant (and pressing) political reality of the courtly context in which this literariness was practiced. Thus loyalty—or its rhetorical demonstration, in any case—features prominently in Indo-Persian *adab*. While Kia focuses on more obviously ethico-didactic examples of literature, much of the poetic language germane to these texts is especially evident in the ghazal. In particular, although the trope of an enlightened *faqīr* is found across multiple ‘genres’, this was especially central to ghazal poetry. The ghazal also conventionalizes the representation of poverty and social marginalization as a mark of ultimate spiritual fidelity. Contrary to the reformist portrayal of ghazal poetics as apolitical, such a portrayal of loyalty, indeed, had significant political connotations; it simply versified issues of power relation through the allegory of love.

The political dimensions of the ghazal’s ‘anti-materialist’ posture may be best approached through the concept of *ghurbat*, which translates as estrangement and is a primary

concept for ghazal reception. The key tropes or poetic metaphors that embody the theme of *ghurbat* vary depending on which linguistic and historical moment of the ghazal we are addressing. Most scholars agree that the first iteration of the ghazal (or the proto-ghazal) was adapted from the *nasīb* section of the pre-Islamic *qasīda*.<sup>236</sup> Separation is a conventional narrative impulse in the *nasīb*, often in the form of a Bedouin lover's separation (*hijr*) from his Beloved upon her departure from an encampment. In this context, separation (*hijr*) also provides the occasion for following sections of the *qasīda* such as the boast (*fakhr*) of the Beloved, as well the catalyst for the poetic speakers' travel into the desert (*rahīl*). Across the many years of ghazal writing and development, its writers have collected, cross-bred, and conventionalized other narratives of separation into the 'original' frame story of the ghazal; Laila and Majnun, God from his devotee, the exile from his beloved city, the revolutionary from his ideal, the list goes on. The repertoire of narratives germane to the ghazal world has, thus, expanded over time. While the discussion of *ghurbat* is most often employed to discuss the physical and metaphysical distance between a lover and his beloved, it undoubtedly aspires to wider meaning.

An illuminating, but not wholly surprising, shift takes place in the pedestrian meaning of *ghurbat* in Urdu. While specific employments of the term, such as the colloquial phrase '*ajīb-o-gharīb*', still convey the original connotation of strangeness, *ghurbat* more commonly translates as poverty while *gharīb* as one who is poor. The distance that the word, *gharīb*, has 'travelled'—from its Arabic root to its more pedestrian use in Urdu—reveals the many layers of meaning that the term contains and which have unfolded over time to intimate a relationship between estrangement (particularly physical exile) and poverty. The ghazal's speaker adopts a repertoire of personas, such as the outcast, the madman, the *qalandar*. This range suggests that while

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<sup>236</sup> See Renate Jacobi. "The Origins of the Qasida Form." *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*. Ed. Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996. 21-34.

estrangement and alienation may lead to spiritual enlightenment, such a process often—if not necessarily—entails social marginalization and economic destitution. In this way, the philosophical elaboration of distance has always been a compelling concept to the ghazal. The ‘lover’, as the ghazal speaker is often identified, seeks to contemplate and overcome the suffering of alienation. For this task, the lover adopts, and ultimately embodies, a distinctly *metaphysical* understanding of presence that delineates and accentuates the difference between worldly knowledge (*ẓāhir*, the visible) and divine knowledge (*bātin*, the hidden). In shedding a purely materialist outlook on his physical condition, the ghazal protagonist is better able to transcend his own suffering.

It is somewhat frustrating to classical ghazal enthusiasts, then, that the *naichral shā'irī* critics, sought to redesign the Urdu ghazal towards more ‘worldly’ ends by amplifying its social utility. After all, the classical ghazal had little interest in responding to material suffering with material solutions. The ghazal *āshiq* conventionally adopts the perspective of an unhappy lover, an outcast, or a ‘madman’, in order to demonstrate how spiritual enlightenment can make one impervious to material suffering.<sup>237</sup> The *āshiq*'s impoverishment in the quest for his beloved is, in fact, a necessary process to his philosophical maturation because attaining enlightenment depends on him stripping away his ego. While the lover may achieve a mad state of transcendence and elation, this is almost always at the expense of his social, mental, and physical well-being. It is an unfair, though not uncommon, historiography that reads the ghazal's discussion of ruin, poverty, and powerlessness as a sign of social morbidity. Not only does it literalize the poetic statement, it interprets an iterative and context-specific reading practice—

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<sup>237</sup> See Harbans Mukhia. "The Celebration of Failure as Dissent in Urdu Ghazal." *Modern Asian Studies* 33: (1999): 861-81.

that rarely assigned a singular, fixed meaning to verse—by more utilitarian conceptions of poetic language in which the relationship between poetic statement and social effect was imagined to be far more deterministic and rigid. In offering a metaphysical perspective, the classical ghazal differentiated between worldly or outward knowledge (*ẓāhir* or visible) and divine knowledge (or *bātin*, the hidden). This relationship between ‘inner’ enrichment and ‘outer’ impoverishment not only sought to reject materialist philosophy, but also argued for the inverse reading too: that worldly knowledge is an impoverished philosophy.

What makes the metaphysical concept of *ẓāhir/bātin* particularly central to the ghazal is that its resonance extends beyond just a few themes/tropes to permeate some of the most fundamental concepts of ghazal interpretation. Indeed, the concept of multiple ‘realms’ (*jahān*) is replicated in ghazal writing through the practice of aspiring to multiple layers of significance. One fairly essential example of this multi-meaning hermeneutics is the ghazal’s concept of metaphoric and divine love, or *‘ishq-e majāzī* and *‘ishq-e haqīqī*. To interpret a *she’r* in terms of *‘ishq-e majāzī* (metaphoric love) is to imagine the ghazal’s versification of eros as directed towards a worldly object, such as a human lover, respected teacher (*pīr*), or even a particular social reality, like the versification of political revolution as the beloved.<sup>238</sup> On the other hand, *‘ishq-e haqīqī*, or true love, is understood exclusively as devotion for the exclusive and omnipotent God. Yet, since worldly love (*‘ishq-e-majāzī*) is often conceived as a first—and necessary—step towards understanding *‘ishq-e haqīqī*, the two cannot be regarded as mutually exclusive. Often, the tenor and vocabulary of a *she’r* will blur the distinction between these two registers of devotion. Such ambiguity and multiplicity of association was, in fact, preferred.

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<sup>238</sup> For a fuller understanding of both this reading and its lacunae in the reception of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, See Mufti, Aamir. *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007. 210-243

As Walter Hakala’s research outlines, Indo-Persian and Urdu poets also employed a variety of other techniques—such as verbal word play, homophones, and puns—to achieve the desired complexity and ambiguity. Such techniques of practicing of *īhām*, or casting in doubt, were particularly appreciated by poetry connoisseurs who could decipher the nuanced and delicate word play (*nazuk k̄hiyālī*) of advanced poets.<sup>239</sup> Indeed, this world of poetry (*suk̄han*) could be so heavily coded and nuanced, that one required guided initiation to acquire the knowledge of its rules, codes and metaphors.

Ambiguity in poetry and lexicography is often couched in terms of the classical distinction, familiar to students of Islam and Persianate poetry, between the latent (*bātin*) and manifest (*zāhir*), or invisible and visible, particularly associated with various forms of Islamic gnosticism. This binary system was often represented by pairs of contrasting terms, often extended metaphorically to include qualities of lightness and darkness, clarity and obscurity, base and superstructure, etc. The general idea is that some forms of knowledge require initiation, and should therefore not be made publicly available. Authors, in order to shield their knowledge from uninitiated and therefore undeserving readers, would deliberately introduce ambiguity into their discourse, fully intending their work to undergo intense scrutiny. The reader, for his part, was expected to possess enough of a grasp of hermeneutics to engage fruitfully with a text, ideally under the supervision of a responsible and reliable guide.<sup>240</sup>

We can imagine how this ambiguity-seeking style of poetry (*īhām-goī*) would have been particularly ineffective at enabling the kind of mass-politics that the *naichral shā’irī* critics imagined.<sup>241</sup> It may come as no surprise, then, that a number of literary histories (like *Water of*

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<sup>239</sup> Hakala gives some details on these techniques of creating poetic ambiguity “Occasionally, the ambiguity worked as a visual pun: a single term, written down, might resemble or reproduce the orthographic form of another unrelated term (as in the case of a homograph). Or it could be a homophone, with an identical pronunciation but a different orthographic representation. While it is currently impossible to identify the extent to which individual poets and appreciators of poetry may have needed to consult lexicographic works to create and comprehend poetic ambiguity, it is clear that both poetry and lexicography relied upon similar modes of intertextuality in support of their respective modes of “creating” meanings.” Hakala, *Diction and Dictionaries*, 230

<sup>240</sup> Hakala, *Diction and Dictionaries*, 191-192

<sup>241</sup> Hakala uses the broader concept of *īhām* to discuss the role of ambiguity in eighteenth-century Urdu literary culture. He writes “The most famous type of wordplay in Urdu is called *īhām*. *īhām* is an Arabic



*Life*) project polyvalence and ambiguity as qualities that were particularly appreciated in the eighteenth century Indo-Persian ghazal which, as I discussed in the previous chapter, was represented as the decadent ‘high style’ of ghazal poetry.<sup>242</sup> As Hakala and Kia explain, genteel literary texts, especially those of a morally or spiritually instructive nature, were decidedly hierarchical. Mana Kia discusses this in terms of one of the central texts of Persian education, Saadi’s *Gulistān* (Rose Garden).

For some, the problem with the *Gulistān* would not be the wisdom it sought to impart, but the form of its expression. By understanding his literary *adab* as superfluous, as only for entertainment, these detractors marked themselves as capable of seeing only the most superficial aspect of the work. But the sensibilities of the *ṣāhibdīlān* or perceptive ones, to whom the text is addressed, illuminate their perspective, allowing them to see the underlying ethico-didactic level of social *adab*. These two levels of *adab* work together in the text, the honey of the literary form more effectively conveys the healing, yet bitter counsel allows for a proper grasp of ethics. In this sense, aesthetics *is* ethics. The *ḥikāyat*’s “entertainment and amusement” enables this necessary counsel’s greater reach, bestowing the good fortune that comes with wisdom’s successful reception (*qabūl*), which, as we shall see, is a key part of the possibility of Persianate perfection.

Sa’dī’s presentation of the intertwined social and literary *adab* most effectively taught through *ḥikāyāt* are echoed in other ethico-didactic texts. One such eighteenth-century text is *Fayẓ-i Mīr*, a collection of five *ḥikāyāt*, by Mīr Muḥammad Taqī “Mīr” (1723-1810), ...[also makes] an oblique reference to two levels of readers: one childlike, reading and enjoying stories while learning the basic contours of writing; and the other,

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word, whose literal meaning is “to cast into doubt.” From this alone, it would appear to be a useful catch-all term for any device that produces ambiguity”

Hakala, *Diction and Dictionaries*, 201

<sup>242</sup> Hakala makes this elegant observation in his dissertation as follows: “Urdu lexicography reflects a broader linguistic process of vernacularization, including the preservation in writing of a set of spoken forms, the development of a literary culture based upon the written word, the superposition of the literary conventions of a classical or cosmopolitan language onto a new literary register, and finally the assertion of complete linguistic commensurability as an equal among other “national” languages. The modes of ambiguity that appear in these texts, including the early literate *ẓilaʿ* and literary *ihām* both assume a sort of heteroglossia, one that is would become increasingly incompatible with the monolingual ideal of the modern nation-state.”

Walter Hakala, *Diction and Dictionaries*, 248

who reads the stories for truly grasping them, allowing them to transform them and enable the navigation of hardships.<sup>243</sup>

Kia's portrayal emphasizes an almost porous quality of ethico-didactic texts. While the unarticulated and understated qualities of this literary tradition have been read as signs of the exclusivity, secrecy and obstructionism of an elite 'class' against its uninitiated others, the many hierarchical layers of meaning also differentiate between advanced and beginner readers – or perhaps, we might say, between the literal and the literary minded. As educators within the humanities surely recognize themselves, such a capacity for interpretive thinking is neither exclusive to, nor guaranteed within, any particular class or community. It is no surprise, then, that reformist accounts portray the fashion for philosophical and metaphoric intricacy in eighteenth-century Urdu ghazal writing as *emblematic* of the 'elitism' of Indo-Persian literature.

While mastering the robust conventions of the ghazal could contribute to one's social currency, the 'lessons' and philosophies that ghazal poetry embodied were undoubtedly directed towards a higher plane. Both the content and structural organization of numerous poetic manuals present poetic knowledge as a staircase of incrementally enlightened stages; as a poetic disciple proceeded towards the goals of their education (always, with the help of an *ustād*) his ascent into the higher levels of poetic expertise was imagined as a series of opening doors (*bāb*) or lifted veils (*kashf*) towards spiritual gnosis (*ma'rifat*). Thus, a register of eighteenth century Indo-Persian poetic and literary knowledge was so decidedly metaphysical that it was averse to instrumental knowledge. This is not unlike the dimensions of contemporary humanistic learning that inculcate values that are neither marketable nor technical. While such a conceptualization of poetic knowledge may seem to idealize transcending material concerns, it is still, nonetheless, a

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<sup>243</sup> Mana Kia. "Adab as Literary Form and Social Conduct: Reading the Gulistan in Late Mughal India." *Columbia University Academic Commons* (2014), 289

‘materially’ informed and socially constituted practice that entailed all sorts of ‘lessons’ for worldly situations. In fact, framing suffering in a metaphysical context liberated the ghazal’s role from beyond the confines of philosophical discussion. As much of the revolutionary poetry of nineteenth-century India evidences, the unwavering—almost mad—loyalty imagined in the ghazal also offered an image of incalitrance and fearlessness that was perfectly suited to political action. In fact, in writing on *īhām* (poetic ambiguity), poets and rhetoricians have distinguished poetic aptitude as the ability to grasp distant (*ba ‘īd*) meanings where others see only the “more obvious or proximate (*qarīb*)”.<sup>244</sup> No doubt, this description echoes the spatial vocabulary of *ghurba* (alienation) and *hijr* (separation) that is conventionalized in the ghazal and also evidences the radical potential behind such a capacity for abstraction and aspiration.

### iii. Nēčarī Ideology and the Instrumentalization of Poetry

The previous chapter demonstrated how the rubric of nature was employed in nineteenth-century Urdu poetry, poetic historiography, and poetic criticism to advocate, in part, for clearly narrativized poetry. This kind of narrative organization by the *naichral shā ‘irī* critics not only hoped to ‘reorient’ Urdu (particularly ghazal) poetry towards a more linear, teleological arrangement, it also interpreted the redemptive structure of *Water of Life* and *The Ebb and Flow of Islam* to be paradigmatic to the very concept of nature. This new ‘style’ of writing was certainly a response to global Romantic trends of the age, particularly in its idealization of

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<sup>244</sup> Hakala uses these terms to explain the role of reception of *īhām* and his terminology is borrowed from a number of eighteenth-century poetic commentaries. He writes, “The poet would rely on a single term or expression to have a more obvious or proximate (*qarīb*) meaning, that is to say, one that approximates ordinary spoken usage. In order for the ambiguity to be resolved, the person to whom the verse is addressed would need also to be aware of a second distant (*ba ‘īd*) meaning, one less commonly used in that particular context or in ordinary speech. Hakala, *Diction and Dictionaries*, 230

geographic ‘origin’ as the source of authenticity to be lost and found. Yet, another way to understand the role of nature in this reformist movement—as the Islamic thinker, Jamal al Din Afghani, did— is to perceive its attention to the rhetoric of ‘lived life’ and reality as a materialist argument. In his 1881 treatise titled “The Truth about the Necheri Sect and an Explanation of the Necheris.” Afghani writes:

the neicheriyya school is the same as the materialist school that appeared in Greece in the fourth and third centuries B.C., The basic aim of this neicheriyya sect is to abolish religions and lay the foundations of license and communism among all peoples<sup>245</sup>

Afghani’s long genealogy of “neicheriyya” ideology points to a number of prominent, though loosely related, thinkers and movements as examples. Among them, Afghani mentions Darwin, the Jacobin movement, the “batinnya” or Ismaili sect, and, as a final example, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. As a contemporary also writing from colonial India, Khan appears to be the chief object of Afghani’s criticism.

He appeared in the guise of the naturalists and proclaimed that nothing exists but blind nature, and that this universe does not have a wise God... He called himself a neicheri or naturalist, and began to seduce ...frivolous young men. .... His doctrine pleased the English rulers and they saw in him the best means to corrupt the hearts of the Muslims.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. “The Truth about the Necheri Sect and an Explanation of the Necheris [Regutation of the Materialists’].” *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writing of Sayyid Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani*. Trans. Nikki Keddie and Hamid Algar. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, 131

<sup>246</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. “The Materialists in India.” *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writing of Sayyid Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani*. Trans. Nikki Keddie and Hamid Algar. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 177.

It is evident from these extracts that Afghani perceived Khan's 'materialist' argument not only to be highly toxic but, in fact, an *imperialist* ruse to ruin Muslims.<sup>247</sup> This reading of *nēčarī* ideology underscores the kind of religious reformation that Syed's valorization of 'naturalness' was felt to constitute in the realm of *adab*. Afghani was not alone in debating and refuting Syed Ahmad's role in Muslim politics. What is singularly fascinating about Afghani's criticism is that it collects the many forms, iterations, and practices of Islamic *un-orthodoxy* that Ahmad proposed under the banner of *nēčar*, as if to identify this term as the heart of a new political ideology. Afghani's designation seems to have caught on. In August 1881, the Urdu newspaper *Oudh Punch* published a biting cartoon that depicts Sir Syed Ahmad as a snake charmer. The caption reads "*Nēčarī Jogī*" (*Nēčarī Yogi*). Both Afghani's treatise and the 1881 cartoon from *Oudh Punch* (which might well have been a response to Afghani's treatise) suggest that the term, *nēčar*, was regarded as an insidious concept—even an instrument of ideological control. In the view of its practitioners and advocates, however, *nēčar* offered a program of progress and liberation, if not immediately from colonial rule than, at least, from the ills of society that had seemingly weakened the Indian Muslim community. Thus, while the *naichral shā'irī* critics

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<sup>247</sup> In fact, we may argue that Afghani's reading of *nēčar* as a materialist *and communist* ideology is proved reasonable when the British aesthetics of 'naturalness' develops into a rallying cry for the most prominent progressive literary circles of twentieth-century north Indian writing. Pritchett hones in on the seemingly paradoxical adoption of this 'imperialist' aesthetic into a language of leftist literary associations in the chapter "Light from English Lanterns" in *Nets of Awareness*. Pritchett writes, "Azad and Hali's whole relationship with their own heritage is haunted by the invisible presence of Wordsworth and his poetics ... It was the fashion of the time. During the early decades of the nineteenth-century a kind of literary "Naturalism" was "so powerful in England" that it permeated ... "the personal beliefs and literary tendencies of every author." ... then, in due course, such views lost their currency in the West .. Wordsworthian views are so archaic now in Western literary criticism that they appear quaint;... In Urdu criticism, however, this paradigm shift never took place. On the contrary: the demand for natural, realistic poetry was reinforced from the 1930s onward by the proletarian sympathies and nationalist concerns of the Progressive movement"

Pritchett. *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*, 18-19.

understood *nēčār* as a remedy to *restore* Urdu to health, Afghani read *nēčār* as an indication of anglophilic and communist tendencies and a challenge to the existing social-structures and paradigms of religious observation. Such a range of interpretation suggests that *nēčār* connoted a complex of issues that were deeply entangled and impossible to separate from one another. It was also, clearly, an evolving and mercurial term, used by different people to mean different things. Although some critics read the citation of *nēčār* as a barely veiled propensity towards British tastes and British patronage, a generous reading of the *naichral shā'irī* movement would concede that its practitioners attempted, however untidily, to steer the conventions of Urdu poetry towards more worldly concerns. This renegotiation of the mystical and metaphysical contents of the Urdu poetic tradition was part of the reform towards a renewed concentration on the 'plebian' and vernacular dimensions of Urdu.

In light of its wider climate, we might fairly read the *naichral shā'irī* movement as a project to redeem poetry from a seemingly abstract exercise in metaphysical contemplation and, as such, a radical recommitment to the material realities of poetic production. Such a reconceptualization of poetry and its primary functions, indeed, challenged the authority of a privileged class of litterateurs (*udabā*), for whom the role of *adab* held ostensibly different purposes to what the *naicharal shairi* critics advocated.<sup>248</sup> In *Water of Life*, Azad amplified this

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<sup>248</sup> Scholars of Persianate and Islamicate textual traditions inevitably operate across the secular-religious divide in order to gleam the full sense of Persian and Urdu literature or *adab* – which, as Hoda Shakri quite succinctly describes, “denote[s] the moral dimensions of individual and social conduct in the Islamic sciences.” Scholars Gail Minault, Barbara Metcalfe and Francis Robins have also highlighted the broad range of literary functions indexed by ‘adab’ and marked its particular relevance to the nineteenth-century religious and cultural reformation in North India. In short, *adab* was the backbone of ‘Indo-Muslim’ sociability, and in the role of informing and contemplating etiquette and ethics, vernacular examples of *adab* and *sukhan* were far more widely employed and effective in indoctrinating ‘Islamic’ sociability and political-philosophy among Indian Muslims than texts which required reading knowledge of Arabic. Hoda El Shakry. “Qur’anic Invocations: Narrative Temporalities in Twentieth-century Maghrebi Literature.” UCLA, 2012.

idea of ‘class’ divisions within Urdu literary custom by repeatedly portraying the elite formation of poetry practice as the chief cause of its ultimate neglect and decline:

As a rule, when people have plenty of wealth, and in the midst of luxury and enjoyment their thoughts are drawn somewhat toward virtue, these thoughts are expressed in Sufi dress. At that time the reign of Muhammad Shah had intoxicated even the doors and walls with wealth, so that thoughts of Sufism were becoming common. . . . Although it's an occasion for the greatest rejoicing that the high essence of humanity [i.e. Sufism], wearing attractive attire, came into our language, it's a pity that it fell short of any benefit to the country. And the reason was that it didn't come by any intellectual or prescriptive road. On the contrary: it blew in on the breezes of faqir-like enthusiasm or merrymaking.<sup>249</sup>

This extract from *Water of Life* demonstrates a certain ambivalence, if not hesitance, around the role of Sufi thought in Urdu poetry. It's unclear what the relationship between Sufism and wealth should be, especially considering the acerbic tone that Azad reserves for particularly for his discussion of luxury, enjoyment, and intoxication. While he is careful not to explicitly criticize Sufi influence on ghazal writing, this moment of the text suggest that Azad's general criticism of the Indo-Muslim condition *implicated* specific qualities of Sufi religiosity such as its cultural, social, and economic, ties to elite Mughal institutions. These softly veiled criticisms of the Sufi influence in Urdu writing give a glimpse of the ways in which *naichral shā'irī* was not simply literary reform, but an avenue through which to execute broader social reform by broadening the function of *adab*. Accordingly, Azad repeatedly laments that the ghazal has become an intellectual exercise, essentially unreachable for the ‘common’ man who has not been trained in the codes and interpretation and of this elite poetic tradition:

When our later poets longed for new applause, the extraordinary thing is that, sometimes through adjective after adjective, sometimes through metaphor upon metaphor, they made their poetry narrower and darker. If their great effort achieved anything at all, it was only an illusory delicacy and an imaginary subtlety that must be called a jumble of paradoxes. But the regrettable thing is that instead of their poetry having an emotional effect on the hearts of great and small, to capable people it offered a complex puzzle on which to test

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<sup>249</sup> Azad, *Water of Life*, 103

their wits, and to ordinary people it presented a deceitful labyrinth. To which the poets' reply is: 'If someone understands, let him understand; if he doesn't understand, let him remain in his barbarous ignorance'.<sup>250</sup>

The elitism of the ghazal, as Azad suggests, is both social—by the nature of its feudal clientele economy—and intellectual too; he portrays the ghazal as a poetic practice more concerned with performing to the ‘delicate’ and intellectualized tastes of a connoisseurs than the ‘ordinary people’ who would constitute the bulk of a national community that reformists imagined through *nēčar*. In Azad’s estimation, the ghazal’s purported inability to reference the real world, rather than the imagined and conventional world of the ghazal metaphors, and to privilege cerebral contemplation over ‘action,’ was completely counter-productive for political mobilization. This quality was especially unforgivable after the devastation of Delhi in 1847, and in the face of the socio-political realities of late nineteenth-century India. Indeed, Azad explains the urgency and stylistic choices of *Water of Life* as a result of the devastation caused to the *community* of lettered and literary people who practiced the tazkirah as a *living* tradition of commemoration in which the crucial para-text was the body of unwritten knowledge through the intimate bonds of family and poetic *silsilā*.

those with new-style educations, whose minds are illumined by light from English lanterns, complain that our anthologies describe neither a poet's biography, nor his temperament, character, and habits; nor do they reveal the merits of his work, or its strong and weak points, or the relationship between him and his contemporaries and between his poetry and their poetry. In fact, they even go so far as to omit the dates of his birth and death. Although this complaint is not entirely without foundation, the truth is that information of this kind is generally available in families, and through accomplished members of distinguished families and their circles of acquaintances. It's partly that such people have been disheartened at the reversal in the times and have given up on literature, and partly that knowledge and its forms of communication take new paths with every day's experience.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Azad, *Water of Life*, 81

<sup>251</sup> Azad, *Water of Life*, 57



The *naichral shā'irī* program was, thus, a response to the disruption of existing codes and practices of literariness. Its critics participated in the redeployment and realignment of literary and scribal classes by working within the colonial institutions of administration, education and law. Reformists also (often) utilized the platforms offered by these institutions to articulate their plans to reorient *adab* and *sukḥan* towards more utilitarian ends. The *naichral shā'irī* movement was, unsurprisingly, met with fierce criticism from a diverse ilk of conservatives and loyalists. For both its apparent support of British ideology and its radical program for reforming the Urdu tradition, the very of concept of *nēčar* came to signify a repudiation of the core truths of Indo-Muslims sociability which had been reinforced from generation to generation through *adab* itself. However, we may argue that if the seemingly proletarian (though more precisely bourgeois) rhetoric of 'ām (common) and 'awām' (the people) was a challenge to Islamic orthodoxy at all, this was less so because of its desire to restructure the established social hierarchies and more because of its *instrumentalization* of poetry for material or worldly gain. To understand this, we must note that the ghazal form—which was one of the most prolific genres (or *sinf-e sukḥan*) of the Indo-Persian culture—held particular currency amongst Sufi *silsilā*. As tazkirahs from the eighteenth and nineteenth-century demonstrate, there was tremendous overlap between poetic and Sufi circles. Ghazal writing and reception was, accordingly, highly complicit with the wider discourse of Islamic religiosity. The ghazal's versification of worldly renunciation and metaphysical alienation was not simply a form of elaborating the value of fidelity, but also of faith.

#### iv. Putting Poetry to Work

In many respects, the *naichral shā'irī* movement's idea of literary reform as the engine for cultural reform was in keeping with other comparable movements concerned with reforming *adab* in nineteenth-century north India, such as the *nai roshnī* (new light) movement. This climate of literary reform involved numerous education institutions and must be read in light of the wider shifts in literary technologies and economic possibilities of this period. Scholars Ulrike Stark, Barbara Metcalfe, Francis Robinson, Nile Green, Walter Hakala, and Hayden Bellenoit have all attended to this history in their research. Inarguably, one of the primary catalysts of the shift in nineteenth-century literary production was the British colonial state which instituted a variety of government institutions and a wide system of bureaus within which the skills of penmanship and language were marketable. Still, the forms of employment opportunity available for lettered and literary Indians within this institutional network were of a somewhat different nature and quality to the traditional and courtly customs of patronage. As Hayden Bellenoit's research on scribal classes suggests, the systems of education and bureaucracy that prefigured the colonial state were partially absorbed into these new institutions. However, not all types of literary knowledge and skill were deemed necessary or useful in this new economy.<sup>252</sup>

Indian education was born in the mid-nineteenth-century as a result of changes from looser, voluntary and particularistic forms of learning to more regularized methods of instruction – which were pinned to the emergence of the colonial state. Many past methods, ethos and values of learning were irrevocably altered. Learning in the Indo-Islamic and Mofussil realms was eclipsed after the 1840s. Informal, voluntary instruction was replaced with regularized, state-managed public instruction. Conformity, which replaced variety, could be enforced with state funds. Pirs and akhunds no longer taught (or were found useful), and tols and pathshalas were absorbed into provincial Departments of Public Instruction and the arm of the state. Persian, the linguistic glue of the Indo-Islamic world, was banished along with a concomitant 'dis-employment' of large numbers of Muslim gentry families dependent upon state service. Indeed, the British were exercising a Gramscian 'hegemony' by regularizing instruction, curricula

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<sup>252</sup> Hayden Bellenoit. "Paper, Pens and Power between Empires in North India, 1750–1850." *South Asian History and Culture* 3.3 (2012): 348–372.

and the experience of learning. This relegated other forms of learning as inferior to those managed by the state.<sup>253</sup>

The fact that “pirs and akhunds” were considered unproductive by the British colonial program of education suggests that it was this *religious* dimension of pre-colonial education that especially lost currency in the new market of literature and pedagogy. The changed nature of education—from one that branched both religious and secular topics to one which actively avoided metaphysical terrain—is also discernable in the *kinds* of literature that British education bodies patronized. For example, when the lieutenant governor of the North-West Provinces, William Muir, advertised an award for the “production of useful works in the vernacular, of approved design and style, in any branch of science or literature” in the Allahabad gazette, the first caveat to this was that “theological treatises will not be received, nor treatises containing anything obnoxious to morality.” C. M. Naim’s essay, “Prize-Winning Adab: A Study of Five Urdu Books Written in Response to the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification,” provides a thorough purview of the books that received these awards and the climate of their reception.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Hayden Bellenoit. “Paper, Pens and Power between Empires in North India, 1750–1850.” 364

<sup>254</sup> As quoted in C. M. Naim. “Prize-Winning Adab: A Study of Five Urdu Books Written in Response to the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification.” *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*. Ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. 292

“Allahabad Government Gazette, Notification No. 79 1A, dated the 20th August 1868:  
It is hereby announced that, with the view of encouraging authorship in the language of the North-Western Provinces, the Hon'ble the Lieutenant-Governor is pleased to make it known that rewards will be given for the production of useful works in the vernacular, of approved design and style, in any branch of science or literature. For this end, the writing may be original composition, or it may be a compilation, or it may be even a translation from books in any other language. Theological treatises will not be received, nor treatises containing anything obnoxious to morality. There is no other condition either as to the subject or treatment. The theme may belong to history, biography, or travel, science, art, or philosophy; it may be a work of fact or of fiction, and may be composed either in prose or verse. In short, the only condition is that the book shall subserve some useful purpose, either of instruction, entertainment, or mental discipline; that it shall be written in one or other of the current dialects, 'Oordoo or Hindee, and that there shall be excellence both in the style and treatment. Neither is there any restriction as to the author, whether in respect of birth, place of education, or residence.”

One of the more successful books from this endeavor was Syed Nizammuddin's *Wit and Wisdom* (*Aql-o Shu'ur*) that, as Naim suggests, was popular enough to be published three times. Much of its success lies in the fact that this text employed the familiar structure and narrative of the Persian moralizing *masnavi*. Moreover, while it refrained from any kind of distinct theological discussion, *Wit and Wisdom* also carefully positioned itself as playing a specific (worldly) role within a wider realm of knowledge that included divine authority. Naim discusses this quality of *Wit and Wisdom*:

He is careful to tell us that there are two types of 'aql: 'aql i ma 'ād (the 'aql of the hereafter), whose fruit shall be received after death, and 'aql i ma 'āsh [the 'aql of living] which is useful in this world. That he devotes his book entirely to the latter is, no doubt, due to his narrow interpretation of the condition in the Gazette Notification against "theological treatises." Likewise, though he declares that all classes of men should pursue 'ilm, his book deals only with the 'ulūm of the gentry... Its ethics are similarly traditional. The author has incorporated in it material from numerous earlier books of *adab*, and constantly appeals to the authority of the past to underscore the validity of his remarks.<sup>255</sup>

As we know from the biographies of numerous poets and writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century, tutorships and poetic mentorships were a primary source of employment for litterateurs of the Indo-Persianate sphere. Moreover, the devotional and spiritual component of this education was integral to the very practice and, indeed, *ethics* of the profession; men of learning demonstrated their culture and *tehzīb* (refinement) not simply through base literacy or textual competence, but also through the performance of *sharāfat* (civility) that was learnt through a more profound engagement with the *human* agents of this knowledge.<sup>256</sup> Teachers were not only the keepers of knowledge through which students could transcend the letter of a

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<sup>255</sup> C. M. Naim. "Prize-Winning Adab: A Study of Five Urdu Books Written in Response to the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification." 298-299

<sup>256</sup> See Nile Green. "The Uses of Books in a Late Mughal *Takiyya*: Persianate Knowledge Between Person and Paper." *Modern Asian Studies* 44.2 (2010): 241–265.

text towards its spirit, they embodied the cultural and social habits that young gentlemen were expected to emulate. Colonial efforts to subtract the religious and observational dimensions from literary pedagogy were understood by some (like Afghani) as attacking the very soul of Islamicate scholarship. At the very least, we can agree that the colonial state's insistence to secularize education further weakened modes of knowledge transmission (*'ilm*) that were already being challenged by new technologies and economy realities.

The increased influence of print was another crucial phenomenon which, undoubtedly, contributed to the new climate of literary practice. While printing technologies were not entirely new to the Indian Subcontinent in the nineteenth-century, improvements to this technology allowed for greater impact.<sup>257</sup> Moreover, increased economic stimulation from colonial institutions allowed the printing industry to make even more decisive impact on this already shifting terrain of literary production and consumption. While the printing industry and print enterprises offered employment opportunities for native litterateurs and calligraphers—notably, in the translation and copying of revered texts from Arabic and Persian into Urdu and other vernaculars—these positions often entailed diminished prestige and significance from what the *ahl-e qalam* (people of the pen) had previously enjoyed.<sup>258</sup> As publishing houses became the face

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<sup>257</sup> Nile Green's research on the history of printing presses explains this improvement of printing technology and, accordingly, why the impact of print technology would have particularly salient to the literary culture of the late nineteenth-century: "And although print technology had been around since the days of Johannes Gutenberg, it is important to recognize the reinvention of printing that occurred during the industrial nineteenth-century... it was through the distribution of mass-produced iron Stanhope presses and the spread of lithographic (or, as the process was originally known, chemical) printing—first introduced to the Islamic World in 1820 but not in widespread use until about 1850—that the Islamic World came to feel the full effects of the Gutenberg (or even Stanhope) revolution." James L. Gelvin, and Nile Green, eds. *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. 2

<sup>258</sup> Ulrike Stark. *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2009. 269

of new literary possibilities, the intimate dynamic that was imagined between poet and royal patron in a courtly culture was renegotiated to imagine the patron as a ‘common man’. In turn, writers were encouraged to shift their writing from suiting the tastes of select ‘connoisseurs’ towards a wider, non-specialized audience. In truth, the colonial government was the major patron of these nineteenth-century printing presses—evidently on behalf of common readers. Ulrike Stark’s study, *An Empire of Books*, examines this terrain of economic and cultural production particularly through the archives and histories of key publishing houses, most notably the Novel Kishore Press. Stark documents how many of these publishing houses received supplementary grants from the colonial government as a stimulus to improve the status of reading in the general public, which colonial administrators found severely wanting but still necessary for the demands of successful governance.<sup>259</sup>

The rise of the printed book coincided with the gradual dissolution of traditional patronage systems that centered around the court and that were shaped by a strong bond between the poet or writer, his royal patron, and his audience of connoisseurs. Within such milieux authors had depended on their wealthy patrons for financial security and social prestige. With the coming of print and the decline of courtly patronage, literature acquired new organizational forms. Mass printing technology not only altered the relationship among the participants in literary production, it also changed the function of the book. In metropolitan Britain, as much as in colonial India, the printing press was put to utilitarian’ ends, the colonial state emerging as one of the principal patrons of the printed book. More than mere intermediaries between author and reader, publishers now rose to become important literary patrons.<sup>260</sup>

This excerpt from *An Empire of Books* is helpful in sketching the social dimensions of nineteenth-century printing and in highlighting the ‘printed book’ as the ‘organizational form’ par exemplar of this phase in literary production. While we can certainly trace a utilitarian logic underpinning the colonial’s state decision to foster *vernacular* publishing, the book (as an

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<sup>259</sup> Stark, *Empire of Books*, 102

<sup>260</sup> Stark, *Empire of Books*, 11

organizational form) actually entailed detrimental consequences for traditional Indo-Persian modes of education. Nile Green identifies the shift from anthropocentric to bibliocentric practices of education as one major development in social and technological processes that underpinned nineteenth-century Indo-Persian literary production:

Among many of the Muslim religious circles which constituted some of the most important potential markets for books in early modern India, in practical as well as in conceptual terms, knowledge was located primarily in persons rather than in books. Books were not considered independent sources of knowledge, but were appendages to the personal pedagogical relationships through which knowledge was transferred and within which writing served to provide only one dimension of the knowledge being transferred. Even where books were used for religious learning, this occurred under the personal instruction of a master who closely directed his students' reading and placed it within larger non-textual programmes of acquiring knowledge through prayer, dreaming, asceticism and the service rendered as an apprentice. Books worked in the service of an anthropocentric mode of knowledge, as mnemonic aids and adjuncts to the bodily incorporation of words in the person of the authoritative master and through him to his students. Correspondingly, those in search of knowledge looked for a master rather than a bookshop or library, with libraries in any case generally being private collections accessed through personal affiliation to a teacher.<sup>261</sup>

We may understand, then, how this shift from anthropocentric to bibliocentric practices of knowledge transmission gravely impacted the status and economic realities for those literate and literary circles, just as it influenced the discourse and practices surrounding education. While poetry writing was rarely a 'day job', even for the most accomplished of poets, poetry was, nonetheless, regarded as an important component of the education of young men.<sup>262</sup> As such, many accomplished poets were employed within para-literary fields including the kind of education practices that Hayden Bellenoit describes as 'voluntaristic'. Poets and poetic

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<sup>261</sup> Green, Nile. "The Uses of Books in a Late Mughal Takiyya: Persianate Knowledge Between Person and Paper." *Modern Asian Studies* 44.2 (2010): 241–265. 243

<sup>262</sup> I must thank Nile Green for helping me recognize the distinction between 'employment' and the 'day-job' during a conversation we had during his office hours.

production were thus influenced by the wider ‘ecosystem’ of Indo-Persian literary conventions which were being unsettled by a range of social and technological factors, including (of course) the growing influence of colonial institutions. Laura Steele’s scholarship on Hali further illustrates how these new modes of knowledge transmission that centered around the ‘democratic’ capacity of the book further fractured a declining culture of *ustād*-centered education. When Hali suggests in the third section of *Introduction to Poetry and Poetics* that poets should become their own teachers, Steele reads this as a reflection of the European ideas that Hali was introduced to:

In the third section, Hali proposes a revolutionary idea. He states that poets should be their own teachers. This is at odds with his own experience and with accepted norms--he is known for his association with Ghalib, and all young poets of his day pointed with pride to their various illustrious teachers. Hali is rejecting the teacher/pupil relationship so important in his cultural milieu. Even the names of Hali’s first teachers are known today. Again, this assertion reflects how sensitive Hali was to the changes going on in his society; for it is true that poets in Europe had no special tradition of famous teachers. This is one of the few places where Hali seems to realize a changed poetry will necessitate a change in the behaviour of poets, and, in their relationship to the old masters.<sup>263</sup>

Although Hali’s recommendation to discard (or, at least, deemphasize) the role of poetic mentorship makes no mention of the role of books in this new ideal, we can infer how the bibliocentric model of knowledge transmission in new-print culture might have influenced Hali’s reevaluation of the traditional methods and practices of poetic education. As the emphasis on embodied and internalized forms of knowledge was displaced by bibliocentric modes of education, this had a resounding impact on both practices of poetic education and the favorable qualities of textual publication too. The values of porosity, ambiguity, and connoisseurship in *adab* and *sukħan* depreciate from the mid-eighteenth to late nineteenth-century. In its place, a

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<sup>263</sup> Laurel Steele, “Hali and His Muqaddamah: The Creation of A Literary Attitude In Nineteenth-century India”, 21-22



new literary climate, which was charmed by the possibilities of print technology and geared towards the mobilization of national politics (through the trope of the ‘common man’), produced *new styles* of didactic literature that emphasized the importance of ready exposition and demonstrated less interest in earlier *forms* of textual ambiguity (*īhām*). Key nineteenth-century educational texts like Azad’s *Qissas-ul Hind* (Stories of India) demonstrate such a shift. We may not be surprised, then, that some of the fields which thrived most obviously in this period were genres of literary production that contributed to the explanation and decipherment of language such as literary commentaries, philological studies and language manuals. Walter Hakala’s “Diction and Dictionaries: Language, Literature, and Learning in Persianate South Asia” portrays this period of literary production as one in which new ideals and parameters of pedagogy particularly influenced the role of lexicography, and vice versa:

South Asian lexicography prior to the nineteenth-century documented a particular linguistic register serving a distinctive, if limited, social functions, especially those related to poetic composition and apprehension, and as such tell us about the specific lifeworlds of those persons with access to those registers and their places within broader society. It is not until the nineteenth-century that language reformers used dictionaries to shape language into a central marker capable of motivating political movements. The rise of a political ideology of representational commensurability in South Asia was partly enabled by ruptures in the structures of patronage and innovations in the technologies of mass print production. This universalizing ideology required the conceptualization of language as a medium capable of expressing the total social life of individuals and the complete political life of nations.<sup>264</sup>

Hakala’s research, which meticulously charts the techniques and processes of language instruction, examines shifts in educational texts and book technologies to offer a number of important insights on the formation and articulation of Urdu as a modern vernacular. Most

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<sup>264</sup> Walter Hakala, *Diction and Dictionaries: Language, Literature, and Learning in Persianate South Asia*, xvi-xv

pertinently, Hakala delineates the technologic and social phenomena that underpinned the production of a *sleeker*, more modern, Urdu:

While the colonial intervention does not represent a decisive shift in lexicography, it does, however, hasten the processes of vernacularization already underway. Thus, lexicography maintains its inclination towards alphabetical arrangement, but comes to include new linguistic content, including spoken expressions. Political and economic change contributed to a reassessment of the valuation previously afforded to the performance of *adab*, central to a wider Indo-Persianate technique of asserting authority and representing charisma. Idiomatic formats and historically specific lexicographic generic forms largely give way to a “royal genre” of the modern standard dictionary as print technologies, mass production and distribution, and education further contributed to the standardization of language. The rise of what Ulrike Stark calls an “associational culture” corresponding with the rapid expansion of the role played by capital creates the conditions for the emergence of corporate accreditation in the form of the university diploma, corporate production in the form of the bureaus of dictionary compilation, corporate consumption in the form of a print based public sphere, and corporate financing in the form of publishing houses.<sup>265</sup>

As a textual form that is primarily geared towards establishing *commensurability* across languages, the dictionary sits —by design— at the intersection of differing linguistic cultures. A privileged exemplar of modern language pedagogy, the dictionaries of this period are also situated at a midpoint between two economies of literary culture: the courtly, Indo-Persian literary culture in which language instruction was delivered through “idiomatic formats and historically specific lexicographic generic forms” and its bourgeois successor, the modern standard dictionary that aspired to instruct at the mass and encyclopedic scale. Dictionaries (and lexicographic works, more generally) are, thus, particularly effective sites for understanding the many techniques of translation and transvaluation in this period, both across languages and economies. They are also premier sites through which to understand the role of “middling” men who were versed across multiple linguistic cultures and had to resituate their expertise as lettered individuals in the new climate of state and market-sponsored patronage. An illuminating

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<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 629-630

example of such a lexicographic trend is Fallon's *A new Hindustani-English dictionary, with illustrations from Hindustani literature and folk-lore*. Fallon's dictionary might be summarized as an example of the prevailing primitivist taste of nineteenth-century vernacular philology; his repeated pronouncement of the aims of the dictionary as a form of 'revealing' the language of 'rustiks' certainly echoes some of the Romantic associations with 'nature' that abounded in numerous literary traditions of this period. Yet, Fallon's dictionary also reveals how eighteenth-century Indo-Persian poetics (ghazal poetics in particular), which was so disadvantaged by Fallon's standards of poetic authenticity, was nonetheless transferred and reconfigured into the modern "political ideology of representational commensurability".<sup>266</sup> The subsequent, and final, section of this chapter examines Fallon's dictionary to elucidate some of the salient aspects of this text and the literary climate which, I contend, it represents.

### **The People's Genius**

"The wealth of the language is in the spoken tongue ... The living utterances of the people are almost absent from our Dictionaries. Their place filled instead by a great many; Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit words which are seldom or never used in written spoken Hindustanī. To cull these so-deemed choice exotics of those languages and foist them in the vocabulary of the indigenous language of which they are not a part, is the peculiar delight of book-learned Moulvis and Pandits. These are the autocrats who have banished the people's mother tongue, and forged in its place the artificial language which divides the people and the ruling class. With might and main they have laboured to keep out the spoken vernacular from the written language of books and legal procedure and official correspondence; and, what they were unable wholly to thrust out of sight, they have mutilated, and mangled, and crushed... The yet unrecognized verdict of the people will one day be preferred to the approbation of a few book-learned critics, by whose proclivities the pen of native writers is now solely guided."<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> This is a phrase from Hakala's dissertation which I have found to be very helpful to describing the lexicographic and literary trends of this period.  
Hakala, *Diction and Dictionaries*, xiv

<sup>267</sup> S. W. Fallon, *A new Hindustani-English dictionary, with illustrations from Hindustani literature and folk-lore*, Banāras, London: Printed at the Medical Hall Press; Trübner and Co., 1879, i-iv

Most of what we know about the writer, S. W. Fallon (1817-1880), come from a small entry in C. E. Buckland's *Dictionary of Indian biography*. Born in Kolkata, Fallon was eventually employed at the Bengal Education Department where he became an inspector of schools at the young age of twenty. He spent some time in Delhi but eventually moved to England, where he lived out his later years. The Hindustani-English dictionary was published between 1875 and 1879.<sup>268</sup> We can deduce that much of this text was researched and written at the same time and within the same institutional network as the *naichral shā'irī* movement. More than the encyclopedic content of this dictionary, it is Fallon's introduction which overtly exhibits the same symptoms of criticism that we discern in the rhetoric of the Aligarh reformists. Azad and Hali's representation of the 'Persian' influence on Urdu as a deviation, or corruption of, *nēčral* poetry *justifies* the rise of Urdu as a language of administration. This simultaneous rise of the status of Urdu and the descent of Persian language education must be understood in terms of the social restructuring of Indian society, particularly in class terms. Indeed, the role of colonial support in the establishment of Urdu as a language of state procedures gives us reason to understand the rise of Urdu as both sign and *instrument* of the disestablishment of pre-existing Persianate practices and institutions of literature. Similarly, Fallon's idea of 'authentic' expression deems the 'learnt' registers of *maulvīs* and *pandits* as 'artificial' language. In contrast to the tastes of this 'exotic' and 'autocratic' class, Fallon hopes to excavate the true 'wealth' of vernacular language which, like Azad's *bhāshā*, is represented as a sweet, mother tongue: it is feminine and rustic. As the above excerpt from Fallon's introduction to his Urdu-Hindustani

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<sup>268</sup> Rauf Parekh, "Literary Notes: Fallon's Urdu-English dictionary: a remarkable feat of lexicography," in *Dawn*, April 14, 2014. Accessed on March 2, 2015

dictionary might foreshadow, part of the challenge of instituting Urdu as the language of administration was that the tastes of the educated, lettered locals that Fallon hoped to engage in this project were so divergent from, even counter-productive to, his own. Fallon, for example, assembled a team of *munshīs* (secretaries) rather than *maulvīs* (teacher of Islamic doctrine) for his vernacular dictionary. Yet, even still, he confesses that it was difficult to find learned men who were both familiar with English and appreciative of his own preference for ‘rustic’, vernacular language.<sup>269</sup>

Fallon’s difficulty in procuring assistants is not surprising considering that his scholarship entailed, in many respects, the devaluation of skills his assistants had acquired through conscious effort and labor. Fallon’s project also, we may argue, expected his assistants to participate in the vilification of a literary culture within which they had been formed for the establishment of another. Surely some resistance within such a project is understandable. Fallon’s expectation that his native assistants should ultimately rejoice at the redemption of their ‘native tongue’ assumes that their loyalty to the spoken, filiative language of their domestic spheres would exceed their loyalty to the learnt, affiliative language designated for a more exclusive and comparatively textual realm.<sup>270</sup> Of course, all language is *learnt*; to associate

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<sup>269</sup> Fallon recounts this difficulty of procuring ‘assistants’ with the following anecdote: “There can be no supply where there has been no demand; and men who have not been taught to read, cannot be reached by an advertisement. And if they could be reached, what rustic would presume to appear as a candidate for an office in the literary world? For has he not always been told ever since the reign of letters began, that he is an ignoramus who speaks a valvar incorrect language ... One inhabitant of a village, who was engaged by the compiler for his knowledge of the rustic language, would give a town or literary phrase for the rustic equivalent required of him. He could read and write a little, and he would on no account suffer a ganwārī word to escape his lips in the presence of literary men of which class he now esteemed himself a member. He had to be sent away finally as far too fine for our purpose.” S. W. Fallon. *A New Hindustani-English Dictionary*, xxi

<sup>270</sup> Of course, it is not necessary to pit these two registers of speech against each other; as scholars Frances Pritchett and Francesca Orsini have emphasized, multilingual households were a common phenomenon in nineteenth-century Delhi as different registers of language were employed across

specific ‘registers’ of language with soil (vernacular) and blood (mother-tongue) is, as in Fallon’s case, a way of insinuating that these languages are ‘naturally’ acquired and, thus, diminishing (if not erasing) the domestic and communal labor of ‘vernacular’ language instruction.

If the literary language has a larger vocabulary of scientific and abstract terms, the rustic language is richer in concrete terms which are minutely and vividly expressive of objects such events perceived by the senses. The knowledge of the literary man is largely composed of reflections and inferences which are often wrong. The knowledge of the rustic is derived from direct personal observations which can hardly be wrong. The knowledge of the first is obtained mostly at second hand, from books. The knowledge of the rustic is knowledge of what he has himself seen and handled. And his language, like his knowledge, is direct, vivid, fresh, he never uses a wrong word in the wrong place; for he speaks his mother tongue, and he knows no other. The literary man often uses the wrong word, or he uses the right word in the wrong place; for he writes, if he does not speak, an acquired language.<sup>271</sup>

I want to emphasize here, as Fallon has done, that the idea that ‘literary’ language is an ‘acquired language’ implies that ‘rustic’ language is something other than acquired. Moreover, while the transmission of ‘rustic’ language is narrated as a tangible experience in the form of things “handled”, “seen,” and “observed,” the literary language is portrayed as indirect, distanced, and second hand. Even if writing requires the *hand* of penmanship, Fallon’s constant emphasis on the sensory and emotive ‘directness’ of rustic language suggests that rustic language has a ‘bodily’ presence which literary language does not. Compare, for example, Fallon’s repeated praise of the mother ‘*tongue*’—in another passage he asserts that “The corrupted form [of language] is not the

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differing spheres of sociability. The linguistic practices of the domestic sphere were often quite distinct from that of *public engagement*.

See Francesca Orsini. *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*. (New Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.)

<sup>271</sup> S. W. Fallon. *A New Hindustani-English Dictionary, with Illustrations from Hindustani Literature and Folk-Lore*, 34

form in which the word comes spontaneously from the *warm lips* of millions”— to his depiction of literary language as composed of “reflections” and “books”.

Fallon’s portrayal of the differences between elite registers of Urdu and the ‘rustic’ language that Fallon hoped to bring out from the shadows as a choice between filiative and affiliative language is helpful for recognizing how both registers are portrayed differently in the writings of colonialist lexicographers as well as the literary reformists of the Aligarh movement; the former appears to move through the ‘natural’ and common routes of kinship and social interaction while the latter seems artificial, bookish, and anti-social.<sup>272</sup> This privileging and canonization of ‘vernacular’ that typifies the work of Fallon and many other nineteenth-century philologists was, of course, a primary stage in the elaboration of “nationalism as an ideology of hearth and home, of collective *Gemütlichkeit*” within which, as Aamir Mufti lucidly notes “[the] mobilization of ... filiative metaphors of kinship and regeneration, obscure its exclusionary nature; that it can be achieved only by rendering *certain* cultural practices, *certain* institutions, *certain* ethical positions representative of “the people” as such.”<sup>273</sup> The portrayal of ‘elite Urdu’ as an affiliative register deemphasizes the flexible, but nonetheless pertinent, filiative dimension of this ‘literary’ language as a tradition that was ‘inherited’ through ‘family legacy’ within genteel Indo-Persian society.

Fallon’s portrayal of “Arabic and Persian-ridden Hindi, called Urdu- [as] the elaborate concoction of pedantic moulvīs and a corrupt ministerial agency” relies, ironically, on portraying

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<sup>272</sup> The participation of both Hindus and Muslims from a range of ethnic backgrounds and ‘caste’ communities in the circles of ‘Zabān-e-Urdū’ and scribal families suggests that this ‘linguistic/literary terrain’ was not exclusively the ‘legacy’ of particular ‘bloodlines’ but could also be entered into with the proper training

<sup>273</sup> Aamir Mufti. “Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, Secular Criticism, and the Question of Minority Culture.” *Critical Inquiry* 25.1 (Autumn 1998): 92–125. 107

literary language as both overly ‘belabored’ and, also, life-less and “dead”. I argue what underpins such a portrayal of *literary language* is ultimately a bourgeois sensibility of appropriate, useful, and productive labor. In this way the privileging and canonization of a *vernacular* Urdu mirrors the shifting of parameters of class identity in nineteenth-century India, particularly with regards to its relationship to the role and function of literature. Margrit Pernau’s study *From Ashraf to Middle Classes* offers important insight into this transformation of the concept of *sharāfat* from one concerned with “the respectability of descent to” to the practice of “middle class virtues of achievement”.

The boundary between ... groups which in the European context would be described with the terms 'nobility' and 'middle class' had traditionally been very permeable in northern India, ... The traditional dividing line... did not run between the nobility and the middle classes but right through the groups which in Europe constituted the middle class, drawing together the professionals and the nobility and excluding merchants and traders from social respectability. This changed after 1857. The bipartite division between the *ashrāf*, the respectable families, and the *ajlāf*, the common people, gave way to a tripartite division between *nawabs*, *ashrāf*, and the rest of the population. The new *ashrāf* began to disassociate themselves from those at both the upper and lower ends of the scale, while at the same time drawing closer to the merchants. The new identity that this group sought to attain did not relinquish the respectability of descent, but shifted the emphasis to the middle-class virtue of achievement.<sup>274</sup>

We may fairly trace this shift in the notion of *sharāfat* in nineteenth century discourses of labor wherein a rhetoric of ‘achievement’ was pronounced through consistent attention to ‘results’, utility, and productiveness. Indeed, such a climate created new ‘hierarchies’ in labor: specific skillsets and forms of knowledge that had held particular significance in *nawābī* culture lost currency, just as others more representative of the merchant classes rose from ‘*ajlāfī*’ to ‘*ashrāfī*’ connotations. Literary and scholarly materials from this period give *particular* evidence of such a

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<sup>274</sup> Margrit Pernau. *Ashraf into Middle Classes: Muslims in Nineteenth-Century Delhi*. First edition. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013. 241



socio-political phenomenon precisely because of the emphasis that was placed on *adab* as a form of cultivating *sharāfat*. As important as *adab* was to the consolidation of *sharāfat* and, accordingly, to middle class identity, nineteenth-century shifts in class construction are particularly perceptible in the debates surrounding *proper* ‘literary labor’, what it entailed, and what it offered. The *naichral shā’irī* critics and Fallon not only participated in such a discussion, they mobilized the concept of nature for such a purpose.

#### vi. Bourgeois Literary Values: Less *Dulce*, More *Utile*

Rita Raley’s “A Teleology of Letters” offers exceptionally important and lucid insight into the manifestation of changing conceptions of class identity through the lens of literary labor. Raley examines the work of another, arguably more influential, vernacular philologist, John Gilchrist. Raley charts how the “legitimation of the vernacular, specifically English, as the bearer of aesthetic and historical value on the one hand, and practical and communicative value on the other” develops out of the utilitarian logic to unleash “the power of the ‘least inflected dialect’[for its]...sheer speed, flexibility, and total translatability.”<sup>275</sup> Central to this process, Raley argues, was “sutur[ing] the values of literacy (the vernacular, simplicity, ease) to those of the literary (thought, reflection), the ultimate end for which is a unification of ‘art and profitable industry’.”<sup>276</sup> Gilchrist expresses such a distinction between vernacular language and ‘Asiatic’ classics in *The Hindee-Roman Orthoepigraphical Ultimatum* (1820):

My favourite notion of proceeding [is] from the utile to the dulce, in which last may be comprehended persian, arabic, sunskrit, with every other branch of local attainments, as

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<sup>275</sup> Rita Raley. “A Teleology of Letters; Or, From a ‘Common Source’ to a ‘Common Language.’” *Romantic Circles* (2000), 9

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

each may become in its turn a useful, lucrative, or pleasant pursuit to any sojourner in the east.<sup>277</sup>

To be clear, Gilchrist is referring to the knowledge of vernacular language as a requisite of governance and ‘utility’; his example preceding this passage is an anecdote in which the incorrect use of Hindi during battle caused tragic miscommunication between a British officer and his sepoys.<sup>278</sup> *Dulce*, on the other hand, seems a slightly more complicated idea. Although Gilchrist does not attempt to explain the concept, Raley suggests that we may think of *the dulce* as “leisured contemplation”. Taken in its wider context, Gilchrist allows that there are some advantages (social and aesthetic) to studying the Asiatic ‘Classics’, particularly Persian. Raley’s reading of the difference between *utile* and *dulce*, thus, does not amount simply to a ‘language’ or register difference. Rather, it extends to the corresponding values, virtues, and philosophies that the knowledge of each affords.

The end results of the bifurcation of philological work are two analytically distinct paradigms of scholarship, a humanist model on the one hand, and a utilitarian, eventually technocratic model on the other. The problem of how to account for an overlap or even a repetition of work, then, is partially solved by thinking of the different kind of intellectual work each is performing, the distinct institutional status each maintains.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> John Borthwick Gilchrist. *The Hindee-Roman Orthoepigraphical Ultimatum*. 2nd ed. London: Kingsbury, Parbury, & Allen, 1820. X

<sup>278</sup> Gilchrist writes, “an officer in ordering his men to move a little to the right, unfortunately said, huto! Instead of, dubo! As the sipahees fell back in a manner that must have exposed a whole army, and their distinguished leader, to inevitable destruction” In another passage, Gilchrist even goes so far as to suggest that the Sepoy mutiny could have been avoided if British officers were able to converse in ‘hindoostanee’. “I have long had reason to believe, that if the hindoostanee had been sufficiently understood at Vellore by the european officers, the dreadful mutiny there would have been prevented from taking place; for, alas! when too late, it is now perfectly ascertained to have been currently spoken of in the bazar, among all descriptions of people, who then might, without the least risk of detection, have said anything they chose in hindoostaaee, which is the current language there. Had the sipahee, who first intimated the existence of the conspiracy, been at once properly understood, no mischief whatever could have ensued, but the person who heard him having referred for an explanation to a native officer, interested in concealing the intelligence, the informer was considered and treated as a lunatic,” Gilchrist, *The Hindee-Roman Orthoepigraphical Ultimatum*, xiv, vii

<sup>279</sup> Raley, “The Teleology of Letters”, 3

Fallon's dictionary, for example, is emblematic of this vernacularizing trend that devalued elite literary labor through its many variations of privileging 'rustick' language over the 'corrupted' language of elites. Fallon's insistence on democratizing the representation of local language in colonial governance relies, practically, on importing 'oral' registers into the textual tradition. In his search for "the people's" linguistic material—in the form of songs, idioms, folklore, and proverbs—Fallon reveals the new (and, until then, neglected) social spaces that his linguistic project must bring to the page, and the world stage. From the "unlettered inhabitants of towns" to the "byways and obscure villages," Fallon arrives at the truly telling site of this reorganization of language hierarchy: the bazaar.

In written literature by far the largest number of extracts have been made from Nazir, the only true Hindustani Poet according to the European standard of true poetry, and the poet whom native word-worship would not allow to be a poet at all.

Nazir is the only poet whose verses have made their way to the people. His verses are recited and sung in every street and lane, especially in his native town of Agra; and Missionaries, who are familiar with his poems, quote him and Kabir with marked effect in their street-preaching. Nazir possessed all the qualities of mind and feeling which distinguish genius.<sup>280</sup>

What Rita Raley notes of John Gilchrist is also applicable to Fallon's project, particularly in regards to its reception of Nazir: "Given both the historical ties of vernaculars to trade and commerce and the gap between vernaculars and the learned classes, [Fallon's] argument for the validity of vernaculars in fact links this linguistic ascendancy to the ascendancy of a new, technical class."<sup>281</sup> Fallon's extended praise of Nazir Akbarabadi (1735–1830) no doubt hinges

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<sup>280</sup> Fallon, *A new Hindustani-English dictionary*, viii

<sup>281</sup> Raley, "A Teleology of Letters", 9

greatly on the *bāzārī* qualities of Nazir’s poems and his popularity amongst the traders, merchants, and ‘everyday’ people.<sup>282</sup> The fact that Nazir’s poems often take inspiration from such mundane and “common subjects as flour and dāl (pulse), flies and mosquitoes,” of course, goes a long way in Fallon’s estimation of Nazir’s ‘proper’ tastes and poetic capability. That “native scholars and poets never deign[ed] to name him” and that he was “quite unknown almost to European readers” must have also only added yet more credibility to Nazir.<sup>283</sup>

In fact, it seems that Nazir’s poetry succeeded by the new standards of vernacular genius because it offered “a picture gallery in which may be seen speaking pictures of the sports and pastimes, pleasures and enjoyments, pain and misery, and the mind and feelings of the natives of India.”<sup>284</sup> Indeed, in the very first pages of his dictionary, Fallon declares that this is exactly what he wishes to *reveal* through the dictionary.<sup>285</sup>

The examples are meant to serve, likewise, as specimens of the best portion of the spoken and written literature, and to afford an insight into the mind of the people — their domestic and social life; their sports and pleasures; their morals, manners, and customs; the religions beliefs and superstitions which actually influence their daily lives, as distinct from the mechanical performance of a formal, ceremonial worship ; with the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, the jealousies and heart-burnings, and the wit and humour, satire and invective which together reveal the inmost thoughts and feelings of the inner life of the people.<sup>286</sup>

Expressed in these terms, Fallon’s linguistic project conveys an almost anthropological thrust: He aims to reveal a ‘people’ by first actively venturing *out* to find their long neglected genius

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<sup>282</sup> *Bāzārī* (marketesque) poetry is often contrasted with *bāghī* (gardenesque) poetry.

<sup>283</sup> Fallon, *A new Hindustani-English dictionary*, x

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, ix

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, xi

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 1

before returning with “utterances” of spoken language and idioms imprinted with the “images” of social custom. It is for these same reasons that Fallon is charmed by (a specific corpus of) Nazir’s poetry, which *represents* people by versifying the objects of everyday, pedestrian life. Accordingly, Fallon gleefully crowns Nazir over far more reputed poets of ‘elite’ taste for having “laid under contribution the treasures of the mother tongue [and] done in this matter what only kings like Chaucer and Shakespeare succeeded in doing.”

The redemption of Nazir Akbarabadi is a highly pivotal moment in the historicization and canonization of Urdu poetry and the codification of the Urdu language which, as Hakala’s research compellingly argues, went hand in hand with one another. Remembered as the ‘people’s poet’, the ‘poet of the *bāzār*’ and ‘the father of the *naẓm*’, Nazir’s poetry fulfils a number of the qualities that the *naichral shā’irī* critics lauded.<sup>287</sup> Yet, discerning from Nazir’s absence in *Water of Life*, it’s clear that even these Urdu reformists—who were already so much more inclined towards the renegotiation of Urdu in an age of ‘mother tongues’ than the elite *moulvīs* and *pandits* that Fallon denigrates—were reluctant to include Nazir in their own literary history.<sup>288</sup> Almost fifty years after his death, Fallon resurrects and qualifies Nazir as “the most natural of poets”.<sup>289</sup> Since then, a number of important Urdu literary histories have written of Nazir in

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<sup>287</sup> As I partly discussed in the previous chapter, Hali and Azad both valorized the ‘cohesive’ narrative of the *naẓm* extensively and can be thought of as chief proponents, if not mid-wives, to modern the *naẓm*.

<sup>288</sup> Not all British critics shared Fallon’s view of Nazir either. Immediately following the publication of Fallon’s dictionary, *The Roman-Urdu Journal* publishes a review of Fallon’s dictionary, which is specifically critical of Fallon’s perception of Nazir. “Fallon has even given him a character for purity of mind and delicacy of treatment; but we regret to remark that our worthy Doctor is singular in his ideas of purity and impurity, delicacy and indelicacy. Suffice it to stay that we too are familiar with the writings of Nazir, and we can unhesitatingly declare that they teem with coarse jokes and led allusions. In fact, Fallon must have presumed too much on the ignorance of natives in general, and Englishmen in particular, as regard nazir and all his works when he compared the author of “pickeled –rats” (*achar-chuhon ka*) to our own Chaucer and Shakespeare”

<sup>289</sup> Another important European Tazkirah writer, Garcin De Tassy, also includes and praises Nazir in *Histoire de la litterature hindouie et hindoustanie*.

exactly the terms that Fallon introduced.<sup>290</sup> Yet, for all the exceptionalism that Nazir is endowed with as the icon of a *finally* natural Urdu poet, the irony is that he wrote far more ghazals than *naẓms*. In fact, even Fallon’s description of Nazir portrays the poet’s genius through the figure of the ‘*faqīr*’-philosopher that, though certainly not exclusive to the ghazal, was characteristic to the spiritual and ‘other-worldly’ dimension of poetry which the ghazal, in particular, emphasized:

He was in truth the *āzād* (independent devotee) he professed himself. He was really the unworldly stoic so many pretend to be. He cared not for any of the gifts or accidents of fortune. He wanted nothing. He cared for no man, nor woman either except to admire her from a distance. Good fortune did not elevate him. Ill fortune did not depress him. As he has himself expressed it— *apney hāl men mast* (he revelled in his own skin).

The best portion of his poems do not appear in any printed collection bearing his name. They are heard only from the lips of wandering devotees (*āzād*) and the illiterate classes who find in their own breasts the better feelings of human nature which Nazir has depicted so well. These illiterate men have their favorite poems by heart, as the literate class have not the writings of their favorite poets; and a larger proportion of them enjoy listening to these popular poems, and devote more time to this enjoyment than do a very few literary men here and there to the unreal word —poets whom they profess to admire. And the pleasure of the illiterate is the more intense also, as their instincts are more true and the object of their admiration more worthy.<sup>291</sup>

Herein lies the productive paradox of Fallon’s championing of Nazir as the paragon of the ‘authentic’ poet; Fallon’s reading of Nazir—both through poetry and through the reception of

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<sup>290</sup> For example, in *The spirit of Oriental Poetry* Puran Singh writes, “Nazir, of Akbarabad, is the poet of the masses. He is wild, inconsistent, huge like nature itself, at times crude, impure, filthy like the slums of the wretched. His rhymes jostle against one another in amazing profusion, crowding out everything but the joy of life... in his own language he beats the music of Swinburne’s verse so glowing, so flowing is his natural simple music. Of all the Urdu poets, he is original, sympathetic, free, rich and self realized.” Singh, Puran. *The Spirit of Oriental Poetry*. 1926. Print.61

Other examples include:

Ahmed Ali. *The Golden Tradition; an Anthology of Urdu Poetry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973. Print. Studies in Oriental Culture no. 8.

Mohammed Sadiq. *A History of Urdu Literature*. 2nd ed. Delhi: Oxford, 1984. Print.

Samar Deen. *Pluralism in eighteenth-century India: Nazir Akbar Abadi*. Academia. November 2016. [https://www.academia.edu/8743952/Pluralism\\_in\\_18th\\_century\\_India\\_Nazir\\_Akbar\\_Abadi](https://www.academia.edu/8743952/Pluralism_in_18th_century_India_Nazir_Akbar_Abadi)

<sup>291</sup> Fallon, *A New Hindustani-English Dictionary*, ix

‘illiterate’ people whose “instincts are more true and the object of their admiration more worthy”—mimics the rhetorical designs simulated by the ghazal to ponder truthfulness and authenticity. If the ideal poet, that “so many pretend to be” is an “unworldly stoic” Fallon’s Nazir embodies this asceticism through his absence in the “printed” realm. Instead, Fallon portrays Nazir’s verses as sublimated into the body of ‘the people’, on the lips, and in the hearts of ‘wandering devotees. In his characterization of Nazir as the most natural poet of the rustics, Fallon employs the ghazal’s own vocabulary of devotion and renunciation to sketch the character of authentic poetry as the poetry of *common people*. Perhaps we may say Fallon’s depiction of Nazir offers a surprisingly literal (almost sociological) interpretation of the ghazal’s metaphysical discussion of *ghurbat*. The enlightenment of the transcendent *āshiq* becomes imminent through the recognition and love for the “better feelings of human nature”. The *āshiq*, as mystic-poet, becomes a ‘people’s poet.

To be sure, Fallon’s ‘worldly’ implementation of the ghazal’s ascetic ‘mood’ is not exactly a misreading of this poetic principle, just as the Urdu reformist insistence on questions of ‘materiality’ cannot be dismissed as simply a ‘misreading’ or misunderstanding of the ghazal, as is sometimes suggested by critics eager to redeem the classical tradition. To suggest so would be to qualify these earlier moments of modernist criticism, as well as the rise of Marxist aesthetics in Urdu literature through the Progressive Writers’ Movement, as simply impersonations of a foreign trend, as Afghani suggested. Instead, Aamir Mufti’s scholarship suggests that we may understand this phase as a refinement and redevelopment of ideas already conventional to Urdu poetics such as *andarūnīyat* (interiority) and *khārijīyat* (exteriority).<sup>292</sup> I, too, argue that the

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<sup>292</sup> Mufti writes, “I read the apparent dualism of these poems—interiority (*andarūnīyat* in Urdu poetics) and affect versus externality (*khārijīyat*) and the outer world, lyric poetry versus society—somewhat differently, as demonstrating an interest in the relationship between the lyric self of Urdu poetry and the “wider” world of contradiction and conflict over the meaning of nation and community. I argue that these

*naichral shā'irī* critics' discontentment with classical topoi is one facet of the renegotiation between the categories of interiority and exteriority most cogently encapsulated by the hermeneutical concept of *zāhir* and *bā'in*. In this regard, the term *nēčar* seems to desire a slightly different (though related) effect to the redemptive narratives embodied in literary histories like *Water of Life*. Fallon's repeated descriptions of Nazir as a "natural poet" and 'the people' as "rustics" exhibits the various and mercurial ways that 'nature' could function in nineteenth-century primitivist scholarship. Even a language-community as cosmopolitan, hybrid, and 'exotic' as Urdu could flexibly employ the rhetoric of *nēčar*, if not for elaborating a history of indigeneity then, at least, for reorienting the poetic tradition towards 'plebian' identity by projecting 'nature' as the ultimate *material* essence.

Like many vernacularists of his time, Fallon's preferences in literary material favored the 'utile' and 'everyday' language of 'rustics.' Nonetheless, his dictionary had to account for and integrate the language and poetry of 'lettered', elite registers. Fallon's characterization of Nazir suggests that the influence of classical ghazal poetry and poetics was still a force in the new literary economy, be it deflected and refracted. What happens to the ghazal's influence and significance after the philological turn to vernacular? I suggest we can think of this process as a translation between two literary economies; a *transvaluation* of ghazal poetics from a courtly worth to the climate of bourgeois, utilitarianism that I have sketched throughout this chapter. For example, Fallon's appropriation of the ghazal's rhetoric of *ghurbat* towards a valorization of 'common' language is crystallized in his characterization of Nazir as an embodiment of the ghazal's *āshiq*. How might we understand this reformulation of the ghazal's discussion of

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poems enact, in a literary-historical register, the dilemmas and complexities of a 'Muslim' selfhood in Indian modernity."

Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*, 214



poverty and renunciation? In the hierarchical tradition of mystical love, the power of the *āshiq*'s enlightenment can, indeed, be liberating, but it is so as a kind of other-worldly madness. In Fallon's employment, this love manifests itself on the worldly plane in terms of the new order of 'common' and natural language, a poetic standard built on the egalitarian ideal of the common as 'universal'.

On some level, this reformation of the ghazal's value is implicated in wider social schisms of the period typified by the elevation of vernacular language. Classical Indo-Persian *adab* anticipated and differentiated between advanced and beginner readers—the 'basic' and the '*kāmil*'. Poetic manuals were, accordingly, arranged as a series of stages that the dedicated student could 'climb' *incrementally* to unveil 'higher' stages of enlightenment. In some Orientalist accounts, this feature of 'veiled' (*bāīn*) meaning comes to signify the exclusive and *obstructive* mystery of 'Asiatic' classics. More so, in a climate of 'democratic' literary values—where the simple, the unobstructive, and the *rōzmarra* (everyday) come to take precedence over the *dulce*—the literary concept of 'veiling' comes to be read as a marker of elite class-identity rather than a figuration of interpretive (humanistic) thinking. Thus, lexicographic efforts to 'unveil' the mysteries and secrets of a multi-layered, densely coded poetic culture are read as an 'egalitarian' practice.

In its nascent moments, and indeed throughout much of the nineteenth-century, what became the institutional discipline of comparative philology depended not only upon the fallacy of presuming a linear and teleological model for the "evolution" and progress of letters, as has been critically remarked, but also upon the mystification and debasement of the foreign grapheme and grammatical structures of writing. More specifically, comparative philology derived its strength from the belief that the languages of South Asia in particular were a mystificatory veil, one that obfuscated the texts, transactions, and even people behind it, and one that blocked the entry of western languages and knowledge.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Raley, "A Teleology of Letters", 4

Raley's observation is strikingly useful for understanding European (Western) representations of the rhetoric of veiling in Islamicate scholarship which, as I outlined earlier in this chapter, signified the *zāhir/bātin* hermeneutical model. In both Fallon's dictionary and Azad's *Water of Life*, the 'lettered' classes are painted as employing literary complexity and ambiguity as a mode of excluding the hungry, eager masses not only from the fruits of poetry, but also from the positions of power and administration exercised through language. Indeed, Fallon's estimation of the damage caused by the an "oligarchy of letters" and their exclusion of vernacular language is heightened: "To remove out of sight the symptom of evil, such as the language in which it is expressed, is not the evil. It is but banishing it from the light, where it is less noxious, to dark and noisome corners where it attains its rankest luxuriance."<sup>294</sup> The antithesis to the "rank luxuriance" of a mysterious and veiled literature of *moulvīs* and *pandits* is, of course, Nazir.

His parity of mind and delicacy of treatment are such that even when he raises an obscene image — when this is necessary to the fidelity and completeness of his picture—the obscenity is so delicately veiled that it is not apparent always even to the natives who indulge so freely in double entendres. When he has to bring out the superior excellence of a pure passion by the effect of contrast, the sensuous image is not permitted to linger in the mind and efface the pure image which the poet keeps steadily before the reader. Handling, as he does, some of the most grossly indecent themes with a piquancy which is essential to fidelity and vivid representation, the obscenity is lost to the wit and refinement of expression which command your admiration.<sup>295</sup>

"Delicately veiled," Nazir's poetry can still protect the gentlemanly sensibilities of his polished reader by offering only a fleeting "sensuous image". Nonetheless, Nazir is still, perhaps more importantly, able to deliver the "pure image" through the lively sentiment of "passion". Fallon's

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<sup>294</sup> Fallon, *A new Hindustani-English dictionary*, viii

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, x

repeated portrayal of vernacular poetry as offering “images” and “pictures” is, thus, tied to an almost literal reading of the ‘veil’ as a form of obscuring and hiding both people and their culture. We can imagine how a primary concern for administrative efficiency could translate into such a utilitarian criticism of poetic ambiguity: simply put, the challenge of poetic complexity was regarded not just with the suspicion of an uninitiated outsider, but also with a technocratic impatience for *wordiness*.<sup>296</sup> It would seem that, by Fallon’s understanding, the ‘images’ available through “natural poets” and rustic language are closer to material concerns of governance and business. Indeed, a similar assessment of Nazir’s *nazms* has been made by both Muhammad Sadiq, who describes Nazir as offering “a panorama of life,” and Aditya Behl in his essay, “Poet of the Bazaars”:

It is a commonplace that Nazir’s verses are expressive of the feel of everyday life, its texture, its material culture and objects, its structure of emotion, exchange, and ideation. Yet, he does not describe this material cultural direction or straightforwardly. Nazir expresses an emotional relationship with it, making the material world the subject of the poem but seeing it through a poetic filter...Material exchange is fundamental to Nazir’s poetry, which renders emotion concrete and places it within the public spaces and objects of the bazaar rather than in a subtly introspective poetic world. He invests ordinary articles such as watermelons and fans with larger symbolic meanings, invoking a wider world of exchange and interaction.<sup>297</sup>

Indeed, reading Nazir’s *nazms* in juxtaposition to the figure-heads of Urdu classicism (like Ghalib, for instance), one has to agree with Behl’s assessment that Nazir is invested in versifying material culture in ways that was not typical of classical poetry. Yet, Fallon’s assessment of this quality within Nazir’s oeuvre as a form of “fidelity,” and his steady portrayal of the poet as an embodiment of all that which classical poets idealize suggests that despite its flaws, the poetic conventions of an elite Indo-Persian literati influenced and inflected primitivist scholarship.

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<sup>296</sup> Fallon exemplifies this quality when he describes “Literary native scholars [as those] who strive and strain after words”. Fallon, *A new Hindustani-English dictionary*, x

<sup>297</sup> Fallon, *A New Hindustani-English Dictionary*, 203-205

Ironically, the vernacularist philologist sees his own efforts to expose the “people” through language as a kind of socially enlightened and secular task of ‘unveiling’.

**The Bardic Hafiz:  
Wandering in a World of Signs.**

The Americans are going to be the most fluent and melodious voiced people in the world—and the most perfect users of words. Words follow character—nativity, independence, individuality.<sup>298</sup>

But, had an American Hafiz sung at his door, while he would have been kind and hospitable, the virtue and temperance in thought and act of his ancestors, bred in him, would have recoiled from the superlative and the reckless, not essential to beauty. Thus he welcomed Whitman's free and New World singing.<sup>299</sup>

Thanks to the scholarship of Baron von Hammer-Purgstall and Sir William Jones, translations of Persian poetry (particularly Hafiz and Saadi) enjoyed massive popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century. It is, thus, not at all surprising that Ralph Waldo Emerson was also inspired and interested in this body of literature. The American critic and writer gives notable attention to Hafiz, particularly in his essay "Persian Poetry". Several scholars have since scrutinized the influence of Persian poetry on Emerson's writing, and on Transcendentalist scholarship more broadly. Yet Emerson's son, Edward Waldo Emerson, politely (yet pointedly) cautions against overestimating the extent to which Ralph Emerson may have admired Hafiz. Though a 'mere' footnote, this small and singular corrective uniquely captures the complexities of reading Persian poetry (especially ghazals) in a literary climate that privileged the 'simple', primitivist ideal of vernacular language and folk culture. Nonetheless, Persian ghazals undoubtedly had a significant impact on the defining moments and models of nineteenth-century World Literature, especially German, American and British poetics. However, this body of Persian poetry was not *perfectly* suited to its new 'terrain'; 'Western' translators, critics, and poets were quite discerning in their

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<sup>298</sup> Walt Whitman. "An American Primer." *The Atlantic* Apr. 1904

<sup>299</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson. *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: With a Biographical Introduction and Notes by Edward Waldo Emerson and A General Index*. Vol. 8. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), 421.

translations and transcreations of Persian poetry. As Edward Emerson's note demonstrates, what was to be admired, emulated, and appropriated from the Persian ghazal, and what had to be eliminated during the transfer of poetic qualities, impinged on the rising value of vernacular literature as a standard of 'common' expression. Thus, in Emerson's scholarship, Whitman emerges not simply as an *American Hafiz* but a *preferable* and improved model precisely because he is able to avoid the tendency towards exaggeration and 'superlatives' that modernist critics (largely) denigrated in Persianate poetry. By the emerging standard of American 'naturalist' ideals, Hafiz had to be made yet 'more essential'. This process of *refinement* takes place not only in the 'transcendentalized' readings and emulations of Persianate poetry (through Emerson and Whitman, for example) but also in many eighteenth and nineteenth-century German ghazal varieties. This final chapter looks to these two illustrations of the reception and reconfiguration of ghazal poetics in 'Western' literature as particularly telling examples of how cosmopolitan poetic literary traditions could, in fact, be reconstituted into the 'naturalist' models of poetry.

In some respects, the interpretive modes of the German and American writers that I will trace follow in the scholarly footsteps of William Jones and corroborate the trends we have seen in the *naichral shā'irī* movement too. Emerson, for example, was well acquainted with Jones writing and his characterization of Persian poetry echoes distinctly of Jones' scholarship.<sup>300</sup> In particular, we can discern how much of the spiritualized transcription of Nature that we associate with Transcendentalism follows from a tradition of *reading* nature that associated the most rustic and 'common' registers of language as the eternal source for poetry. The ghazal (and Persianate

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<sup>300</sup> Emerson includes two of Jones translations, "Narayena: Spirit of God" and "The Babe", in his poetic anthology *Parnassus* (1880).

See Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. *Parnassus: An Anthology of Poetry*. Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Company, 1880; Bartleby.com, 2013. [www.bartleby.com/371/](http://www.bartleby.com/371/)

poetics, more broadly) could not completely integrate itself into such a new ‘taste’ on accord of its susceptibility towards mystification and hyperbole. Yet, as Jones’ scholarship demonstrates, there was still much about the ghazal that felt ‘essential’ and timely to the various projects of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century world-poetics. Since characterizations of ‘natural’ language in this period regularly privilege the ‘living’ oral registers, the ghazal’s integration into nineteenth-century models of authentic poetry (even outside of its ‘native territory’) was enabled by readings that emphasized the ghazals oral and sung registers. The transposition of a number of ghazals into lied attests to this phenomenon. The ghazal was certainly sung and recited – indeed, as I suggest in chapter two, the ghazal’s oral dimensions were quite primary.<sup>301</sup> In contemporary practice, we may even go so far as to say that the oral medium of ghazal reception (particularly in the form of song lyrics) exceeds the successes of its textual counterpart. Yet, in emphasizing the oral register of the ghazal, numerous nineteenth-century receptions of Persian poetry inaccurately construe the ghazal as an object of *Kultur des Volkes* ("culture of the people") rather than *Kultur der Gelehrten* ("learned culture"); these categories were, of course, introduced and elaborated by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) and became central to eighteenth and nineteenth-century scholarship on folk culture. Benjamin Filene outlines the role of Herder’s scholarship in this field.<sup>302</sup>

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, European intellectuals turned their attention as never before to the vernacular culture of their countries' peasants, farmers, and craftspeople, launching what historian Peter Burke has called "the discovery of the people." Once scorned as ignorant and illiterate, ordinary people began to be glorified as the creators of cultural expression with a richness and depth lacking in elite creations.

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<sup>301</sup> See Francesca Orsini and Katherine Butler Schofield. *Tellings and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India*. Open Book Publishers, 2015. Web.

<sup>302</sup> While it’s unnecessary, sometimes even inaccurate, to insist on treating these categories as mutually exclusive, it’s necessary to retain some distinction between the cosmopolitan and vernacular varieties of ghazal practice to understand how these readings of the ghazal as a ‘folk-song’ were inaccurate for their context.

German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), the most influential proponent of the new cultural outlook, contrasted the *Kultur des Volkes* ("culture of the people") with *Kultur der Gelehrten* ("learned culture") and made clear which of the two he favored: "Unless our literature is founded on our Volk, we [writers] shall write eternally for closet sages and disgusting critics out of whose mouths and stomachs we shall get back what we have given." To Herder, folk culture offered a way to escape the Enlightenment's stifling emphasis on reason, planning, and universalism in cultural expression. Folk forms could cleanse culture of the artificiality that, he felt, was poisoning modern life.<sup>303</sup>

If, as per Filene's suggestion, the modern fascination with *Volkskulture* can be understood as a kind of 'cleansing,' it resonates especially with the *naichral shā'irī* movement's turn to 'everyday language' and 'vernacular' speech as an 'antidote' to the corrupted forms of elite culture. In both instances, however, the valorization of vernacular was guided by the steady hand of urban intellectuals. Thus, even as the intellectual progenitors of this aesthetic trend may have travelled to remote, rural regions in their "discovery of the people," the curatorial and editorial *process* through which objects of *Volkskulture* were produced cannot be underestimated. Just so, the ghazal's transformation in European and American modernist readings offers a fascinating look at how the transposition of this highly cosmopolitan literary tradition into transcripts of rustic wisdom required a number of refractions. We must note, first, the productive contradiction of a trend that idealized 'primitive' and oral forms but which coincided with the influx of print technologies and modern transportation. In *Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx contemplates this paradoxical trend towards pastoralism in an industrial age. He asks, "What possible bearing can the urge to idealize a simple, rural environment have upon the lives men lead in an intricately organized, urban, industrial, nuclear armed society?"<sup>304</sup> While an anti-urban sentiment that often

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<sup>303</sup> Benjamin Filene. *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Print. Cultural Studies of the United States.

<sup>304</sup> Leo Marx. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 4



accompanies the prioritization of *Volkskultur* is by no means a necessary quality of this concept, we may say that nineteenth and late twentieth-century popular conceptions of *Volk* betray a distinct preference towards cultures practiced in more rural and rustic geographies. If, in some instances, the *naichral shā'irī* critics seem to be engineering Urdu history and language towards *Volkskultur*, the multiethnic, colonial, and urban history of Urdu origin strains such a self-projection. As Walter Hakala suggests, “The *zabān-i urdū-i mu'allā-i shāhjahā nābād* was an anachronism in an age of mother tongues, nationalism, and, subsequently, representational democracy.”<sup>305</sup> How, then, do we understand the brief, albeit robust, ‘Western’ fascination with cosmopolitan forms of Indo-Persian literature in a climate of ‘mother tongues, nationalism and ... representational democracy’ that the nineteenth-century model of ‘world literature’ conjured. So far, I have sketched how the rhetoric of ‘nature’ that pervaded this period furthered the “Orientalist ascription of historicity to the linguistic-textual corpus of ... vernacular, an ascription structured around the chronotype of the indigenous”.<sup>306</sup> A productive irony of the Romantic idealization of nature is that it makes nativist claims towards the powerful effects of ‘origin’ and ‘soil’ whilst simultaneously being one of the most *mobile* and reproducible trends of modern literature. Thus, even immigrant and colonial literary accounts, such as the American and Urdu tradition, mobilize the rubric of nature that we might otherwise associate with primitivist models of literature that privileged ‘indigeneity’ and nativism. As this chapter demonstrates, these transformations of the ghazal in German and American reception illustrate how ‘natural’ poetry was sometimes, ironically, conceived as *universal* territory.

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<sup>305</sup> Walter Hakala, *Diction and Dictionaries*, 616

<sup>306</sup> Aamir Mufti, *Forget English*, 143

### **i. Primordial Song: Ghazal as Lied, Radif as Refrain<sup>307</sup>**

German Orientalists were some of the first pioneers in translating and introducing Persian poetry to a German, and subsequently wider European public. While Goethe's famous *West-östlicher Divan* (1819) and Joseph Hammer-Purgstall's translations of Hafiz (1812) are largely credited with catalyzing the German public's fascination with ghazals (and Persian poetry), Friedrich Schlegel was the first writer to compose a ghazal in German himself. Furthermore, he did so almost a decade before Hammer-Purgstall and Goethe, in 1803. This moment of cross-cultural poetics is an especially meaningful one; far from being an anomalous experiment, the German reception of Persian ghazals took off with a flurry of literary and musical activity that far exceeds the literary production of ghazals in any other European language—that is, until the pioneering efforts of Agha Shahid Ali to cultivate English ghazals in the twenty-first century.<sup>308</sup> The

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<sup>307</sup> I've borrowed this phrase 'Primordial song' from David E Wellbery's discussion of Herder's scholarship on folk poetry. Wellbery writes "One of the principle sites in which the myth of primordial orality finds expression is the critical discourse on folk poetry that emerges in the 1770's. Again Herder is the decisive figure, fashioning through both his published collections of folk poetry and his theoretical writings the concept of a "poetry of the peoples" (Volkspoesie), which radically altered the axiology of the eighteenth-century literary system. The close connection between the concepts of folk poetry and primordial orality—epitomized, for example, in the title of the 1807 edition of Herder's folk-song collections, *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* ("Voices of the Peoples in Songs"), hardly requires demonstration here."

David E Wellbery. *The Specular Moment: Goethe's Early Lyric and the Beginnings of Romanticism*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1996), 222.

<sup>308</sup> Jürgen Thym and Ann Clark Fehn outline this history of the introduction of Persian poetry into German reading. They write, "The ghazal was introduced to European poetry in the early nineteenth-century as part of a general discovery of Oriental literature. Encouraged by the translations, essays, and university lectures of the rapidly developing field of Oriental scholarship, German writers, among others, looked to the East not just for fables and exotic decorations, as earlier generations had done, but also for new ideas and modes of expression, which they sought to understand and to incorporate into their own creative efforts. Friedrich Schlegel is credited with the first use of the ghazal in German poetry, in 1803, but a more decisive impetus to German Orientalism came from Joseph Hammer-Purgstall's translation of Hafis, published in 1812, and from Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*, which appeared in 1819. Goethe's interest in the East lay in the kinship he recognized between his own ideas and those of the poets he read, particularly Hafis, whom he called his "twin" and from whom his *Divan* borrows numerous images, motives, and even phrases."

German experimentation with this new ‘mode of expression’ is particularly fascinating because, unlike most other nineteenth-century imitations of Persian Poetry, we find that a number of German writers embraced one of the most challenging aspects of the Persianate form: its use of a *radīf*, or refrain. Ironically, even in the Urdu context, writers who were well versed in this poetic structure began to debate its virtues. Hali’s commentaries in *Introduction* (and the decision by organizers of the Anjuman-e Punjab’s poetry recitals to focus on *nazms*) suggest that the ghazal certainly had its detractors in the modern Urdu context too. Though not the first to embark on such a project, two of the most prolific writers of German ghazals were Friedrich Ruckert (1788-1866) and August Graf von Platen (1796-1835). The latter of these poets published a total of “four separate collections: *Ghaselen* (1821) *Ghaselen, Zweite Sammlung* (1821), *Spiegel des Hafis* (1822), and *Neue Ghaselen* (1823)” and Charlotte Shabrawy’s article “German Ghazals An Experiment in Cross Cultural Literary Synthesis” especially commends Platen’s writing, calling it “the most perfected of all ghazals composed in German”.<sup>309</sup> Her analysis of Platen’s reception conveys an intimate network of Persian ghazal enthusiasts:

The ghazals were highly acclaimed by such Orientalists as Hammer-Purgstall and Silvestre de Sacy. Goethe characterized them as “pleasant, clever poems, in complete conformity with the Orient.” Fully recognizing the difficulty of composing ghazals because of the necessity of maintaining an associative theme development, Goethe remarks to Eckermann: “The characteristic peculiarity of the ghazals is that they demand an enormous quantity of content; the recurrence of identical rhyme must always be met with a supply of analogical thoughts. Therefore, not everyone can succeed (in writing them), but these will please you.”<sup>310</sup>

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Jürgen Thym and Ann Clark Fehn, eds. *Of Poetry and Song: Approaches to the Nineteenth-Century Lied*. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010)

<sup>309</sup> Charlotte El-Shabrawy. “German Ghazals: An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Literary Synthesis.” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 3 (2013): 56–79, 57

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 76

In addition to piquing the interest of German poetry readers, Platen's ghazals also made a significant impact on the musical scene and attracted some of the most notable and celebrated composers of the German tradition, including Johannes Brahms (1833- 1897), Franz Schubert (1797-1828) and Richard Strauss (1864-1949).

In view of the richness of Lied production during the nineteenth-century, it is not surprising that a number of these ghazals found their way into musical settings. Schubert, with his usual receptivity to new poetry, set ghazals by Platen and Ruckert within a couple of years of the appearance of the poems. Brahms set texts in this form by Platen and Daumer. Other, lesser-known composers, such as Kahn and Hiller, also set ghazals in the nineteenth-century, and in the twentieth Richard Strauss based his choral composition *Deutsche Motette* on a ghazal, Othmar Schoeck composed ten by Gottfried Keller, and Schoenberg tried his hand at the form in one of the songs in Op.6.<sup>311</sup>

This brief sketch gives an idea of the span and significance of the German ghazal, or *ghasel*, phenomenon that is often overlooked—except, of course, in studies of ‘world poetics’.<sup>312</sup>

Though the *ghasel* is deserving of a much longer discussion, this chapter focuses specifically on the transformation of such a cosmopolitan form into the literary paragon of German *Volkskulture*: the lied. Lorrain Gorrell remarks in her study *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied*, “without any apparent conflict in the romantic mind, a growing sense of nationalism could coexist with a love of the exotic. Poets and musicians were fascinated with Oriental themes, poetic forms, and poets.” Although the trends of ghazal translation that have been identified by lieder scholars might not be reassuring to classical ghazal enthusiasts, for comparative romanticists this is, indeed, a moment of remarkable poetic synergy.

As we may expect, aspects of the classical Persian ghazal that are easily translatable—such as themes, tropes and allegories—make the journey across the linguistic divide reasonably

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<sup>311</sup> Jürgen Thym and Ann Clark Fehn, *Of Poetry and Song: Approaches to the Nineteenth-Century Lied*, 222

<sup>312</sup> Of course, as scholars of the ghazal have routinely pointed out, the ghazal had been a ‘multilingual’ and cross-pollinated form for centuries before the term ‘World Literature’ became operational.

well. Shabrawy, for example, finds that “The gathering of images from disparate realms and joining them in one harmonious universe is a technique Platen used frequently in his early ghazals”.<sup>313</sup> Remarking on these more general and key themes of *lieder*, Gorrell writes,

Romanticism is an important concept in the German art song since the lied is so closely wedded to the literary movements that preceded and paralleled it. All of the romantic literary themes are present in the lied: the artist as a wanderer cast out from society, a reveling in nature, a love of the past and the exotic (including the Greeks, the Romans, the Persians, Shakespeare, the Middle Ages), supernatural forces, ghosts, fairies (Loewe's "Erlkönig," "Elvershoh," [Elves' Mountain] and "Tom der Reimer"), and of course, love--the most popular topic of the lied.<sup>314</sup>

The classical ghazal, of course, meaningfully engages with a number of these topics, most notably love and—as the previous chapter's discussion of *ghurbat* elucidated—wandering.

Indeed, the very next excerpt from Gorrell's scholarship prioritizes this quality, in particular.

The artist as an outsider, a wanderer, is a powerful, poignant theme in many of Schubert's songs. Both of his song cycles: *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* (The Beautiful Miller Maid) exhaustively explore this subject. *Winterreise* begins with the words: "Fremd bin ich eingezogen, Fremd zieh ich wieder aus" (I came here a stranger, I depart a stranger). His song, "Der Wanderer" (The Wanderer), the second most popular lied in the nineteenth-century after "Erlkönig," expresses the forlorn message "Ich bin ein Fremdling überall . . . 'Dort, wo du nicht bist, dort ist das Glück!' .. (I am a stranger everywhere; "there, \where you are not, there is happiness!").

The artist's love of nature is sometimes coupled with isolation from human society. The young miller in *Die schöne Müllerin* finds his only companion and friend to be a brook! The wanderer in *Winterreise* finds his emotions mirrored by the winter landscape. Yet the theme of nature as something joyful, something in which to rejoice, is also expressed over and over. Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's last song sets Eichendorff's "Bergeslust" (Mountain Joy).<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Charlotte El-Shabrawy, "German Ghazals: An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Literary Synthesis", 62

<sup>314</sup> Lorraine Gorrell. *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied*. Pompton Plains, NJ; Milwaukee, Wisc.: Amadeus Press; For North American sales, Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005. 43

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 43

Gorrell’s analysis reveals how tropes from the classical ghazal—which not only versified alienation, but imagined the former in terms of mystical and philosophical longing—could modulate into modern forms of the national ‘folk song’. In fact, within such a vernacularly oriented literary environment, which idealized the “mother tongue” as an inherently indexical register of language, *songs* were not only regularly interpreted as cultural products of ‘the people’ but, also, as a realm of literature *especially* representative of the country (*mulk*) and/or homeland (*watan*). Much like Hali’s redirection of the traditional *marṣiyā* towards national horizons in *Flow and Ebb of Islam*, a number of nineteenth-century transcreations of the ghazal similarly converted its elaboration of alienation, love, and loyalty (*ghurbat*) towards a national Beloved: the homeland. As Sunil Sharma’s *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier Masu’d Salman of Lahore* demonstrates, such a nostalgic versification of homeland is by no means an entirely modern phenomenon.<sup>316</sup> Yet, the popularity of such a reformulation of ghazal poetics in the nineteenth-century certainly gives some weight to our consideration of the trend as a *particularly* modernist interpretation of the ghazal.<sup>317</sup> Indeed, numerous studies of the ghazal as

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<sup>316</sup> For example in his analysis of *ghurbat* in eleventh and twelfth century poetry, Sharma writes, “*Ghurbat* (exile, alienation) is an emotionally charged word used by poets like Nāsir Khusraw and Sanā’ī to describe their conditions, the same word being used today by Iranians away from their homeland. The use of language and manipulation of their own situations by poets resembles the phenomenon of modern-day migrancy as described by Iain Chambers: “[It] involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation.” Similarly, for the pre-modern poet, in the words of Giuseppe Mazzotta: “Exile is not merely a perspective from which he acknowledges the storms brooding over history and nostalgically relives the pastoral order of the city. It is also the very condition of the text, its most profound metaphor.’ Since poets were frequently unsettled physically, they had nothing but their memories and their poetic craft to sustain them.”

Sunil Sharma. *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas’ūd Sa’d Salmān of Lahore*. New Delhi: Permanent Black : Distributed by Orient Longman, 2000. Print. Permanent Black Monographs. The OPUS 1 Series. 47-48

<sup>317</sup> Sharma, *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier*, 47-58

‘World Literature’ recapitulate the idea of homelessness as a primary lens through which to read the modern ghazal.<sup>318</sup>

In addition to the more obvious themes and tropes that transfer in the translation from Persian to modern German, non-semantic aspects of the ghazal (i.e. its infamous structure) also became a challenging, yet rich, source of creative energy for modern ‘Western’ writers. In fact, what is particularly striking about the arc of Platen’s writing is that while the poet retained and elaborated the familiar tropes, metaphors and themes of the Persianate ghazal in his earlier works, his later ghazals abandon the thematic material and, instead, focus on simply recreating the bare structure of the ghazal. In this regard, we may argue that Platen’s *ghazels* becomes more ‘German’ in their content. Yet, it is also true that such a move to retain ‘formal’ (rather than thematic) qualities is unique and testifies to the German poets’ ability to see value in one of the least translatable aspects of the form. In particular, a number of arrangements of the *ghazel* into lied show how the themes of homelessness, restlessness, and wandering—that are made explicit through song *lyrics*—could also find *structural* expression through the treatment of the *radif* as a refrain. This is one aspect in which the scholarship of ghazal transposition into lied is especially helpful. In their study on the uses of *radif* as a structural device in lieder, Thym and Fehn conclude “Looking back at all five songs, but especially the four with refrains, one sees that the insistent ghazal repetition provides a shaping impetus throughout, but in very different ways. In

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<sup>318</sup> For example, two notable essays on the ghazals of Agha Shahid Ali try to read the nostalgia in his writing to the form of the ghazal itself, Nishat Zaidi’s article “Center/Margin Dialectics and the Poetic form: The Ghazals of Agha Shahid Ali” and Thomas Woodland’s “Memory’s Homeland: Agha Shahid Ali and the Hybrid Ghazal”  
See Malcolm Woodland. “Memory’s Homeland: Agha Shahid Ali and the Hybrid Ghazal.” *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 1.2 (2005): 249–272.  
Nishat Zaidi. “Center/Margin Dialectics and the Poetic Form: The Ghazals of Agha Shahid Ali.” *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 23 (2008): 55-66

much more varied ways than Brahms, Schubert responds to the formal structure of the poems.<sup>319</sup>

A good example of the *ghasel's* adaption of the *radif* into a *refrain* (which, we may argue, is a terminology usually reserved for songs) is *Der Strom* by von Platen which Brahms set as a lied in 1864.

The stream whose roar beside me faded, Where is it now?  
The bird, to whose song I hearkened, Where is it now?

Where is the rose my friend Wore on her heart?  
And that kiss which enchanted me, Where is it now?

And that man who I have been, And whom long since  
I have exchanged for another self, where is he now?<sup>320</sup>

From this short *ghasel*, we can see how the refrain of “where is it now” (*Wo ist er nun*) serves as an anchor within the poem; as other, seemingly unrelated and tangential, poetic images enter the song, the refrain organizes them through the nostalgia of “*Wo ist er nun*”. This *ghasel* is also a particularly effective example of the employment of classical ghazal metaphors/tropes in lied e.g. the singing bird, the rose, the lost self. As we may note, the ‘stakes’ of the *ghasel's* nostalgia rise with the progress of the song; what begins as a recollection of the scenic idyll modulates first into a remembrance of love and, then, finally, a forgotten sense of self. In using a *radif* that is so immediately concerned with the theme of *ghurbat* (alienation), the *ghasel/*lied allows the

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<sup>319</sup> Jürgen Thym and Ann Clark Fehn. *Of Poetry and Song: Approaches to the Nineteenth-Century Lied*, 19

<sup>320</sup> In many lied compilations (such as the book from which I gathered this translation), the arrangement of the song-lyrics, in terms of line-breaks, obscures the *ghasel* structure. I have reformatted the poem in the manner conventional to ghazals, with the first couplet repeating the *radif* at the end of each line and each subsequent couplet only ending with the *radif* in the second line. Translation from Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich, George Bird, and Richard Stokes, eds. *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder: The Original Texts of over Seven Hundred and Fifty Songs*. 1st Limelight ed. New York: Limelight Editions, 1984. 133



nostalgic refrain to act as the only form of ‘return’ within the poem/song. Thus, the nostalgia of the lyrics is mirrored and amplified in the structure of the *ghasel*.

Through an analysis of another lied, Thym and Fehn show how Schubert’s music ‘setting’—what we could think of as the musical arrangement—responds to the structure of the *ghasel* by employing a ‘ritornella’ (or, little return) with each instantiation of the *radīf*/refrain.

From here the poem moves to four pairs of lines in which the speaker describes in succession the agony of separation, his resolve to overcome the distance between himself and his beloved, a memory that brings his love vividly to mind, and the act of loving imagination that dissolves space and time to draw her into his arms. Each step of the process is marked by the refrain, which steadily reiterates the speaker's wish and in itself mirrors the poem's progression from greeting to embrace. In its formal design Schubert's setting of 1822 owes much to the repetitive elements of the poem. Indeed, the composer amplifies the refrain line of the ghazal by repeating its second phrase. He thereby gains additional verbal material for a six-measure ritornello that occurs six times in the setting and constitutes an important unifying device. . . . The balance between the ritornello and the rest of the song—the rondo form of the setting, so to speak—offers an appropriate match for the song's text, where grief and pain are overcome by the warmth and tenderness expressed by the refrain lines "sei mir gegriisst, sei mir gekiisst!" Just as the poet calls attention to this utterance of an unalterable conviction by using it over and over in his poem, so Schubert calls attention to it by setting the lines to a ritornello that always moves back to the tonic key. The ritornello, that is, becomes a structural and emotional anchor for the song. Despite its "static" character, the ritornello does not generate a loose juxtaposition of contrasting sections.<sup>321</sup>

Though some of the more technical aspects of Thym and Fehn’s reading may be challenging for readers unaccustomed to music theory analysis, it may suffice to understand that the rondo form, which Schubert used for this lied, has a particular structure in which the introduction of a theme is followed by its modulation, elaboration, and *return* to the original principle theme, or refrain.<sup>322</sup> The tonic, often referred to as the ‘home’ key, usually offers the most satisfying

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<sup>321</sup>Thym Jürgen and Ann C. Fehn. “Repetition as Structure in the German Lied: The Ghazal.” *Comparative Literature* 41.1 (1989), 39-40

<sup>322</sup> A ritornello is another refrain-like device used in a number of musical forms and can simply be a recurring passage that has a structural function within the overall piece.

resolution to any tonal modulation. All these musical aspects of the ‘refrain’ may be said to provide the appropriate mood to the *ghasel* by i) creating the *feeling* of unresolvedness that is produced when a musical phrase strays from its tonic key and ii) by providing the relief and settled quality of a “ritornello that always moves back to the tonic key.”<sup>323</sup> In effect, the arrangement of *ghasel* into lied could (and indeed did) amplify and experiment with the themes of longing, wandering, and desire that were so germane to the ghazal. This treatment of the refrain as a ‘homing’ technique—through the logic of song-lyrics and (especially) through the emotive structure of tonal modulation—made exotic poetic forms and themes *feel* familiar by rendering them into familiar song patterns.<sup>324</sup>

What is unique (and ironic) about this affective dimension of the ghazal’s transposition into a lied is that it converts the philosophical and poetic elaboration of alienation (*ghurbat*) into a discourse of ‘homing’. This happens on a broad level of cultural production when the ghazal is presented as a variation of ‘folk’ song that, in the case of Der Strom, not only wistfully remembers the pastoral countryside but were consciously conceived as an object of *Volkskulture*. Perhaps more poignantly, the idea of a musical ‘resolution’ (or homing) also suggests the kind of resolution that the classical ghazal endlessly pines toward—as *visāl* (union) or *fanā* (sublimation)—but never quite attains, except fleetingly. *Tapish*, which literally means warmth

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<sup>323</sup> Fehn and Jürgen write, “The balance between the ritornello and the rest of the song—the rondo form of the setting, so to speak—offers an appropriate match for the song’s text, where grief and pain are overcome by the warmth and tenderness expressed by the refrain lines “sei mir gegrtisst, sei mir gekiisst!” Just as the poet calls attention to this utterance of an unalterable conviction by using it over and over in his poem, so Schubert calls attention to it by setting the lines to a ritornello that always moves back to the tonic key. The ritornello, that is, becomes a structural and emotional anchor for the song.” *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>324</sup> Interestingly, the ghazal was not the only Indo-Persian ‘song’ transposed into European musical forms. A series of Indian ‘folk-songs’ were published as *The Oriental Miscellany* by Andrew Bird in 1789. At the end of the collection of “Rekhtahs... Teranas... Tuppahs and Raagnies,” Bird offers a composition of the sonata in which includes musical phrases culled from the Indian songs.

but connotes agitation and longing, has long been characterized as the predominant ‘mood’ of the ghazal. However, this affect conventionally refers to the desire for erotic or mystical sublimation. Our present analysis of the *ghasel*-lied should not imply that such a modern conversion of *ghurbat* was an exclusively European invention. As the preceding chapters on the *naichral shā’irī* movement exemplify, the versification of *tapish* into a narrative of national belonging has become one of the predominant frames through which modern ghazal poetry is read; we may think to the ghazals of Faiz, Iqbal, and, even, Agha Shahid Ali.<sup>325</sup> Thomas Woodland’s reading of Shahid’s ghazals illustrates how the effects of the *radīf* can be quite varied. If we interpret the *radīf* as an echo of the past, it embodies what we may call a ‘backwards looking’, post-colonial nostalgia. Yet, if we interpret the structure of the ghazal as a form that continually invests new meaning into the refrain, the ghazal appears as an ‘outward-looking’ poetic form that acquires and incorporates new meaning as it moves—much like the diasporic poet whose ghazals serve as the template for Woodland’s argument.

It may already be clear how this treatment of refrain can be mapped onto some characteristic postcolonial and diasporic concerns. Refrain poems that seek “total recurrence” could embody—given the appropriate content—what Jahan Ramazani describes as the “postcolonial longing for an original home”, the “nativist quest for a

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<sup>325</sup> In fact, the ‘refrain’ like quality of the *radīf* in the ghazal can work towards various and (sometimes) opposite directions. For example, the postmodern ghazals of Kashmiri-American poet Agha Shahid Ali are regularly read as a versification of the hyphenated identity of this bilingual, diasporic poet; such a reading is yet another variation of interpreting the ghazal’s affect of ‘*tapish*’ in terms of a desire for (be)longing. Yet, as Nishat Zaidi argues, the effects of such a reading in the diasporic context can be more deconstructive and anti-nativist than how we might interpret the ‘national’ tenor of some of the nineteenth-century varieties of *ghasel*. She writes, “What hope does the form offer to marginalized subjects? The nonlinear, contrapuntal structure of the ghazal, where couplets, though independent in terms of theme, are held together by a profound and complex cultural unity, built on association and memory and expectation, allows the diasporic subject non-hegemonic, non-subordinate space. ... Ali’s innovative use of the ghazal form reaffirms the dialogic possibilities in dialectically juxtaposed cultural spaces. In sharing his experience of multiple linguistic, geographical, and historical dislocations, ... Ali asks his readers to see culture not as a static, fixed or given entity, but as something dynamic in its interaction with other cultures. He demonstrates the performative processes of cultural engagement.” Nishat Zaidi. “Center/Margin Dialectics and the Poetic Form: The Ghazals of Agha Shahid Ali.” *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 23 (2008): 61

unitary source”, and the “[r]evivalist nostalgia for an origin uncontaminated by the logic of reproduction”; they would suit, to borrow the words of Bruce King, the “nostalgia for a lost unified culture [that] has been a feature of Indian Islamic writing since the mid-nineteenth-century”...my purpose here is neither to validate nostalgia nor condemn refrain; it is merely to indicate how refrain might articulate a certain kind of nostalgia...Refrain, in fact, has the potential to align itself with a radically different position: a refrain’s capacity to continually “accrue new meaning” (Hollander) to provide “fresh energy or varied perspective” (McFarland) permits it to embody the condition of “hybridity” or “interculturality” so central to postcolonial and diasporic theory, literature, and experience. A subject’s sense of her cultural identity or “meaning” alters irrevocably when a colonizing nation imposes its culture on her and her world, and the cultural recontextualizations attendant upon willed or enforced emigration generate similar transformations.<sup>326</sup>

Thus, while the ‘disconnectedness’ of the ghazal was a supreme frustration for many of its modern critics, more contemporary practitioners and scholars have found the ghazal’s “ravishing disunity” to be spectacularly meaningful.<sup>327</sup> This brief comparison between what Fehn and Thym identify as the role of ‘refrain’ in the aforementioned lied and Woodland’s interpretation of the same structural-technique in Agha Shahid Ali’s reception, demonstrates that while the effects of the refrain can be quite varied, this central feature of the ghazal has, itself, become a source from which critics have extracted meaning. In our German examples, the very transposition of *radīf* into a refrain allows the ghazal to be received as ‘song’, a category so general and ubiquitous as to be universal. It would seem that in ‘Der Strom’, Platen’s employment of a decidedly nostalgic *radīf* further accentuates the themes of wandering and alienation that had been a central to the classical Persian ghazal. Similarly, Agha Shahid Ali’s use of *radīf* like “Of English” and

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<sup>326</sup> Malcolm Woodland. “Memory’s Homeland: Agha Shahid Ali and the Hybrid Ghazal.” *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 1.2 (2005), 5

<sup>327</sup> This is a term coined by Agha Shahid Ali in his study on anglophone ghazals, *Ravishing Disunities: Real Ghazals in English*. See Agha Shahid Ali, ed. *Ravishing Disunities: Real Ghazals in English*. ([Middleton, Conn.]: Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press ; University Press of New England, 2000).

“Arabic” forces the themes of migration, dislocation and repatriation (that, we could argue, were central to the ghazal’s history and thematic repertoire) to the fore. Undoubtedly, part of the reason that these poets (and the scholars who analyze their work) have interpreted the ghazal’s ‘yearning’ and desiring tenor towards questions of identity is because of the expectation placed on poetry, particularly ‘exotic poetry’, to represent its *people*. In fact, this reinterpretation of the *radīf* as a technique of contemplating postcolonial nostalgia develops in conversation with pastoralist representations of ‘the country’ as that site of home and hearth which embodied authentic experience.

The way that nineteenth-century poets like Von Platen responded to and reconfigured the *radīf* illustrates how the ghazal’s language of desire could be, and was, redeployed to towards the nostalgic remembrance of the ‘country’ as an idyllic pastoral space. In fact, such *pastoral nostalgia* is quite characteristic of the idealized nineteenth-century ‘folk’ song and was particularly effective in romanticizing the idea of the ‘*Volk*’, as a rustic ‘people’. Yet, while the elaboration of longing and nostalgia was undoubtedly prevalent within the classical ghazal, its themes of wandering and alienation pointed to a distinctly ‘exilic’ philosophy. In contrast, the reformulation of these poetic tropes in German intellectual culture (more properly, German *poetry*) works towards more cosmopolitan effects by repurposing the ghazal’s *radīf*-structure for an *idealized* wandering. I argue that although the redeployment of *ghurbat* (alienation) from a primarily philosophical and mystical allegory of exile to a more worldly register of ‘nostalgia’ is neither an exclusively modern or specifically European reading, it is, nonetheless, *particularly* popular in modern, ‘Western’ reinterpretations of the ghazal.<sup>328</sup> In fact, the romanticization of

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<sup>328</sup> Instead, what is unique (and important) about the German employment of the *radīf* as a device for evoking ‘wandering’ is that it imagines the *whole* ghazal as the practical poetic unit, as opposed to the *shi’r* as an individual, though representative, unit of the ghazal. Thus, we may concur that the modern emphasis on the *radīf* develops *out of* the assumption that the ghazal offered cohesion primarily through

*wandering* becomes a defining ‘affect’ of ghazal reception, particularly in German and American readings of Hafiz. While such readings were undoubtedly responsive to the ghazal’s language of *ghurbat* (alienation), they were also motivated by a climate of literary reception in which encountering and embracing ‘foreign’ literature was allegorized as *wandering*. The subsequent section of this chapter illustrates how such representations of reading ‘World Literature’ as *wandering* often borrowed, in part, from the ghazal’s vocabulary.

## ii. Wandering as a Trope of World Reading

While William Hodges, whose travel writing I analyzed in chapter one, is wary of getting lost in India, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe rendered his own enthusiasm for Persian ‘lyrics’ (and ‘World Literature’ more broadly) as a faithful wandering in foreign lands. Jeffrey Librett makes this point by noting the typological character of Goethe’s writings on the ‘Wandering Jew’. While the term ‘wandering’ may convey a sense of benign and wholly disinterested movement, the typological readings of Israelite wandering have long served the purposeful end of safely converting Jewish narratives from the old Testament into forms of reading the coming of Christ.

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‘mood’ or tone. Woodland suggests this is the case and corroborates his analysis of the *radif*’s role in providing emotive cohesion by borrowing from the writings of Agha Shahid Ali and Ahmed Ali regarding this same effect. He writes, “Ali suggests that the kinds of patterns that interest me are already there in the ghazal tradition: part of the ghazal’s “cultural unity” lies in its manipulation of “association and memory and expectation”, which must rely to some extent on refrain, and he cites Ahmed Ali’s claim, in *The Golden Tradition*, that “atmospheric and emotional cohesion and refinement of diction hold the poem together”. And, as I will shortly demonstrate, many of Ali’s more politically charged refrains nudge the form ever so slightly toward a more “Western” kind of thematic unity. But it is a rather conventional simile for the ghazal that gives me most courage. Attempting to explain the autonomy of the ghazal’s couplets, Ali insists that “one should at any time be able to pluck a couplet like a stone from a necklace, and it should continue to shine in that vivid isolation, though it would have a different lustre among and with the other stones” (Introduction 2-3). This statement seems to license an investigation of the “different lustre” that a ghazal’s couplets acquire in context, and of how refrain contributes to that lustre.”

Malcolm Woodland. “Memory’s Homeland: Agha Shahid Ali and the Hybrid Ghazal.” *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 1.2 (2005): 256

In his book *Orientalism and the figure of the Jew*, Librett artfully demonstrates how German Romantic explorations of Indic and Persianate literature employ the typological reading of wandering to a similarly self-aggrandizing end. In the following excerpt, Librett discusses Goethe's essay "Israel in the Desert" from *Notes and Essays for a Better Understanding of the West-East Divan*.

the wandering of the Israelites . . . [is] not finally a wandering at all, but a continuous narrative— it is the narrative of the development of a promise—God's promise to Abraham, then to Moses—that leads toward (and that is always already) its realization, the realization of the faith that is its core. The faith at stake here just happens to be, in Goethe's restoration, the faith in narrative, and the narrative of faith, as the incessant passage from an origin and back toward that origin. This circular narrative combines linear development with structure, or time with eternity (or space) in the form of the circle or cycle of its own movement, a movement that it gives to and takes from itself, in pure self-affection.<sup>329</sup>

Librett's sketch of the Christian figural interpretation of the old testament as a kind of 'circular narrative' is un-coincidentally parallel to the narrative structures of *Water of Life* and *The Flow and Ebb of Islam*. As I suggested in the introduction, such a paradigm of 'looking back' as a means of moving forward is almost ubiquitous in the nineteenth-century and can be read in light of a range of intellectual and artistic movements, particularly primitivism and 'landscape thinking'.<sup>330</sup> Most notably for scholars of World Literature, this *redemptive* structure reproduces

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<sup>329</sup> Librett, *Orientalism and the Figure of the Jew*, 87

<sup>330</sup> Raymond Schwab's uniquely important study *La Renaissance orientale* is particularly masterful in charting the significance of an Ancient Indian literature to the eighteenth-century theological debates of the time, as Said notes in his valuation of the scholar's unparalleled importance in Comparative Literature: "the Judeo Christian component in Western culture is seen by Schwab as being forced to submit to the discovery of an earlier civilization; thus Indo-European linguistics rival the primacy of Hebraic society in the European mind. Later that mind will accommodate the discovery, making the world into a whole again. But the gripping drama of Orientalism, as Schwab puts it in the superb first thirty pages of *La Renaissance orientale*, is the debate it initiates about the meaning of "the primitive," how different worlds are seen as claimants to originality and genius, how the notions of civilization and savagery, beginning and end, ontology and teleology, undergo marked transformation in the years between 1770 and 1850"

Edward W Said. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983. 252

and reenergizes older, Christian practices of reading. If typology, in both modernist and Christian reading, produces transformations on a largely chronological plane, we should also recognize that “the contest in the European mind between Oriental priority and Biblical history” is also, inescapably, a *global* contest. Just as tropological reading repurposed the Jewish ‘past’ for a Christian future, this was also a repurposing of ‘Asiatick’ past for European faith. Orientalist revitalizations of tropological reading should, rightfully, remind of us of this geographic ‘rivalry’. Librett ultimately builds his reading towards a demonstration of the employment of *figura* in German reception of non-European texts (Indic and Persianate). He argues that in “Goethe’s secular and aesthetic . . . appropriation of the typological tradition, the Old Testament anticipates its realization as the poet’s wandering in the poetic traditions of the Orient.”<sup>331</sup> This transfer of poetic meaning from the ‘wandering Israelite’ to the wandering German poet embodies a mode of engaging with ‘World Literature’ that was particularly vogue in the nineteenth-century and, in many respects, is still with us today in the form of close-reading practices that interpret poetry as universal utterance.

The redeployment of *Figura* in nineteenth-century German intellectual culture, thus, worked towards demonstrating the ‘promise’ of World Literature by making centuries old *adab*—replete with modes of rhetoric and philosophy that were both socially and conventionally determined—*readable as literature* for a removed and seemingly ‘secular’ consumption.<sup>332</sup> This

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<sup>331</sup> Jeffrey Librett, *Orientalism and the Figure of the Jew*, 24

<sup>332</sup> As M. H. Abrahms and Edward Said have noted, this secularized literature often simply “redeployed” the older, metaphysical structures of premodern writing. Indeed, this dissertation has outlined some key moments of this modernist recycling. Said writes “Modern Orientalism derives from secularizing elements in eighteenth-century European culture. . . . But if these interconnected elements represent a secularizing tendency, this is not to say that the old religious patterns of human history and destiny and “the existential paradigms” were simply removed. Far from it: they were reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in the secular frameworks just enumerated. For anyone who studied the Orient, a secular



*distance*, even alienation, between the source of Oriental text and its European readers was the primary occasion for the colonial enterprises of philology and, eventually, literary studies. As such, the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are a period of burgeoning ‘studies’ in literature: the influx of Oriental libraries into European reading seems to overwhelm its readers who must now organize, systematize and, most notably, *characterize* their way through the mysterious texts that ‘Asia’ offered. Accordingly, a vast array of the literary histories and literary commentaries produced in the late eighteenth and nineteenth period sought to *facilitate* the reading of foreign literature. Goethe, who famously heralded this new age, embodies the associated postures of scholarship only too well. Librett writes:

For the sending out into the world of these poems—Goethe speaks here of sending poems “in die Welt” with or without explanation—implies a spatial movement of distinction and differentiation, and consequently an *exile* of the subject from itself in writing. The commentary on these poems that constitutes the “Notes and Treatises” is meant to overcome this exile and distance, returning the poetic cycle to the inward place of its intentional origin... the *context of the transcendent origin* as such, as we shall see below. The subjectivity of the poet (as the place of this transcendent origin) and the objectivity of the text should be kept, according to Goethe, in one place and time (i.e. the understanding of the text should be immediate). The distance between the authorial subject and the reading subject should be overcome.<sup>333</sup>

While Librett’s study beautifully illustrates the appropriation of “Israelite wandering” into a broader method of encountering ‘World Literature,’ Goethe’s vocabulary of distance, alienation, and exile—which bleeds into Librett’s own—undoubtedly borrows from the ghazal itself.

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vocabulary in keeping with these frameworks was required. Yet if Orientalism provided the vocabulary, the conceptual repertoire, the techniques—for this is what, from the end of the eighteenth-century on, Orientalism did and what Orientalism was—it also retained, as an undislodged current in its discourse, a reconstructed religious impulse, a naturalized supernaturalism.”

Aamir Mufti. “Orientalism and the Institution of World Literatures.” *Critical Inquiry* 36.3 (2010): 458–493.

<sup>333</sup> Jeffrey S Librett. *Orientalism and the Figure of the Jew*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.  
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Librett's chapter "Being as Presence in the Erotic Gaze," for example, appreciates the range of registers (social, philosophical and metaphysical) that erotic consummation, or its lack thereof, could signify in the ghazal. I suggest that another example of the Persianate (and particularly ghazal) convention of representing 'exile' warrants more attention: the 'mad-man', Majnun, whose importance in the ghazal and its sibling forms is perhaps unmatched by any other narrative. The story of Majnun and his beloved Laila is essentially one of unrequited love; a topic that, as we know, is primary to the ghazal. According to the story, when the young man, Qays, is driven mad by the separation from his beloved, Laila, he wanders into the desert, spurred by a kind of spiritual ecstasy and eventually becomes known as the 'mad one' or Majnun. Majnun's *retreat* into the desert is, thus, a gesture of social and sexual renunciation but born—as it were—from a mystical awakening that affords secret kinds of transcendence. In over a thousand years of literary development—which the ghazal has experienced across an expanse of languages—writers, singers, saints, and philosophers have taken this potent moment of Majnun's renunciative transcendence and splintered it into countless myriad forms, affects, and philosophical questions. While Goethe's interest in wandering cannot be attributed exclusively to the ghazal's many allegories of wandering (including, most notably, Majnun), many of the Hammer Von Baron's translations of Hafiz and Goethe's imitative works in *East-West Divan* reveal that this theme's prominence in Persian Poetry was indeed noticed and adopted by German orientalists.

To be sure, Goethe is not unique in his adulation of wandering. A number of philologists and *littérateurs* of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century participated in a collective, intellectual effort to retrace poetry, "the universal possession of mankind," back to its site of '*transcendent origin*'. It seems a number could not resist the vocabulary that the ghazal and its related genres

offered; perhaps it is not so surprising that they were enchanted by the philosophical elaboration of *distance* in Indo-Persian texts when alienation and remove was the very condition (or fantasy) of their own writing. We find, accordingly, that depicting the development of poetic convention as a kind of ‘wandering’ was not simply the rhetorical flourish of a few writers but, instead, appears again and again in literary histories, commentaries, and poems of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century. By highlighting this representation of wandering across a range of modern scholarship (including literary histories like the tazkirahs and philological treatises that I have analyzed so far), we can discern how the ghazal was integrated into select models of Romantic lyric poetry that idealized wandering as a mode of contemplation and amplified this quality, especially, in folk songs. Amongst such an array of writers and thinkers, the Transcendentalists are a particularly noteworthy example: not only could we characterize Whitman’s famous “Song of Myself” as a rather wandering, meandering narrative, but Emerson, particularly, promotes the ‘country walk’ as a beneficial exercise in bringing man closer to experience with the most eternal sites of authentic experience and knowledge, ‘nature’. Emerson portrays the benefits of the ‘country walk’ as primary not only for men hoping to unlock the ‘secrets’ of the world but for those orators of great ‘common’ truths – statesmen, philosophers, and poets – who would reshape the meaning of ‘piety’ in modern and secular terms. I argue that the concept of ‘Bardic Genius’ as the poetic representative of ‘his people’ exemplified such a conceptions of nature. The next section of this chapter will demonstrate how, like many of his contemporaries, Emerson’s understanding of literary genius was founded on popular notions of nature as a site of transcendent knowledge and that his interpretation of Persian poetry featured prominently in this reading.

### iii. The Bard: A Natural Genius

As we know, Ralph Waldo Emerson was famously inspired by Persian Sufi poets, particularly Hafiz and Saadi.<sup>334</sup> Indeed, a number of scholars have outlined the need to regard him as one of the foremost scholars of ‘World Literature’ (much like Goethe) on account of his immersion in Oriental reading. Even some of Emerson’s celebrated writings on nature reflect this interest in ‘Oriental’ culture. For example, in his 1858 lecture, “Country Life”, Emerson advocates for the priority of nature in American culture (and literature) partly as the fulfillment of a racial temperament. The lecture begins so:

The Teutonic race have been marked in all ages by a trait which has received the name of Earth-hunger, a love of possessing land... The land, the care of land, seems to be the calling of the people of this new country, of those, ... And if, instead of running about in the hotels and theatres of Europe, we would manlike see what grows, or might grow, in Massachusetts, ... ponder the moral secrets which, in her solitudes, Nature has to whisper to us, we were better patriots and happier men.<sup>335</sup>

Emerson’s theory of the *particular* disposition of ‘Teutonic’ peoples is not the singular subject of this lecture. Instead, this ‘racial’ aspect flits in and out throughout a broader argument about the benefits of nature which borrow from literary examples that are geographically (and ethnically) diverse. The racialized quality of Emerson’s historiography is only momentarily visible when he traces the origins of “earth-hunger” to “Aryan Progenitors in Asia,” thus echoing the Jonesian

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<sup>334</sup> For a fuller analysis of Emerson’s engagement with Islamic culture, see Wai-chee Dimock. *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006.) Open WorldCat. Web. 9 Jan. 2017. 23-52  
Arthur Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism: A Study of Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott* (New York, 1963).  
Jeffrey Einboden. *Islam and Romanticism: Muslim Currents from Goethe to Emerson*. (London: Oneworld, 2014).

<sup>335</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson. “Country Life.” *The Atlantic* Nov. 1904:  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1904/11/country-life/376194/> (Accessed Dec 20 2017).

genealogy of a common, Indo-European ancestry. In fact, Emerson delivers this example of nature-loving ancestors with the image of invading Aryan warriors, riding chariots into battle. He writes “they are coming with weapons, war-cries, and decorations. I hear the cracking of the whips in their hands. I praise their sportive resistless strength. They are the generators of speech.”<sup>336</sup> Thus, the primordial Indo-European utterance is imagined as a battle cry. It is an ominous, though telling, image for understanding how a history of violent colonial settlement can be assimilated into the naturalist narrative that pervades nineteenth American poetry and, indeed, culture.<sup>337</sup>

Further on, another example of benevolent nature (sampled, again, from the ‘Indo-European’ branch) similarly advocates the benefits of nature as a space of wandering:

Nature kills egotism and conceit; deals strictly with us; and gives us sanity; so that it was the practice of Orientals, especially of the Persians, to let insane persons wander at their own will out of towns, into the desert, and, if they liked, to associate with wild beasts, especially gazelles, collect around an insane person, and live with him on a friendly footing.<sup>338</sup>

Of course, what Emerson cites as a practice of healing the insane is none other than the most widely read and disseminated ‘insane’ figure of Persian poetry, Majnun. This prototype of the madman who wanders into the desert and develops an affinity with nature, particularly gazelles, is conventionalized in Arabic, Persian and Urdu poetry. In some respects, the theosophical concepts associated with the literary figure of Majnun were highly conversant with ascetic

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<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> We may think, for example, of the influential urban parks (and scholarship) of Frederick Law Olmstead as well as the establishment of the first National Parks in the United States (Yellowstone, Sequoia, Yosemite, Mount Rainier), all of which demonstrate the immense value placed on ‘Natural’ culture as a primary feature of nineteenth-century American cultural history.

<sup>338</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Natural History of Intellect*. N.p.: Houghton, Mifflin and, 1893.

practices of *fakīrs* and *jōgī* in the Middle East and South Asia. Nonetheless, it is highly unlikely that the practice of allowing mad- men to wander nature and converse with animals was ever considered a realizable method of ‘healing’ the insane. While it is possible that Emerson was familiar with the social customs associated with ascetics, it is more likely that this particular example comes out of Emerson too much factuality to a *literary* representation of madness and wandering. Despite Emerson’s misrecognition of this ‘Persian’ madness as a social, rather than ‘literary’, example, this Sufi trope undoubtedly informs his own writings on the benefits of wandering in nature, which has since become an iconic feature of American poetry.

While the versification of wandering was a prominent feature in Persian poetry, and particularly the ghazal, Emerson’s reception of this theme is often interpreted as a particular style or *signature* of Hafiz. Indeed, Emerson’s portrayal of Hafiz suggests that he associated a number of affective and theosophical qualities of Persian poetry (particular ghazal poetry) with Hafiz himself. On the one hand, so exceptionalizing Hafiz obscured the role that the *conventions* of Persian poetry (and particularly ghazal poetics) played in Emerson’s scholarship. And yet, Emerson’s reception of Hafiz is also abstracted, standardized, and universalized through the prototype of ‘bard’ which was, itself, a prominent *trend* in nineteenth-century literary scholarship

He asserts his dignity as bard and inspired man of his people ...Hafiz is the prince of Persian poets, and in his extraordinary gifts adds to some of the attributes of Pindar, Anacreon, Horace and Burns, the insight of a mystic, that sometimes affords a deeper glance at Nature than belongs to either of these bards.<sup>339</sup>

As some scholars of Bardic Nationalism point out, the designation of specific poets as ‘bards’ was a popular trend in Romantic writing. In the literary traditions where Bardic culture has its

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<sup>339</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson. “On Persian Poetry.” *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: With a Biographical Introduction and Notes by Edward Waldo Emerson and A General Index*. (Vol. 8. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904) 254, 244.

historical roots (i.e. Celtic, Welsh, and Gaelic) this figure became a figurative ‘mouthpiece’ from which to consider local histories.<sup>340</sup> For English poets writing in a climate deprived of feudal patronage yet enamored with the promise of national autonomy, this figure of the Bard could serve, instead, as a nostalgic gesture towards the privileged position that the poet (as minstrel or troubadour) held in pre-modern societies. Mary-Anne Constantine elucidates this Romantic redeployment of Bardic culture:

The bard (also figured as the Anglo-Saxon scop or the Scandinavian skald), conceived both as the memory and the voice of his people, became an extraordinarily potent character for writers throughout Europe in the Romantic period and inspired some of the period’s most influential works. The bardic revival (or “neobardism”) is intimately connected with the phenomenon of Celticism, the primitivist “rediscovery” of the native Celtic languages and cultures of the British Isles and Brittany... The revival also contributed to the growth of what has been termed “bardic nationalism,” a resurgence of cultural confidence within the Celtic-speaking countries that fed into later nationalist movements... The figure of the bard, then, while offering a window into the past, inevitably became part of a wider political discussion about loyalties and identities... Bardic revival poetry was also at the heart of several notorious literary controversies—the “Ossian scandal” chief among them—as alternative versions of the past were offered and contested, and the lines between translation and invention became blurred.<sup>341</sup>

Emerson’s characterization of Hafiz as a ‘Bard’ is indeed part of the recasting of the bard as a universal figure of proto-national (thus, vernacular) story-telling. We may consider how *Bardic revivalism*, thus, reflected the growing *global* trend towards communalist politics. Rabindranath Tagore, for example, was cited as ‘The Bard of Bengal’, Shakespeare was ‘The Bard of Avon’,

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<sup>340</sup> Katie Trumpener offers the the massacre of Welsh Bards by King Edward I as the crystalizing moment for this Celtic memory of the Bard. She suggests that Evan Evan’s “Paraphrase of the 137<sup>th</sup>” “links a latter-day cultural nationalism to a sanctified biblical precedent, to invest the Welsh with the Israelites’ self-confidence as a chosen people and to raise cultural self-preservation to the status of religious duty.” Katie Trumpener. *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>341</sup> Mary-Anne Constantine. “Literature of the Bardic Revival: an annotated bibliography.” *Oxford Bibliographies Online*. [<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/obo/page/british-and-irish-literature>]

Alexander Pope was ‘The Bard of Twickenham’ and the Australian poet Henry Lawson was referred to as the ‘Bush Bard’. What is unique about Emerson’s production of Hafiz as Bard (as might already be apparent from earlier chapters on the ghazal) is that in the expansive and diverse territories where Persian circulated as a lingua Franca, Hafiz was a primary figure of Persian cosmopolitanism; after all, it was through his writing (and Saadi’s *Gulistan*, the other Persian poet that captures Emerson’s attention) that young men of genteel birth learnt the Persian language and the sociability associated with elite Persianate culture. Reformulating Hafiz (and, to a lesser degree, Saadi) as bardic figures entailed refracting Persian poetry through ideals that amplified certain aspects of this literary history and obscured others. The various representations and versifications of wandering that were conventional in Persian ghazal poetry coalesced (impressively) with the refiguration of the ‘Bard’ in nineteenth-century primitivist scholarship. Yet, these readings also inverted specific qualities of the ghazal. I argue that the adjustment which is most salient in this transfer from the ghazal’s *āshiq* to the bard is a shift in ‘affective’ color from the exilic, powerlessness of the *āshiq* to the aspirational nationalism of Emerson’s bard.

#### **iv. Bardic Utterance, National Genius**

Emerson’s scholarship also exhibits that popular refraction of the Persian poetic tradition in nineteenth-century German and America reading: the amplification of its *oral* dimensions. Bardic poetry and story-telling was, of course, predominantly an oral custom; Emerson’s portrayal of Hafiz as a bard emphasizes (arguably, overemphasizes) this same facet of Persian poetry. As I have sketched earlier in this chapter, the ghazal was, indeed, practiced orally, both through recitation and in musical arrangement. However, we can be sure that Hafiz’s poetry did



not reach its primary translators, Von Hammer and Jones, in aural form. Indeed, most of the British colonial adventures in Persian philology were mediated *through* India, where Hafiz's ghazals would have been popular amongst a lettered-educated elite.<sup>342</sup> To characterize these poems as songs is, therefore, not incorrect but, in light of the broader valorization of primitive poetry, wittingly *understates* the textual dimension of the Persian poetic tradition. Moreover, we can note from Emerson's depiction of the ghazal as a 'song' that by this term he seems to imply a more rustic and popular strain of song culture than the kind of musical performance of ghazals that we know to have been patronized by the Safavid or Mughal courts.<sup>343</sup>

The muleteers and camel-drivers, on their way through the desert, sing snatches of his songs, not so much for the thought as for their joyful temper and tone; and the cultivated Persians know his poems by heart. Yet Hafiz does not appear to have set any great value on his songs, since his scholars collected them for the first time after his death.

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<sup>342</sup> Katherine Butler Schofield attends to this 'sung' dimension of the ghazal which is often overlooked by literary scholars. She writes, "The ghazal as Islamicate India's preeminent literary genre has enjoyed lavish scholarly attention over the years. The ghazal as a broadly popular genre of Hindustani music that has historically been sung, enacted and danced, has received much less. Musicologists, perhaps doubting their abilities to deal with its sophisticated language, have by and large ceded the terrain of the ghazal to literary specialists. For their part, save the usual gestures to *musha'iras*, literary scholars have been all but deaf to the extensive performed lives of historical ghazal texts. Yet there is pervasive evidence that the Persian and Urdu ghazal enjoyed dual, mutually enriching existences as both poem and sung performance throughout North India and the Deccan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" Katherine Butler Schofield and David J Lunn. "Releasing the Music of the Archive: Opening our Ears to the Historical Ghazal"

<sup>343</sup> Katherine Butler-Schofield's scholarship outlines the hybridization and cross-pollination of the Persian (and Urdu) ghazal with other vernacular registers of poetry and musicality thus corroborating that the 'sung' ghazal was indeed a stunning synthesis of Islamicate and Indic culture, Sufi theosophy and *rasa* (mood). She writes, "When *dhrupad* songs travelled from the court to the sufi assembly and back into the courtly setting and out again, they *had* to be capable of being interpreted in a multiplicity of ways—whether sufi, Hindu *bhakti*, aesthetic, devotional, or any combination of these—depending on the listener's history of emotional and cultural experiences. But by the seventeenth century the Mughal patron had long appropriated and reappropriated, through repeated listenings in different contexts and on different occasions, the imagery and the sounds associated originally with *shringara rasa* into his own deeply felt aesthetic experience of Hindustani music, through the powerful affinity he felt between *shringara rasa* and *'ishq*, cultivated in the particular sufi environment of Mughal Hindustan. In this way, some Mughal connoisseurs of Hindustani music became, recognisably, *rasikas*." Katherine Butler Schofield, "Learning to Taste the Emotions", 421

Of course, it's true that Hafiz's poems would have been learnt by a courtly elite and sung by professional musicians. However, even in the days of Emerson's writing (several centuries after Hafiz's death), it is unlikely that Hafiz's poetry would have been a prominent part of a rural, folk culture, even in regions where Persian is vernacular. More importantly, as an image of the circulation and 'after-life' of Hafiz's poetry, it is rather misleading to focus exclusively on Hafiz's reception in Persia (or contemporary Iran). Hafiz was, after all, a monumental figure in India, Turkey and Central Asia. The reach of his poetry (especially geographically) is far more attributable to the movement of letters and lettered men than camel-driers. Nonetheless, a telling sample from Emerson's essay suggests how routinely the American critic interpreted Hafiz's poetry as a 'folk' tradition.

The Persians have epics and tales, but, for the most part, they affect short poems and epigrams. Gnostic verses, rules of life conveyed in a lively image, especially in an image addressed to the eye and contained in a single stanza, were always current in the East; and if the poem is long, it is only a string of unconnected verses. They use an inconsecutiveness quite alarming to Western logic, and the connection between the stanzas of their longer odes is much like that between the refrain of our old English ballads.<sup>344</sup>

It is likely that the earlier 'gnomic verses' Emerson describes could well be *rubā'iyāt* (or *qit'āt*). The later discussion of 'unconnected' longer odes must be none other than the 'alarming' ghazal. The parallel that Emerson draws between the ghazal and the ballad is of course mediated by his interpretation of the *radīf* as a refrain—a quality that, as we already discussed, also allowed the *ghasel* to assimilate into the corpus of German lied. It seems appropriate that the American scholar should compare the ghazal—a form that was assimilated by German poets and musicians in terms of the quintessentially German 'folk song'—similarly, in terms of the quintessentially 'American' folk song. Indeed, this seems to have been a popular orientalist reading of the ghazal

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<sup>344</sup> Emerson, "On Persian Poetry", 243

and one which was undeniably influenced by eighteenth and nineteenth-century trends in collecting and curating ‘folk’ culture.

Emerson’s figuration of Hafiz as a bard certainly depended on stressing the sung nature of his poems. This orality is also impressed upon the reader by Emerson’s representation of Hafiz poems as *literally* spoken. Of course, we assume that Hafiz must have recited his own poetry, extensively even. Yet, Emerson’s investment in stressing the orality of Hafiz’s poems also emphasizes the *Bardic* ‘genius’ he believed Hafiz to possess. As an idealized poet-figure, particularly of folk poetry, the ‘bard’ often embodied the quality of personal genius that primitivist scholarship valorized over conventionality. As Irving Babbit’s monumental essay, “Genius and Taste”, articulates, this eighteenth-century poetic trend vilified the role of ‘imitation’ in poetic practice, in favor of ‘originality’. Emerson’s praise for Hafiz insinuates these values in the following passage:

His was the fluent mind in which every thought and feeling came readily to the lips. “Loose the knots of the heart,” he says. We absorb elements enough, but have not leaves and lungs for healthy perspiration and growth. An air of sterility, of incompetence to their proper aims, belongs to many who have both experience and wisdom. But a large utterance, a river that makes its own shores, quick perception and corresponding expression, a constitution to which every morrow is a new day, which is equal to the needs of life, at once tender and bold, with great arteries,—this generosity of ebb and flow satisfies, and we should be willing to die when our time comes, having had our swing and gratification. The difference is not so much in the quality of men’s thoughts as in the power of uttering them. What is pent and smouldered in the dumb actor, is not pent in the poet, but passes over into new form, at once relief and creation.<sup>345</sup>

It’s clear from this passage that Emerson conceived of Hafiz recitation as performing a much ‘greater’ drama; the power of poetic *utterance* comes to signify the social and political vitality of a “new day”. It also emphasizes the ‘person’ of Hafiz by bringing the speech-act of the poet into immediate view. Emerson, we must remember, would have undoubtedly encountered Hafiz’s

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<sup>345</sup> Emerson, “On Persian Poetry”, 247

poetry almost exclusively through text. Yet, the Hafiz of his projection is especially *fleshed*; the discussion of lips, lungs, arteries and, of course, breath seems to will the Persian ‘bard’ into materialization.

Emerson’s insistence on understanding Hafiz’s poetry by engaging with the poet himself is, of course, deeply rooted in notions of genius that were especially popular from the eighteenth-century onwards. Hafiz’s characterization as an especially spontaneous personality, for instance, contrasts with the “sterility” and “incompetence” of “dumb” actors who produce “pent” and “smouldering” thought. For Emerson, Hafiz is a figure of genius as opposed to a product of learnt imitation. We may deduce this from the attention given not only to Hafiz’s personhood but also to the other primary source of Emerson’s explanation of Persian poetry, nature.

Life in the East is fierce, short, hazardous, and in extremes. Its elements are few and simple, not exhibiting the long range and undulation of European existence, . . . All or nothing is the genius of Oriental life. Favor of the Sultan, or his displeasure, is a question of Fate. A war is undertaken for an epigram or a distich, as in Europe for a duchy. The prolific sun and the sudden and rank plenty which his heat engenders, make subsistence easy. . . . The temperament of the people agrees with this life in extremes. Religion and poetry are all their civilization. . . . The favor of the climate, making subsistence easy and encouraging an outdoor life, allows to the Eastern nations a highly intellectual organization, - leaving out of view, at present, the genius of the Hindoos (more Oriental in every sense), whom no people have surpassed in the grandeur of their ethical statement. The Persians and the Arabs, with great leisure and few books, are exquisitely sensible to the pleasures of poetry. Layard has given some details of the effect which the *improvisatori* produced on the children of the desert. When the bard improvised an amatory ditty, the young chief’s excitement was almost beyond control. The other Bedouins were scarcely less moved by these rude measures, which have the same kind of effect on the wild tribes of the Persian mountains. Such verses, chanted by their self-taught poets or by the girls of their encampment, will drive warriors to the combat, fearless of death, or prove an ample reward on their return from the dangers of the ghazon, or the fight.<sup>346</sup>

Of course, we know from William Jones’ writing on Asiatick poetry that interpreting poetry through the lens of ‘climate’ and geographic conditions was popular in the eighteenth-century:

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<sup>346</sup> Emerson, “On Persian Poetry”, 238-239

this very mode of literary reception developed from the classical notion of *genius loci*, understood as the guardian spirit of a place, to a more secularized concept of ‘local spirit’ as the essence of place.<sup>347</sup> Later conceptualizations of genius as the unique and innate talent of an individual developed out of this localist model. Thus, even contemporary notions of ‘originality’ as ‘newness’ or uniqueness can be traced to the eighteenth-century rhetoric around ‘genius’ as an *originary* impulse.<sup>348</sup> Emerson’s figurations of Hafiz as a bard reveal how these two models of ‘genius’—as ‘local spirit’ and individual talent—could refer back and forth towards one another. In its eighteenth and nineteenth-century configurations, the ‘bard’ is always conceived in terms of a ‘locale’ and representative of a specific place and its ‘people’. Yet, this bardic-figure is also no ordinary, common representative; he is exceptionalized by his very extraordinary capacities of perception and articulation. Thus, especially in its eighteenth and nineteenth century redeployment, the figure of the bard mediated between these two conceptions of genius as local spirit and natural talent.

Emerson’s portrayal of Hafez as a poet intimately conversant with nature reflects the idealization of the bard as a local, natural, and ‘people’s poet’.

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<sup>347</sup> See Andrew Robinson. *Genius: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 2-4

<sup>348</sup> Irving Babbitt’s “Genius and Taste” is one the monumental critical essays on this primitivist trend in eighteenth-century poetry that undervalues (and indeed vilifies) the role of ‘imitation’ in poetic practice in favor ‘originality’. In this essay, Babbitt highlights Edward Young’s essay “Conjectures on Original Composition” (1759) as a primary example of the primitivist conception of genius. He writes, “Those who sought to purge literature of this taint began towards the middle of the eighteenth-century to oppose to the neo-classical harping on judgment and imitation a plea for imagination and originality. The enthusiast and original genius who emerged at this time and arrayed himself against the wit and man of the world had from the outset a strong leaning towards primitivism. For example, Edward Young’s “Conjectures on Original Composition” (1759) will be found in its attacks on imitation, and its exaltation of spontaneity and free expression, to anticipate surprisingly the gospel of recent primitivists like Dr. Spingarn and his master, Benedetto Croce.” Irving Babbitt. “Genius and Taste.” *The Nation* 7 Feb. 1918: 138–141.

Hafiz defies you to show him, or put him in a condition inopportune and ignoble. Take all you will and leave him but a corner of Nature, a lane, a den, a cow-shed, out of cities, far from letters and taste and culture, he promises to win to that scorned spot, the light of moon and stars, the love of men, the smile of beauty, the homage of art. It shall be painted and carved and sung and celebrated and visited by pilgrimage in all time to come.<sup>349</sup>

If a ‘corner of Nature’ (or really any space ‘far from letters and taste and culture’) is the essential starting point for Hafiz’s genius, his poetry (or celebrity) as bard produces a circular effect when the site of his inspiration also becomes a site of pilgrimage. Of course, the devotional aspect evoked by ‘pilgrimage’ was a prominent quality of ghazal poetry; major poets (like Rumi and Hafiz) were often regarded as spiritual masters. Yet, Emerson, again, translates the poetics of rapture, in a way that dovetails with eighteenth-century configurations of the bard as a kind of mystic or seer.<sup>350</sup> Thus, Emerson’s reading of Hafiz’s genius as a form of transcendent and mystic perception illustrates how certain characterizations of the bard assimilated especially with qualities of the ghazal’s lyric speaker (the *āshiq*.) This, too, is a primary moment of *refraction* in Emerson’s reading; by interpreting Hafiz as a representative of native Persian genius, Emerson realigned the conventionalized language of mystic love towards a kind of socio-political devotion towards the common, folk people.

#### **v. Unconventional Representatives: From Mad Mystic to ‘People’s Poet’**

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<sup>349</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Notes” *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: With a Biographical Introduction and Notes by Edward Waldo Emerson and A General Index*. Vol. 8. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), 413.

<sup>350</sup> For more detail on the representation of blindness as a form of ‘higher’ seeing, See Edward Larrissy. *The Blind and Blindness in Literature of the Romantic Period*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

In certain respects, Emerson's conflation of the mystical dimension of the ghazal with notions of poetic genius is—as with much of his comparative poetics—rooted in highly conventionalized aspects of the ghazal. The ghazal speaker typically adopts a transgressive spiritual and religious attitude. For example, in a climate of multi-ethnic and multiple religious traditions, the ghazal's *āshiq* often fixes its erotic attention towards the religious other; in the Ottoman context this is often the Frankish boy whereas in Indic ghazals it is configured as 'idol worship'. Figural representatives of orthodox Islam, like the *maulvī*, are often configured as antagonists while the ghazal's *āshiq* typically engages in wine-drinking at the risk of criticism. We might read such poetry as embodying individuality rather than conventionality. Emerson's scholarship certainly betrays such an interpretation when he portrays these moments of customary unorthodoxy or 'liberalism' as a kind of social egalitarianism:

The other merit of Hafiz is his intellectual liberty, which is a certificate of profound thought. We accept the religions and politics into which we fall, and it is only a few delicate spirits who are sufficient to see that the whole web of convention is the imbecility of those whom it entangles,—that the mind suffers no religion and no empire but its own. It indicates this respect to absolute truth by the use it makes of the symbols that are most stable and revered, and therefore is always provoking the accusation of irreligion...His complete intellectual emancipation he communicates to the reader. There is no example of such facility of allusion, such use of all materials. Nothing is too high, nothing too low for his occasion. He fears nothing, he stops for nothing. Love is a leveller, and Allah becomes a groom, and heaven a closet, in his daring hymns to his mistress or to his cupbearer. This boundless charter is the right of genius.<sup>351</sup>

The attitude of religious unorthodoxy—which Emerson considers particular to Hafiz but which was, actually, conventional to ghazal poetry—certainly offers a commentary on the 'structures of power' that governed Islamicate societies.<sup>352</sup> The potential for this poetic language to evoke

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<sup>351</sup> Emerson, "On Persian Poetry," 248

<sup>352</sup> This term 'structures of power' was introduced to me through a class on Medieval Indian history taught by Sunil Kumar at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 2009. It is a particularly effective

revolution in the poems of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, for example, is partly derived from the ghazal's versification of mad-love as a radical form of *wafā* (loyalty) to the eternal and divine, rather than worldly, truth. In this vein, the literal symbols of power are proven to be fleeting and the dispossessed and impoverished are promised as the ultimate inheritors of truth. It is, nevertheless, also perfectly possible for participants of a conventionalized rubric of unorthodoxy to exhibit otherwise traditional views on power and religiosity—the ghazal poetry of the Ayatollah Khomeini, perhaps, suggests such a possibility. Reading the *performed* unorthodoxy of the ghazal too literally underestimates the currency and clout that Sufi religiosity undoubtedly held in Hafiz's fourteenth century, and for several centuries afterwards. Emerson, for instance, reads the rejection of false piety in Hafiz's ghazals as a rejection of a mystical dimension altogether!<sup>353</sup> This secularized reading of Hafiz's unorthodox piety, in effect, redirects the radical potential of his poetry from a metaphysical to a social context. This is one of many *modern* redeployments of ghazal poetics towards egalitarian ideals. In its premodern context, the 'mad mystic' of ghazal poetry reflected much of the hierarchical, feudal culture of which it was a product. This 'mad mystic' figure has always had 'real world' varieties in the form of *jogīs* and *fakīrs* – these too are some of the many guises that the ghazal speaker uses. The translation, or codification, of *faqīr* is difficult because, as Nile Green's study *Islam and the Army in Colonial*

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term for understanding the dynamic relationship between the two major institutions of power in Sultanate history, the royal court and the Sufi shrine, *darbār*.

<sup>353</sup> For example, Emerson writes "We do not wish to strew sugar on bottled spiders, or try to make mystical divinity out of the Song of Solomon, much less out of the erotic and bacchanalian songs of Hafiz. Hafiz himself is determined to defy all such hypocritical interpretation, and tears off his turban and throws it at the head of the meddling dervish, and throws his glass after the turban. But the love or the wine of Hafiz is not to be confounded with vulgar debauch. It is the spirit in which the song is written that imports, and not the topics." Emerson, "On Persian Poetry," 249



*India* suggests, *faqīrs* were often perceived as mad men by colonial officials working within Victorian British understandings of mental pathology. For local populations, however, the *faqīr* could have a range of different associations: a ‘poor man’, a mendicant, or a holy man.<sup>354</sup> The unorthodoxy of this figure did not so much build towards the rejection of hierarchy or a political-philosophy of liberty and fraternity. Rather, it would be more accurate to say that it claimed madness as a privileged and exclusive condition of *exception*:

an earlier pre-Islamic Arabic legacy present madness as the result of possession by a spirit or ‘genie’ (*jinī*) so as to render the victim ‘jinned’ (*junūn*, *majnūn*). In India, this idiom of possession fused with local demonological traditions that have remained influential to the present day. Finally, drawing on a specifically Islamic notion of the soul’s innate ‘attraction’ (*jazb*) towards its creator certain expression of madness could also be interested theologically as proof of an individual’s special intimacy with God. Such figures were regarded as *majzūbs*, persons whose state of permanent and enraptured ‘closeness’ (*qurbat*) to God rendered them ideal intercessors and workers of wonders. As such their every transgression was permissible, since it was necessarily committed through divine dispensation.<sup>355</sup>

Through an examination of the role of *faqīrs* and saints (both interpreted as ‘holy men’ of sorts) in the British colonial army, Green’s study demonstrates how this more *exceptionalized* sociology of madness was interwoven into institutions of Indian society that were hierarchically organized, much like local notions of mystic-madness.

We have repeatedly seen the patronal and hierarchical relationship of the soldier with his holy men, and this too should be seen as a characteristic of the Islam of the barracks. Implicit in the Islamic notion of ‘sainthood’ (*wilāyat*) is a hierarchical model of differentiated humanity that stands in direct contrast to the egalitarian conception of making that underlay the Enlightenment origins of professional history. In the historical

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<sup>354</sup> Green writes “The genealogy of mental pathology in Victorian British through ideas of social reform and the earlier Enlightenment ideology of reason lent colonial medicine a complete politic-cultural agenda based on an ingrained bourgeois association between work and morality on the one hand and notions of self-control based on the characteristically British formulation of ‘common sense’ on the other.”

Nile Green. *Islam and the Army in Colonial India: Sepoy Religion in the Service of Empire*. Vol. 16, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 107

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 107

sensibility of his followers, The Muslims saint or *walī* was conceived as a person who, while part of the same spectrum of human life as other men nonetheless inhabited the end of that chain of being and command that was closest to God. The position of ‘closeness’ (*qurbat*) of the *faqir* to God that underpinned his intercessionary role was untenable to the democratizing ideology of intrinsic human equality that fostered both Islamic reform and the liberal project of ‘history’.<sup>356</sup>

The *naichral shā’irī* movement was a spectacular instance of both an ‘Islamic reform’ and a ‘liberal project of history’. Green’s analysis of the ‘patronal and hierarchical’ model of sainthood should, thus, not only shed light on the way that Emerson manipulated the aspirational unorthodoxy of Hafiz’s ghazals, it should remind us of the nineteenth-century Urdu reform movements too. In significant ways, both the nineteenth-century Urdu and American modernist reformulations of the ghazal sought to realign the referentials of poetry from the *vertical* axis of metaphysical/mystical tradition, to a *horizontal* axis of the ‘world’. This was a highly industrious recalibration of a courtly, cosmopolitan literary tradition in an intellectual climate enthused with reengineering language studies towards representational democracy. As we know, the classical Indo-Persian ghazal was not as immediately poised to represent ‘the people’ as other literary traditions more amenable to the “chronotype of indigeneity”: it neither fit neatly into the model of ‘national’ form, nor corresponded to the utilitarian values that were coming to define the literary market. The Indo-Persian ghazal was, thus, quite ‘other’ to primitivist and proto-national conception of ‘folk’ poetry that some of its pioneering European translators and commentators imagined it to be. Nevertheless, in transforming the ghazal’s mad-lover into a bardic figure, Emerson converted the allegories of wandering, separation, and longing that represented a mystical rejection of the world (*dunyā*) into (paradoxically) its discovering, unveiling, and conquering. This was the poetry of the “new day” that held radical promise in Emerson’s reading

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<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 138

of Hafiz, and which Emerson's editor and son perceived to be more promising still in the figure of the 'American Hafiz', Walt Whitman.

This chapter concludes by discussing pertinent ways in which Walt Whitman, too, 'embodied' and further elaborated American Orientalist trends that are rooted in Emerson's readings of Hafiz and Saadi. In particular, I focus on Whitman's employment of the tropes of veiling and unveiling which, as I outlined in the previous chapter, were a primary hermeneutical concept of Persian literature—particularly poetry. Of course, Whitman's application of this trope is a modified version; much like Fallon's rhetoric of unveiling, Whitman collapses the traditional connotations of spiritual enlightenment to a modern conception of egalitarianism. Whitman's treatment of this Sufi Persian convention is all the more intriguing for the fact that he is able to employ the technique towards articulating that most 'American' of philosophies, democracy.

#### **vi. A Democratic Sufi**

As one of the most celebrated and canonic of American poets, Walt Whitman's writing also contains indelible traces of its linguistic encounter with the classical Persian ghazal—a testament to the inroads that this form has made into modern Anglophone and, indeed, 'World' poetry. To be sure, the appropriate object of this analysis *must* be the ghazal's conventions and not, simply, Whitman's inspired interpretation of Persianate poetics. While his emulation of Sufi poetry was often performed quite obviously, Whitman nonetheless refracted Persianate convention through a kind of universalist prism that obscures important particulars of this translated representation. We must, accordingly, deconstruct the universalist impulse in Whitman's writing (and Emerson's too) if we are to understand the possibilities that a deeper engagement with ghazal poetics can reveal about its importation into modern Anglophone and

World literature. In this regard, we must note how the broad and multifaceted discourse of ‘nature’ often comes to perform a primitivist posture *against* literary convention. Thus, as exceptional as Whitman was, unless we wish to retain the fallacies of Emerson’s assessment of Persian poetry as ‘folk’ literature, we must place the analytical emphasis back onto the role of *convention*, rather than the modern obsession to transcend it through ‘genius’.

The residual traces of ghazal convention in American writing demonstrate both the syncretism of nineteenth-century American poetry as well as the modes by which foreign literary concepts could be nationalized. While Whitman’s versification of democracy always considers this a uniquely ‘American’ ideal, the very quintessence of this ‘America’ is its *universalism*. Yet, as I will demonstrate presently, the particular quality and limits of this universalism lies in its decidedly *common* register.

A great observation will detect sameness through all languages, however old, however new, however rude. As humanity is one under its amazing diversities, language is one under its. The flippant read on some long past age, wonder at its dead costumes ... but the master understands well the old, ever-new, ever-common grounds, below those animal growths, and, between any two ages, any two languages and two humanities, however wide apart in time and space, marks well not the superficial shades of difference, but the mass shades of a joint nature. In a little while, in the United States, the English language, enriched with contributions from all languages, old and new, will be spoken by a hundred millions of people: perhaps a hundred thousand words<sup>357</sup>

This kind of exceptional universalism (which Whitman imagines to be distinctly American), thus, allows for Persian poetic concepts to be integrated into the process of cultivating ‘American identity’. This exceptional universalism, however, also obscures pivotal moments of symmetry, dissimilarity, and untranslatability between the primitive ideals of a common tongue that Whitman desired, and the conventionalized Persian of Hafez’s poetry.

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<sup>357</sup> Whitman, “An American Primer”, 2

Whitman's conception of literary and linguistic syncretism imagines 'commonality' somewhat differently to Emerson. In Emerson's essay, linguistic commonality is often underpinned by the Jonesian genealogy of a proto-Indo-European language that served as a forefather to Persian, Sanskrit, and English. Such a 'root' oriented conception of language and linguistic culture conceived of the 'essence' of primitive language in terms of a primary moment of origin. Yet, linguistic 'essence' could also be conceived as a register of language that was stripped of all unnecessary excess and pared down to its most effective and *utile* core. I argue that Whitman emphasizes the latter variety. Where Emerson occasionally gestures to the racial qualities of his Adamic prototype of language through recollections of "Aryan progenitors," Whitman overwhelmingly articulates the American 'common' in distinctly 'class' terms. For example, in his essay, "An American Primer", Whitman actively stresses the superior value of orality and "spoken words" (rather than written language):

What beauty there is in words! ... the most common word! ...not the words used in writing, or recorded in the dictionaries by authority ... The Real Dictionary ... The Real Grammar ... Books themselves have their peculiar words—namely, those that are never used in living speech in the real world, but only used in the world of books. Nobody ever actually talks as books and plays talk.<sup>358</sup>

Were this not enough proof of Whitman's prioritization of orality over textuality, his mention of textual considerations (such as spelling) echoes the bourgeois stereotypes of elite literariness as an emasculated culture. He writes, "Morbidness for nice spelling and tenacity for or against someone letter or so means dandyism and impotence in literature."<sup>359</sup> Such disregard for established literariness culminates, shockingly, in the dismissal of *even* Shakespeare, whose

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<sup>358</sup> Whitman, *An American Primer*, 3-5

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

writing is often regarded as an exemplar of vernacular literature that was both accessible to and reflective of plebian registers of language. For Whitman, even this seemingly non-elite playwright is, still, too foreign.

The plays of Shakespeare and the rest are grand. Our obligations to them are incalculable. Other facts remain to be considered: their foreignness to us in much of their spirit—the sentiment under which they were written, that caste is not to be questioned—that the nobleman is of one blood and the people of another.<sup>360</sup>

Whitman's 'democracy', we may contend, has a certain anti-intellectual dimension; his writing does not simply imagine the upward mobility and redemption of 'all castes', it actively separates and questions the role of 'words' stemming from language contexts that do not represent the 'muscular classes', "the drivers of horses, and all whose work leads to free loud calling and commanding, [whose voices/words] have such a ring and freshness", or "the slang words among fighting men, gamblers, thieves, prostitutes". Whitman even goes so far as to portray each 'caste' contributing the very vocabulary of its trade to the perfect American tongue.<sup>361</sup> He writes

they are iron words, wrought and cast. I see them all good, faithful, massive, permanent words... Coal has its words also, that assimilate very much with those of iron... These are carpenter's words, mason's words, blacksmith's words, shoemaker's words, tailor's words, hatter's words, weaver's words, painter's words.<sup>362</sup>

Of course, we might not be surprised by Whitman's repeated emphasis on the 'common' and plebian dimensions of American words and language since this was a popular trend of nineteenth-century intellectual culture. Yet, while Whitman's American ideal of inclusivity is radically 'open' to the hitherto underrepresented castes—he even goes to far as to insist that "the bad words as well as the good" must be collected—he outlines some specific registers of

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<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 15

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 5

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 13

language that are too foreign to the concept of democracy and, as such, unfitting within the “words that would be welcomed by the nation, being of the national blood,—words that would give that taste of identity and locality which is so dear in literature.”<sup>363</sup>

Californian, Texan, New Mexican, and Arizonian names have the sense of the ecstatic monk, the cloister, the idea of miracles, and of devotees canonized after death. They are the results of the early missionaries and the element of piety, in the old Spanish character. They have, in the same connection, a tinge of melancholy and of a curious freedom from roughness and money-making... What do such names know of democracy,—of the hunt for the gold leads and the nugget, or of the religion that is scorn and negation?<sup>364</sup>

It’s quite telling that, out of the many varieties of ‘American’ language, Whitman would isolate and exclude what we might describe as the linguistic register of piety—especially, Catholic piety. After all, if the “old Spanish character” is so unfit for the democracy of Whitman’s vision, how can Sufi poetics not only situate itself in his poetic vision but, moreover, offer a philosophic accompaniment to this ideology? As chapter three emphasized, Persian (and particularly ghazal poetry) was thoroughly infused with some of the same characteristics that Whitman deems removed from democracy; ecstatic and hermetic figures, “the idea of miracles,” religious devotion, melancholy, and, most importantly, “a curious freedom from money-making.” These traits, which were rejected when marked as ‘old world’, Catholic ‘piety’, are not only tolerable but *inspirational* as Persian poetry. We might say that it is a fortunate misreading which enables such an inconsistency; Sufi religiosity is assimilable into Whitman’s democratic vista because it, somehow, gets interpreted as an essentially democratic philosophical tradition.

We might argue that the potential for a ‘universalist’ reading is already ripe within Sufi paradigms that were introduced to ‘Western’ readers through Persian Poetry. On the one hand, Sufi poetry often embodies an ‘anti-establishment’ tenor; of course, as I have already argued,

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<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 18

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 18

such a stance was, in fact, quite *conventional*. Whitman's poem "A Persian Lesson" illustrates how some literary *tropes* and metaphysical paradigms of Sufi religiosity could also be interpreted as 'common', universal truths:

For his o'erarching and last lesson the greybeard sufi,  
In the fresh scent of the morning in the open air,  
On the slope of a teeming Persian rose-garden,  
Under an ancient chestnut-tree wide spreading its branches,  
Spoke to the young priests and students.  
"Finally my children, to envelop each word, each part of the rest,  
Allah is all, all, all—immanent in every life and object,  
May-be at many and many-a-more removes—yet Allah, Allah, Allah is there.  
"Has the estray wander'd far? Is the reason-why strangely hidden?  
... "It is the central urge in every atom,  
(Often unconscious, often evil, downfallen,)  
To return to its divine source and origin, however distant,  
Latent the same in subject and in object, without one exception.<sup>365</sup>

In addition to the more obvious markers of the Persian influences in this poem—Persian Rose-garden, Grey-beard Sufi, the rhetoric of 'wandering'—Whitman makes reference to the literary and philosophical concept that, as discussed in chapter three, was of primary importance in Sufi hermeneutics: the idea of a 'hidden' reason-why, or '*ilm-e bātin* (knowledge of the hidden), which transcends the '*zāhir*' or apparent/visible nature of things. Although the idea of a 'hidden' truth is certainly not exclusive to Sufi theosophy, Whitman's articulation of this idea, especially in this poem, suggests that he aware of such a principle in Persian poetry. The poem also explains the *hidden* 'reason' in terms of an immanent God e.g. "Allah is all, all, all...Latent the same in subject and in object". Such imagery will be quite recognizable to students of Islamic philosophy as the articulation of the Sufi doctrine of *Wāhdat al Wūjūd* (The Unity of Existence), as opposed to *Wāhdat ash Shūjūd* (Unity of Witness). This philosophy is mostly attributed to the twelfth century theosophist, Ibn Arabi. While a certain simplified version of Ibn Arabi's

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<sup>365</sup> Walt Whitman. *The Complete Poems*. Ed. Francis Murphy. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 564.



philosophy was received and appreciated by European readers, it was, indeed, read as universalist rather than Islamic attitude. Islamic scholar, Carl Ernst, has discussed this tendency in popular ‘European’ readings of Persian poetry.

Most people would translate it, “unity of being.” Wujud gets translated as ‘existence’ but suggests encountering something. Not an abstract concept of being, but an encounter with reality. It’s often associated with Ibn Arabi and his metaphysical school. He authored an immense range of complex spiritual teachings. What’s interesting is *wahdat al Wujud* is a slogan that he never uses—the expression was developed as a kind of a shorthand to explain his philosophy, which is actually pretty hard to summarize in a single phrase, but was presented in simplified forms, particularly in Persian poetry. And the shorthand version of *wahdat al-Wujud* was understood by some people as meaning “Everything is God.” In European thought, this was called the philosophical view of pantheism initially associated with Spinoza and European thinkers who said that God is nature... Ibn Arabi was interpreted in European thought. And it’s quite striking because what most of these European thinkers say about Ibn Arabi—and they often say the same thing about Rumi—is that his greatness is that he was a universal mystic who wasn’t really a Muslim.<sup>366</sup>

Although Whitman’s “A Persian Lesson” clearly cites Sufi influence, there’s much evidence to suggest that both Whitman and Emerson regarded the canonic Persian poets less as Islamic mystics and more as universal mystics. This is evidenced by the fact that both writers often employ some of the ideas and language we associate with Sufi poetry without any explicit mention of the literary conventions from which they (likely) first encountered it. In particular, both writers repeatedly employ the rhetoric of ‘veiling’ and veiledness and/or refer to some conception of divine unity without any reference to potential influence from Islamicate, particularly Sufi, literature. Although the potential for a universalist reading is already contained within the concept of *Wahdat al Wujūd*, we might argue that stripping this concept of its Islamicate particularity is precisely what enabled the philosophy to be redirected—even appropriated—towards new horizons.

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<sup>366</sup> Carl Ernst. *Sufism: History, Politics and Culture*. Winter 2014. Journal Sufi Volume 86.

What are the new horizons towards which remnants of Persian poetry have been redirected and what does this mean for scholars of the Indo-Persian ghazal and World literature? Particularly in nineteenth-century American scholarship, we may partly address this question by tracing representations of ‘divine unity’ and, more particularly, the rhetoric of veiling and unveiling in Orientalist literature. Emerson’s essay “The Oversoul” offers some key moments of such universalized readings of the Persianate elaboration of *Wahdat al Wujūd*.

The Supreme Critic on the errors of the past and the present, and the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest, as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart, ... We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle<sup>367</sup>

Of course, Emerson’s theory of the Oversoul cannot be attributed exclusively to Sufi theosophy; in fact, it is more often attributed to his readings of Vedantic thought.<sup>368</sup> Nevertheless, Emerson’s discussion of “the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle” betrays the recognizably Persian tropes that Emerson would have been familiar with. Indeed, it is the recurring metaphors of seeing, hiding, and veiling which suggest the Sufi influence in Emerson’s writing which is, otherwise, universalized and cross-pollinated into anonymity. For example, in the following excerpt, Emerson credits a number of European philosophers and poets with the

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<sup>367</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Self-Reliance, The over-Soul and Other Essays*. (Claremont, Calif: Coyote Canyon Press, 2010), 56

<sup>368</sup> See, for example, Nathaniel H Preston. "Whitman's "Shadowy Dwarf": A Source in Hindu Mythology." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 15 (Spring 1998), 185-186. My point is not to identify Sufi literature as the definitive and exclusive source of this quality in Whitman’s writing but to consider specifically how ‘eastern’ spirituality, including Sufi thought, has played a role in the American nature poem.

extraordinary power of ‘seeing’, even that “thing unseen”. He even goes so far as to imagine these figures as the “half-insane” mystics that were so conventional to Indo-Persian ghazal poetry. but he makes no specific mention of the Indo-Persian literary traditions, or its writers, that likely provided some of the language.

The great distinction between teachers sacred or literary, — between poets like Herbert, and poets like Pope, — between philosophers like Spinoza, Kant, and Coleridge, and philosophers like Locke, Paley, Mackintosh, and Stewart, — between men of the world, who are reckoned accomplished talkers, and here and there a fervent mystic, prophesying, half insane under the infinitude of his thought, — is, that one class speak from within, or from experience, as parties and possessors of the fact; and the other class, from without, as spectators merely, or perhaps as acquainted with the fact on the evidence of third persons. It is of no use to preach to me from without. I can do that too easily myself. Jesus speaks always from within, and in a degree that transcends all others... But if a man do not speak from within the veil, where the word is one with that it tells of, let him lowly confess it. The same Omniscience flows into the intellect, and makes what we call genius.<sup>369</sup>

Emerson’s differentiation between ‘experience’ and ‘spectators’ should, of course, remind us of Fallon’s description of ‘rustic’ language as one of immediate experience, rather than the learnt register of *maulvīs* and *pandits*. More importantly, this passage echoes Fallon’s employment of ‘veiling’ as a literary trope. With little citation of the Persianate origins of this hermeneutical metaphor, Emerson’s writing conveys the extent to which the classical tropes and conventions of Islamic mysticism were appropriated as ‘universal’ concepts. Furthermore, as Emerson’s conception of Oversoul suggests, the very notion of ‘genius’ as a manifestation of divine “Omniscience” both incorporates Sufi (and Vedantic) philosophy into its ideology, but also, effectively, erases and/or forgets this exchange.

As these readings demonstrate, one of the primary difficulties of analyzing American interpretations of Persian poetry is that the very impulse towards syncretic and universalist

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<sup>369</sup> Emerson, *Self-Reliance, The over-Soul and Other Essays*, 64

philosophy that prompted writers like Emerson to engage with Persian poetry was also the same ‘mode’ of engagement that obscures this exchange.<sup>370</sup> Such an impulse is not entirely different to how the *naichral shā’irī* critics and Islamic reformists of the nineteenth-century understood their adoption of British poetic theory: both the Urdu reformists and the ‘Western’ readers who adopted ghazal-convention into their own scholarship viewed the particulars of literary and cultural exchange as secondary to a more elemental and primary concept of common humanism. If aesthetic and literary material could be represented through simple, (almost imagistic) language, even the most foreign of philosophies could be interpreted as an example of ‘inner’ experience and ‘common’ truth. In this way, the binary that Emerson employs—‘speaking “from within”’ and speaking without—is not simply a refiguration of the *ẓāhirī* and *bātinī* distinction that suffused Indo-Persian poetry, but a mode of conceiving literary authenticity that was especially paralleled in the nineteenth-century debates around *naichral shā’irī*.<sup>371</sup>

### Common Horizons

As earlier sections of this chapter demonstrated, there was a general inclination towards abstraction and deracination in nineteenth-century intellectual culture that we may reasonably credit with a variety of ‘universalized’ readings of Persianate literary convention; the redeployment of *ghurbat* as a kind of pastoral nostalgia, Hafiz’s characterization as a variety of

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<sup>370</sup> Of course, this syncretism exhibited by Emerson and other transcendental writers, in some ways, parallels the history of many Sufi traditions, particularly ghazal poetry.

<sup>371</sup> ‘Without’ seems to suggest a much more damning insufficiency than *ẓāhir* (which can be translated as apparent or outward). Another variation of this distinctly Sufi rhetoric comes earlier in the essay. Emerson writes, “In their habitual and mean service to the world, for which they forsake their native nobleness, they resemble those Arabian sheiks, who dwell in mean houses, and affect an *external* poverty, to escape the rapacity of the Pacha, and reserve all their display of wealth for their *interior* and guarded retirements.” Emerson, *Self-Reliance, The over-Soul and Other Essays*,

the ‘common’ (though universal) figure of the bard, and the employment of the Sufi trope of ‘veiling’ and unveiling are particularly important examples. Yet, these treatments of Persianate literary convention as common, mystic truths were clearly incorporated into a distinctly *American* tradition of versifying ‘democratic’ ideals. We might wonder how such universalist readings can contribute towards the imaginaries of a *particular* national ‘voice’, as Whitman’s “An American Primer” did. Indeed, part of what this study demonstrates is that the common patterns across two nineteenth-century ‘vernacular’ traditions—the American and the Urdu—are not so dissimilar. Reading nineteenth-century American poetry with an eye for Persianate literary convention reveals the role that Orientalist scholarship played in burgeoning ideas of deciphering and articulating *national* character—particularly through nature! In fact, twentieth-century ‘Asiatick’ poets like Muhammad Allama Iqbal continued to transmit and transform this body of American Orientalist literary criticism in their own body of ‘national’ verses. Presently, I may only briefly gesture to this later chapter of the American-Urdu dialogue. I hope to elaborate it further in the near future.

This dissertation has traced a broad range of eighteenth and nineteenth-century scholarship in which the representation of ‘nature’ as a site of primordial truth held a variety of discursive effects: it imagined the relations between disparate literary cultures in terms of geography and environmental determinism, it offered a teleological narrative of ‘return’ for poems and literary histories that had previously employed more encyclopedic and kaleidoscopic organizational form, it also corroborated an intellectual culture of primitivist scholarship in which the unlettered forms of poetry came to be read as “the permanent forms” and, of course, it also (paradoxically) produced narratives of mobility by conceiving of primitive truth (even of foreign origin) as common territory. Perhaps the most lasting effect of this hermeneutical trend is

its conception of the ‘national poet’ as one who could articulate ‘the people’. Yet, as Emerson’s scholarship reveals, this figure still retains some of the conventional characteristics of ‘classical’ poetic persona. While Emerson’s figuration of the ideal American Bard was produced through a highly syncretic approach to a *wide variety* of Oriental and Orientalist texts, I argue that Persianate poetic convention was *particularly* influential to such a model of national genius.

As a final demonstration of this phenomenon, let us consider how the trope of ‘unveiling’ has been interpreted and mobilized as a distinctly humanist project in which the poet, like a prophetic figure, delivers ‘liberty’ by reminding the reader of the original and primal authority. Much like Fallon’s employment of this metaphysical trope to imagine the egalitarian ‘unveiling’ of ‘the people’, this next excerpt suggests that although Emerson’s use of rhetorical veiling was, in some ways, more proximal to conventional Sufi poetry, its application imagines an even more radically egalitarian vision than Fallon’s.

These questions which we lust to ask about the future are a confession of sin. God has no answer for them. No answer in words can reply to a question of things. It is not in an arbitrary "decree of God," but in the nature of man, that a veil shuts down on the facts of to-morrow; for the soul will not have us read any other cipher than that of cause and effect. By this veil, which curtains events, it instructs the children of men to live in to-day. The only mode of obtaining an answer to these questions of the senses is to forego all low curiosity, and, accepting the tide of being which floats us into the secret of nature, work and live, work and live, and all unawares the advancing soul has built and forged for itself a new condition, and the question and the answer are one.<sup>372</sup>

By conceiving of the ‘veil’ as a product of human nature, and one that can be overcome by man himself, Emerson’s conception of a divine unity is so anthropocentric as to have eliminated the need for ‘God’. Indeed, Emerson finds God “has no answers for them.” Of course, there is a rich history of ecstatic heresy in Sufi theosophy which, we may correctly note, has informed much of

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<sup>372</sup> Emerson, *Self-Reliance, The over-Soul and Other Essays*, 63

the Indo-Persian ghazal's penchant for celebrating unorthodoxy.<sup>373</sup> Still, the development of these literary and philosophical concepts in American transcendentalism towards the establishment of a spiritual democracy is a particularly *modern* variety of such 'heresy'. Its valorization of nature comes dangerously close to reading the 'world', which had been interpreted as the ultimate 'veil' obfuscating reality, as some kind of stable sign of 'divine unity'. Thus, we may argue that the 'democratic vista' of American Transcendentalism is achieved by abandoning the old hierarchical structures of religiosity in favor of a modern and secular humanist ideology. Few poets capture the devotional tenor of this democratic vision as the rapturous Whitman, the 'American Hafiz':

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,  
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the  
same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,  
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,  
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,  
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of  
the father-stuff,  
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,  
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil<sup>374</sup>

We may not be able to delineate, precisely, where and to what extent Persian literary convention influenced Whitman's writing, but the influences are undoubtedly there. Readers of the classical ghazal might understandably hear some faint traces of this influence in Whitman's prophetic

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<sup>373</sup> See Harbans Mukhia. "The Celebration of Failure as Dissent in Urdu Ghazal." *Modern Asian Studies* 33 (1999): 861–81.

<sup>374</sup> Walt Whitman. *Song of Myself*. (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 2001), 21.

projection of democracy as a primeval, rather than modern, phenomenon. Moreover, such a formulation of the individual poet's transcendence is not only theologically radical but politically significant for the ways it imagines and assumes power.<sup>375</sup> Robert Wilson has argued that such a "communal construct of self and national empowerment" was precisely the task of the nature poem and the wider tradition of the American Sublime.<sup>376</sup> I suggest that such a transference of power and majesty from 'nature' to the bardic representative of 'the people', was undoubtedly conversant with modes of abstraction germane to the Persian ghazal. While such a *nationalization* of nature arguably developed most vividly in American social culture, it was an inherently reproducible formula that staged itself in numerous national contexts—we need only consider the commoditization of nature by national tourist boards as one symptom of the *global* application of 'landscape thinking'. There are countless examples of such concurrent, literary exchanges. Ultimately, what such comparative literary analysis forces us to recognize is that inter-national aesthetic practices should not be attributed exclusively to the global standard of 'nation-state.' They are, indeed, products of a larger history of comparative literary study that facilitated the construction of such an ideology. If this dissertation is any example, then there is

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<sup>375</sup> Popular historiographies of eighth century Sufi thinker, Mansur Al-Hallaj, suggests that it was his exclamation of '*Anā al-Haq*' (I am the truth) that incited the accusation of heresy for which he was executed by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Muqtadir. It's often suggested that the Caliph's primary motivations for persecuting the philosopher were probably political rather than theological.

<sup>376</sup> Wilson writes "The ground of ... self-elective power lingers in the landscape and language, so the sublime assumes, as the archive of grand dreams; not so much "supreme fictions" in which to believe as instruments of American power (sublimity) upon which the self can depend, and which, believing in it, can enact... The sublime experience of huge natural forces may dwarf and empty the self, but it no less underwrites the ongoing appropriation of nature-writ-large within a giddy sense of self-empowerment that Emerson declared to be enacted as "an instantaneous in-streaming causing power." Rob Wilson. *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre*. (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 12-13.



so much to be gained from allowing 'national' literary practices to break beyond their national bounds.

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