

Urdu Through Its Others: Ghazal, Canonization, and Translation

by

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DEDICATION

For Mahtaab and Sorayya

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PREFATORY NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

I have provided the Urdu text in Perso-Arabic script for longer quotations and ghazal couplets, not only because I have found it helpful in others' work, but also because my work thematizes script as a civilizational marker, noting the ways in which the inconvenience, awkwardness, difficulty, or even technological incompatibility of Perso-Arabic script with English and Roman script has been mobilized at key historical moments--including our own--as evidence of Urdu's cultural backwardness. Including the Urdu script here is therefore intended as a partial antidote to that narrative, as well as a simple convenience for the Urdu reader.

Because I provide the Urdu where necessary, I have endeavored to make the Romanized transliteration of Urdu, Hindi, and Persian as unobtrusive as possible, adding vowel diacritics only to italicized words and avoiding consonantal diacritics (that would distinguish between *te* and *to'e*, or *baRi he* and *choTi he*, for instance). In this way, the transliterated text more closely mirrors oral pronunciation rather than strictly transliterating the Urdu as it is written. For names, I add diacritics only the first time a name is introduced, dropping the diacritics thereafter.

Again, with ease of reading in mind, I have opted not to italicize the words "ghazal," "mushaira," "tazkirah," "tārīkh," and "nazm," except in titles or sometimes when the terms are initially introduced. With ghazal in particular, since the form has already been borrowed into English, I think it only fitting that we borrow the word as well, instead of using italics to mark it as foreign. The word mushaira should more properly be written *musha'irah*, but I have aimed to

naturalize its appearance on the page in English--a compromise between foreignizing and domesticating transliteration.

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation, "Urdu Through Its Others: Ghazal, Canonization, and Translation" analyzes the codification of the Urdu literary tradition as it is both celebrated and reviled in a wide variety of popular and scholarly media. I focus specifically on the genre of the ghazal, which, as the most canonical of Urdu literary forms, holds a unique cultural cache throughout all of South Asia and the diaspora. The canonization of the ghazal reifies Urdu's linguistic boundaries through the project of literary histories and comparison with other proximate literary traditions like Hindi, Persian, and English. This reified notion of Urdu not only underwrites Anglicist colonial intervention in India by rhetorically painting Urdu as the backward foil to the English's modern progressivism, but also continues to shape the national Urdu imaginary in which the language is both vilified as dangerously communalist and idealized as redemptively secular.

Although canonizing literary histories point to Rekhtah as the historical antecedent of the Urdu language, I show, via readings of the ghazals of Urdu's "founder" Valī Dakkanī (1667-1707), that Rekhtah in fact represents a unique poetic mode--an idiom of translation that forces us to reconsider boundaries between languages against the standardizing forces of canonization. The uneven ways in which the translative quality of Rekhtah get passed on to the Urdu tradition as it unfolds during the period of colonialism have shaped the ways in which Urdu is seen in the national imaginary as derivative, backward, and foreign. At the same time, popular narratives

about ghazal work to naturalize the Urdu tradition in India, particularly through the nationalization of canonical poets Mirzā Ghālib (1797-1869) and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984).

This dissertation diverges from existing attempts to establish canonical literary histories, or reconstruct a moment prior to translation, which ultimately reinforce colonial notions of both history and translation; instead, I focus on the traces of past texts and events as they continue to operate within the present--what I am calling historicity--ultimately arguing that moments of translation themselves constitute the Urdu language and literary tradition.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2016, two artists were painting the following Urdu couplet on a wall in Delhi as part of a government initiative for city beautification called "Delhi, I Love You":

دلی تیرا اجرنا اور پھر اجر کے بسنا
وہ دل تو نے پایا تھی نہیں ہے جس کا

*Dillī terā ujarnā aur phir ujar ke basnā
Woh dil tū ne pāyā sanī nahīn hai jis kā*

This couplet came in response to a call issued in 2014 as part of the project for Twitter posts including quotes, poems, or stories celebrating the city of Delhi, which would subsequently be painted on prominent walls throughout the city. A Delhi University student, Zeeshan Amjad, responded with the above Urdu verse, which translates roughly to: "Delhi, you have been ruined and rebuilt, ruined and rebuilt / No other [city] has found a heart like yours." The couplet turns on tropes typical to the Urdu ghazal--the most prominent genre of the Urdu language, celebrated throughout India and the South Asian diaspora. In this verse, the traditional ghazal tropology of lover and beloved is turned toward Delhi itself, where the city becomes a lover who hopelessly ruins himself again and again for the sake of his beloved land. The artistic rendering of the verse features the couplet transposed in white against stylized red and yellow flames, again troping on common metaphors within the ghazal universe, in which the lover is the moth to the beloved's flame.

The significance of the ghazal genre for expressing this sentiment, however, exists not only in this tropological play, but also in the common association of Urdu literature and language with the city of Delhi. For example, a highly lauded 1953 film about Urdu's most canonical ghazal poet, Mirza Ghalib, begins with several shots of Delhi and its most recognizable monuments, with a voiceover narrating the repeated ruin and re-establishment of the city.¹ Delhi and Urdu are understood in the Indian national imaginary as having an intimate connection, not least because Urdu, like Delhi, is understood as having been ruined and then reborn.

Even the very prevalence of the name "Urdu" for the language as we know it today--as opposed to earlier historical names for this language, including Rekhtah, Hindi, and Hindustani, among others--implicitly links the Urdu language and its literature with the city of Delhi: the term "Urdu" comes from a shortening of the phrase *zabān-i urdū-i mū'alla-i Shāhjahānābād*--the language of the exalted camp of Shahjahanabad. Shahjahanabad, now part of modern Delhi, is the historical name for the Mughal capital established in 1648 with the completion of the Lal Qila (Red Fort) commissioned by the fifth Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan (of Taj Mahal fame). If the name "Urdu" comes about as a mistaken shortening of the phrase historically used to signify the language spoken within the heart of the Mughal camp, then the Lal Qila in Delhi would be the physical manifestation of the site of that camp (*urdū*).²

¹ The opening lines to the movie are as follows: *Dillī, jo pāndavon ke zamāne se le kar is waqt tak kaī bār basi aur kaī bār vīrān hūī. jise insān ke kabhī nah hār mānnevāle hāthoṁ ne har bār pahle se ziyāda khūbsūrat banā diyā.* [Delhi: the place that, from the time of the Pandavas (and the Mahabharata, roughly 900 BCE) to this very day, has so many times been established, and so many times been ruined. The place that has each time been made more increasingly beautiful by the hands of men who never accept defeat.]

² Shamsur Rahman Faruqi notes, "When used alone, *urdū* would, more often than note, mean 'royal city' (therefore, Delhi)" (28). He also notes that although almost all of the Mughal emperors knew some form of the North Indian vernacular, this language did not become closely associated with the court until 1772--almost 200 years of Mughal rule had passed--with Shah Alam II's personal predilection for composing vernacular verse. Even then, however, Persian

Furthermore, the Lal Qila today in many ways physically embodies the notion of the Urdu language as both glorious and defunct: while a large part of the Red Fort is open to the public as a tourist site, and many original structures remain intact, much of the inlaid jewels and other features are missing after the widespread looting of the 1857 Rebellion, such that the site simultaneously suggests both grandeur and decay. This association of Urdu with Delhi, and particularly the Lal Qila, informs Zeeshan's ghazal couplet honoring the ruin and rejuvenation of Delhi: the ghazal genre, too, is understood as having reached its height in the twilight of the Mughal era, before dying abruptly in 1857 and beginning the afterlife that continues today. With the fire framing the Urdu couplet in the completed mural, the Urdu ghazal itself becomes the lover immolated on the flame of his beloved city.

Yet in an ironic and illustrative twist of events, the calligraphic rendering of this verse celebrating Delhi's linguistic, literary, and civilizational history underwent its own ruin and rebirth: the artists painting the couplet were reportedly approached by a gang of men, forced to erase their work, and instead write nationalist slogans. The men were members of the RSS (Rāshtrīya Svayamsevaka Sangha), a right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary organization; they were reported in multiple news outlets, including *The Times of India*, as saying they could "bear anything, but not the Urdu script."³ Furthermore, the police arrived only to continue to harass the artists themselves, asking why they were writing in Urdu, and ultimately taking the artists into custody. The incident finally resolved when the culture minister in charge of the Delhi project, Kapil Mishra--himself a high-caste Hindu--phoned the police to explain and insist on the

remained the official court language. For a detailed discussion of the history of the language name Urdu (as well as earlier names for this language), see Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also Chapter 4 of this work for further engagement with Faruqi's philological work.

³ Nandini Majumdar, "Rss Members Threaten Artists Painting Urdu Couplet," *The Wire*, May 24, 2016.

artists' release. Two months later, Mishra sponsored a "wall painting event," including music, dance, and community-led wall painting, to commemorate the completion of the mural and demonstrate support for the city's linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity.⁴



Figure 1: The completed rendering of Zeeshan Amjad's Twitter verse celebrating Delhi's history of ruin and rebirth. Picture taken from <http://www.delhiiloveyou.com/mydillistory>

In many ways, the incident of the "Delhi, I Love You" artists accosted by RSS agents encapsulates the variety of cultural agents and contexts involved in the current status of Urdu and Urdu ghazal in India. Zeeshan's Urdu verse came about as a result of a city government-sponsored initiative that explicitly called for Twitter users to post such compositions in one of Delhi's four official languages--Hindi, Panjabi, English, or Urdu, each of which has a different script and relationship to the public imaginary. That a Delhi University student chose the form of the ghazal couplet in response to this call--and that this couplet was one of 40 tweets chosen by a

⁴ Pheroze L Vincent, "Poem Back on Wall," *The Telegraph*, July 29, 2016.

city-wide committee for part of the city beautification project--suggests the cultural significance of this genre, especially in and for the city of Delhi, which, as the erstwhile Mughal capital and the center of Urdu ghazal's most famous poets, has been canonized as the rightful "home" of Urdu and its literary tradition. The artists themselves--one a native Delhi-ite and signboard painter by profession, Akhlaq Ahmad (known as "Shabbu"), and the other a visiting French artist named Swen Simon--represent the wide swathes of global society in which Urdu ghazal circulates; even while Urdu continues to be associated with Delhi and its history, it has also become a visible part of the world literary canon, not least through the mediation of social media platforms like Twitter.

On the other hand, despite the popularity of the ghazal genre, Urdu on the global stage continues to be shaped by the fraught and contested context of Indian nationalist politics, perhaps most clearly via the divisive issue of script. The RSS members who instigated this encounter with the Delhi artists represent an aspect of national politics dominated by right-wing Hindu extremism and exacerbated by the election of Narendra Modi as India's Prime Minister in 2014, who is himself an avowed Hindu nationalist and RSS member. (The RSS gang forced the artists on threat of violence to write over their Urdu couplet with the phrases "Narendra Modi," and "Swacch Bhārat Abhiyān"--a Modi-led federal campaign to keep India clean.) In the context of Hindu nationalism, Urdu represents a Muslim subculture deemed incompatible with and fundamentally opposed to modern Indian national culture--hence the ire of the RSS members at the sight of Urdu writing. Indeed, this incident comes in the wake of a call issued just two months before in which Urdu writers in India have been asked to sign a written statement

affirming that their work contains no "material which is against the national interest or which may create any sort of hatred amongst the different sections of society."⁵

This dissertation is an analysis of the canonization of the Urdu literary tradition--and particularly the ghazal--as it is narrativized in competing and conflicting ways, both celebrated and reviled, through a variety of popular and scholarly media. I use the term narrativization to refer to the means via which the Urdu literary canon and the cultural and linguistic ideology implicit in this canon become disseminated through a variety of texts, genres, and languages, both nationally and internationally. I focus specifically on the narrativization of Urdu ghazal both because of its status as the most canonical of Urdu literary forms and, concomitantly, because no other form holds such powerful cultural sway across languages, religions, ethnicities, and geographies in India; though canonized as the unique provenance of northern India, and Delhi in particular,⁶ the Urdu ghazal remains unparalleled in the extent to which it resonates with wide audiences throughout all of South Asia and the diaspora. Zeeshan's "Delhi, I Love You" couplet reflects the dual legacy of the patterns of Urdu ghazal's narrativization in India: while celebrated in many circles, and even sponsored by the Delhi government, as an appropriate commemoration of India's capital city, the verse was nevertheless reviled by some as incompatible with modern Indian values.

⁵ Eram Agha, "Urdu Writers Asked to Declare Their Work 'Not against National Interest'," *Times of India*.

⁶ Lucknow, a city in the state of Uttar Pradesh in northern India, is also understood as one of Urdu's traditional homes, and in many ways continues to function as the "heartland of Urdu." While this dissertation focuses specifically on narrativizations of Delhi, instead of Lucknow, as Urdu's home, there are also a fair number of narrativizing texts that situate Urdu in Lucknow, especially in the genre of "Muslim social" Bollywood films (see below). Nevertheless, I choose to focus on Delhi because of the unique way in which the city not only "hosts" Urdu, but also stands in metonymically for the language, as well as its literature and cultural milieu. As India's historical and current capital, Delhi also holds carries more cultural weight and visibility both nationally and internationally.

For example, the abovementioned 1953 film *Mirza Ghalib*, as well as further iterations of the film that continue to circulate today, constitute a narrativization of the Urdu tradition: although Ghalib had already begun to be canonized by nineteenth century texts, this mid-twentieth century film further promulgates notions of Ghalib's canonicity, using his fictionalized biography as proxy for the Urdu ghazal tradition as a whole; specifically, *Mirza Ghalib* promotes a fictionalized history of Urdu ghazal as the provenance of a bygone Mughal era. Because of the unique relationship between Urdu ghazal as a poetic genre with a distinct cultural cache, we see a concomitant circulation of narratives (including such diverse narrative genres as histories, films, short stories, novels, etc.) that draw on Urdu ghazal while also serving as a sort of exegesis for the form--especially in a manner that explains and/or justifies the presence of Muslims and Muslim culture in India through the existence of the Urdu ghazal. By closely reading both the ghazals themselves, and the narratives surrounding them, we can see how literary study of narrative adds to traditionally historical understandings of Urdu's cultural role throughout India, South Asia, and the diaspora.

Furthermore, narrativization is an ongoing process of canonization that happens both *to* and *through* Urdu literature. Zeeshan's meta-couplet, for instance, celebrates the city of Delhi through implicit reference to and participation in the Urdu literary tradition; in the act of composing an Urdu ghazal, Zeeshan plays upon and reifies already existing notions about Urdu's geographic, cultural, and historical associations. These associations circulate via an amorphous national Urdu imaginary--ideas about Urdu that constitute part of popular opinion and common understanding, and are perhaps more difficult to unpack because they seem to simply exist "in the air"--that is in fact propped up by concrete canonizing and narrativizing texts, including

literary histories, short stories, novellas, plays, films, television serials, newspaper articles, and tweets.

These texts constitute a dizzying recursion of generic and linguistic translations. For example, an Urdu television serial called *Mirza Ghalib* garnered wide audiences when it first aired in India in 1988;⁷ the serial continues in its initial popularity via DVD and YouTube, while an English translation of the screenplay--written by prominent Urdu ghazal poet Gulzar, who is also a frequent Bollywood lyricist--circulates throughout middle class bookstores in India. This TV serial, however, is an adaptation of the abovementioned 1953 Bollywood film *Mirza Ghalib*, which opened to rave reviews and received India's first-ever National Film Award. The film *Mirza Ghalib* was in turn written just a few years after Independence--and the Partition of India and Pakistan--in 1947 by a giant of the Urdu prose canon, Saadat Hasan Manto, who based the movie on a play he had already written ("Ghalib aur Chaudvin"). Incidentally, a 2012 Bengali novel by Rabisankar Bal, called *Dozakhnama*, narrates an imagined conversation between the ghosts of Manto and Ghalib, and takes parts of its narrative from this play and other literary works that Manto wrote about Ghalib. That this novel was written in Bengali and then translated into English demonstrates the wide audience for Urdu-inflected cultural narratives throughout South Asia and the diaspora, even in contexts where readers might otherwise harbor hostile feelings toward the language; although Bengali is now the language of both the Indian state of Bengal and of neighboring Bangladesh, the latter was until 1971 part of Pakistan, where Urdu operated as a hegemonically enforced national language. The transnational, translingual circulation of ideas about the Urdu literary canon demonstrates the multiple contexts in which

⁷ More specifically, the serial aired on Doordarshan, a government-sponsored television station, somewhat akin to American's Public Broadcasting Station (PBS), although for many years this was the only television channel in all of India. See Chapter Five for more details on how Urdu ghazal has been co-opted within Doordarshan's role in defining national culture.

ghazal is put toward significant cultural work, even where Urdu otherwise appears in contradiction to nationalist interests.

Not only did Manto's work on Ghalib inspire the film as well as multiple future iterations of the same storyline, but the film *Mirza Ghalib* also includes scenes from a chain of earlier texts, stretching into the past as far as 1752. For instance, the second scene in the 1953 Ghalib film, following the opening montage of stills of Delhi monuments, consists of a mushaira--a poetry gathering, at which poets orally perform their poetry by either chanting or singing--held in the Mughal court at the Lal Qila that is lifted almost verbatim from a 1927 Urdu novella, *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'* ("Delhi's Last Flame," often translated into English as *The Last Mushairah of Delhi*), written by Farhatullah Beg. (Stage versions of both *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'* and *Mirza Ghalib* continue to be performed throughout India, particularly by a Delhi-based theater group known as Pierrot's Troupe; not only does the name of the group hearken back to the French pantomime tradition, but their lead actor, Tom Alter, is himself an Indian-born white American who nevertheless frequently plays the roles of major Urdu poets, including Ghalib himself.) Beg's novella was based on an 1848 tazkirah (poetic anthology) by Karīmuddīn, called *Tabaqāt-i Shu'arā-i Hind* ("The Stages of Poets in India"), which was itself partly a recording of the verses and anecdotes from an actual mushaira held by Karimuddin himself.

This example is especially revealing, as I discuss at length in Chapter Two, because *Tabaqāt-i Shu'arā-i Hind* also announces itself as both the first instance of Urdu literary history and as a translation of a French tazkirah by Garcin De Tassy, first published in 1839 as *Histoire de la littérature hindoue e hindoustani*. Not only that, but in a second edition of the *Histoire* published in 1870, De Tassy cites Karimuddin's 1848 text as an original source, and insists that it is not a translation, but an original work. Furthermore, both De Tassy's and Karimuddin's texts

are meant as comprehensive compilations of existing tazkirahs, going back as far as the first major tazkirah of the Urdu tradition, Mīr Taqī Mīr's *Nikāt ush-Shu'arā*, written in Persian circa 1752. The recuperation--indeed, the translation--of the tazkirah genre into a type of literary history in the nineteenth century has solidified the Urdu literary canon, even while tazkirahs themselves engaged in a productive destabilization of the binary of original versus translation.

This maze of intertextual citations and translations defies both linear chronology and linguistic bounds, as the texts span from the mid-eighteenth century to the present day, circulating both orally and in print, in Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Persian, English, and French, among others. Taken together, these works point to the need for a comparative approach to the Urdu literary canon that can account for this range of genres and languages through careful attention to the work of translation in the narrativization of the Urdu tradition. Indeed, translation has been a key feature of the Urdu literary scene since its very beginning--from Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah's translations of Hafez's Persian ghazals in the mid-sixteenth century; to the Delhi College's swathes of students and faculty (including Karimuddin) producing histories, science textbooks, and novels translated from European languages as well as Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit in the mid-nineteenth century; to the renewed attempt at translating scientific and historical textbooks into Urdu at Hyderabad's Osmania University, as well as Saadat Hasan Manto's work in translating novels from Russian, English, and French in the early to mid-twentieth century.⁸ In

⁸ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi writes: "Translation became practically a genre in the nineteenth century, writers like Mastar Ram Chandar (1821-1880) and Maulavi Inayatullah (1869-1943) devoting their entire creative energies to translating hard sciences, histories, and novels into Urdu." Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "Keynote Address: A Modest Plea: Please, Could We Have a Proper History of Urdu Literature?," in *Urdufest* (University of Virginia, Charlottesville 2008).

On Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah and his translations, see Chapter One of this work. On the Delhi College, see Chapter Two of this work, as well as Gail Minault, "Delhi College and Urdu," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 14 (1999). On Osmania University and its legacy of translation,

fact, the Vernacular Translation Society of the Delhi College was often referred to as simply the Urdu Society: in the mid-nineteenth century, translation activity was synonymous with Urdu.

I contend in this dissertation that the canonization of the Urdu literary tradition helps to constitute the Urdu language itself by reifying Urdu's linguistic boundaries through comparison and contrast with other proximate linguistic and literary traditions; my intent here is to undo that reification by calling attention to translation instead of repressing and naturalizing the linguistic boundaries entailed in it. The compulsive repetition of material--Manto's initial short play "Ghalib aur Chaudvin," for instance, now exists as a film, a television serial, a long stage play, an English screenplay, and a Bengali novel and its English translation--points to a clear trajectory of narrativization that preserves and popularizes myths about Urdu, propping up a literary canon aimed at solidifying a distinct "Urdu" language of dubious existence prior to 1800. The variety of genres and languages in which the Urdu literary tradition has been canonized, narrativized, and promulgated ensures accessibility and explains the prevalence of this Urdu imaginary, both nationally and internationally, while also allowing Urdu ghazal to be used rhetorically as both political weapon and cultural salve. By closely reading texts from a wide variety of genres and discourses--including short stories, novellas, histories, historiographies, tazkirahs, films, tweets, songs, and, of course, poems--I can read against the grain of the received narratives of nationalism that prescribe particular reading practices for Urdu ghazal and in the process predetermine the form's cultural significance for Indian Islam.

see Kavita Saraswathi Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

Urdu Through Its Others

Urdu stands out among world languages in the extent to which concerns surrounding its linguistic boundaries--questions and repeatedly contested assertions of what Urdu is and what it is not--haunt and indeed define the language itself. As influential Columbia University professor and Urdu scholar Frances Pritchett wrote over an exchange on a public Urdu listserv: "Now that there are millions of North Indians who come from an Urdu-speaking tradition, but who in this generation use Devanagari script, what are we to call their language? Can it be Urdu without the script? Can it be Hindi if it contains Persianized vocab [sic] and izafats?"⁹ In these rhetorical musings, Pritchett cites differences in script, vocabulary, and syntactical constructions ("izafats") as linguistic markers that differentiate Urdu from other languages, particularly Hindi.

Yet, as these questions indicate, in line with a significant volume of scholarly work on the topic, the line between Hindi and Urdu is slippery and continually shifting, even today. While Hindi--the national language of India--and Urdu--the national language of Pakistan--are mutually intelligible languages originating in North India and sharing a common ancestor referred to as *Kharī Bolī* ("upright speech"), today the two languages stand opposed to one another. Historically, education and position determined language use; yet the differentiation of Hindi and Urdu along religious lines--Hindi for Hindus, Urdu for Muslims--came about as a result of British colonial education and governmental policy throughout the nineteenth century.

One of the most significant actors in the historical process of linguistic differentiation between Hindi and Urdu was John Gilchrist, a famed linguist and Orientalist who began teaching the "Hindustani" language at the Fort William College in Calcutta in 1800. Gilchrist coined the term "Hindustani" in order to avoid the politics of choosing between "Urdu" and "Hindi,"

⁹ Frances Pritchett, email communication, 6/7/2015. Cited here with permission.

choosing instead a name that connoted the language spoken in a particular place ("Hindustan") rather than by a particular group of people.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he was forced to choose a script to teach the language in, and his choice of Perso-Arabic script over Nāgarī--associated with Sanskrit and therefore Brahmanical Hinduism--led to some dissatisfaction; later, when students successfully petitioned to have a separate class for "Hindavī" taught in the Nāgarī script, it resulted in the formalization of a bifurcation between Hindi and Urdu, perceived as separate languages, despite Gilchrist's attempt to solidify the single national dialect of Hindustani.

In addition, Hindustani written in the Perso-Arabic script--increasingly understood as Urdu--became the official language of colonial administration in 1837. In response to the perceived dominance of Urdu over Hindi in this move of linguistic patronage, major Hindi-nationalist actors, particularly Bharatendu Harischandra (1850-1885), enacted the self-conscious Sanksritization of the shared Khari Boli dialect into what we know today as Modern Hindi;¹¹ this Hindi-Nagari movement was effected through the mobilization of the Hindu middle class and increasingly standardized educational curricula.¹² At the same time, rising nationalist sentiment

¹⁰ Although the place name "Hindustan"--referring to India--seems to also include reference to the Hindu religious community, the words "Hindi" and "Hindu" in fact came from the Persian word *Hind*, itself derived from the Indo-Aryan/Sanskritic *Sindhu*, which referred to the Indus River. Confusingly, "Hindi" was the Persian word for the North Indian vernacular, and was often used even up until the mid-nineteenth century to refer to what we would today consider "Urdu," especially where there was a need to distinguish the vernacular from Persian. "Hindustan," also a Persianate term for India, literally means "land of the Hindu"--but this historically was a reference to the geological feature of the Indus River, and not to the Hindu religion. See below for how this ambiguity has been exploited by linguistic nationalists.

¹¹ For more on this, see Vasudha Dalmia's pivotal work on Harischandra and the creation of Modern Standard Hindi: Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹² This summary of events is primarily based on Christopher King's now canonical work on Hindi and Urdu linguistics: Christopher Rolland King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in the Nineteenth Century North India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1994). However, because of the cultural and political importance of Urdu and Hindi, and the separate nationalisms these languages inspired and symbolized, there are a host of studies on the

in the 1880s led to the creation of a notion of India that could be unified under the slogan "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan," in which Hindi written in the Devanagari script (and implicitly spoken by Hindus) was claimed as the proper language of India.¹³ In order to establish its autochthony, Hindu-nationalist leaders fabricated linguistic histories that posited the antiquity of the Hindi language in India in direct contrast to Urdu, which they painted as a comparatively recent arrival via the Muslim conquest of India, when the Mughal invaders brought with them Persian, Arabic, and Turkish words that combined into the "pidgin" known as Urdu.¹⁴ This false history of Urdu paints the language as both foreign--brought in by violent, conquering Muslims--and undeveloped or incomplete as compared to other, properly indigenous languages. Indeed, given Delhi's fame as the site of repeated pillaging and conquest by Muslim "invaders," the narrativization of this city as the home of the Urdu language and its literary canon supports the ongoing prevalence of this myth.

linguistic origins of Hindi and Urdu that describe this linguistic "split" in remarkable detail. For further reading, see also: Amrit Rai, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984); Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras*.

¹³ The etymological ambiguity in the term "Hindustan" has been exploited to suggest that Hindus are the only properly autochthonous community in India, and that (Sanskritized/Modern Standard) Hindi is their proper language. Nationalists then organized under the belief that Muslims were "contaminating" elements in India as a properly Hindu nation. See Gyanendra Pandey, "'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'," in *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ This narrative hides the fact that "Hindi" was the Persian word for the "native" language of India from well before the Mughal period, and in fact was often used to refer to the language now understood as Urdu--as I will discuss further in Chapter 4. For a neat summary of these false philologies of Urdu, see: Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*. Faruqi suggests that historians of Urdu literature from 1880 onward propagated this myth such that the mistaken belief in Urdu's origins as a "military language" is now widespread. This false history is also promulgated by historians of Hindi literature (particularly Ram Chandra Shukla, writing in Hindi), who contrast Urdu's martial past with Hindi's simple, pastoral origins). See Ram Chandra Shukla, *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itihas* (Varanasi: Nagari Prachini Sabha, 1965).

By the late nineteenth century, the terms "Hindi" and "Urdu" became increasingly differentiated and politicized along the lines of religious groups--Hindi for Hindus, and Urdu for Muslims. With increasing tensions between Muslims and Hindus over the fate of the Muslim minority in independent India, these linguistic identifications gained increasing sociopolitical salience during the early to mid-twentieth century.¹⁵ When India achieved Independence from the British in 1947, this moment of decolonization was marked by the creation of two new nation-states--India and Pakistan--intended as separate states ostensibly "secular" but in actuality for Hinduism and Sikhism, on the one hand, and forthrightly for Islam on the other. When the new border between nations was drawn in the West of the Subcontinent, splitting the region of Panjab in two, it resulted in the largest mass migration in human history, with roughly 17 million people crossing the border into either India or Pakistan. Furthermore, this event--known as Partition--was marked by extreme violence between members of differing religious communities, with over 1 million killed, and many more raped, kidnapped, or maimed.¹⁶ Following this

¹⁵ Arvind Mandair has coined the term "monotheolingualism" to refer to the identification of particular languages with particular religious groups in India. Arvind-Pal Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Estimates for the numbers killed and displaced during Partition vary widely--with very little concrete evidence or records from the period to produce precise numbers. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees puts the number at 14 million displaced, whereas historians cite numbers ranging from 12 million to 17 million displaced; similarly, estimates of those killed range from 200,000 to 2 million, with 1 million being the "generally accepted" number. Yet Gyan Pandey rightly criticizes the shoddy methodology involved in producing any number for the destruction of Partition: "Nothing in the surviving records, in the calculations made at the time, or in the contentious debates that have gone on since then, gives us anything like a persuasive basis for such an inference [as to exact numbers of those killed or displaced]. Is it, rather, a question of what one can live with? [...] Is this the 'median' that allows one to emphasize the enormity of Partition and point to our surviving humanity at the same time? Or is it a figure that has gained credibility in academic circles simply by repetition?" (90-91). See Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See especially pp. 88-91 for a discussion of the

horrific violence, the political and cultural position of moderation has been understood as implicitly secular--where, in the Indian context, secularism acts as the opposite of and antidote to the dangerous communalism that led to Partition.¹⁷

This history also explains why Delhi, for instance, has four official languages--Hindi, Urdu, Panjabi, and English. The first three languages are each associated with a particular religious community of India's formerly colonized peoples--Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, respectively--effectively legitimizing these communities' local belonging given the specter of violence that haunts the Indian nation, and particularly Delhi and Panjab even today. English, on the other hand, serves as a secular and global language that inherently underwrites the other three, even while it also retains its association with British (Protestant Christian) colonizers. To return to the opening example of the "Delhi, I Love You" verse, the finished mural (see Figure 1 above) features the Urdu couplet that is then authenticated with a Hindi transliteration as well as English paratext that connects the local, physical art with the global, digital circulation of social media, while also reassuring the nationalist viewer that the mural is "supported by Delhi govt [sic]."

various figures associated with the destruction and violence of Partition, as well as a critique of the methodology with which these numbers are produced.

¹⁷ See especially Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). The editors of this volume note that secularism rarely operates as the antidote to communalism that many in India idealized it to be--perhaps most of all the British, who hoped to establish the state as the arbiter of secular ideals against the communalism of ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. Gilchrist's turn to "Hindustani" is instructive in this sense: his goal of establishing, and in many ways creating, a "secular" language outside of the associations of Hindi and Urdu with Hindus and Muslims, respectively, demonstrates the ways in which the state of "Hindustan" was itself already conceived as non-communal, and therefore secular. However, as Gauri Viswanathan points out, a great deal of British colonial policy consisted of finding ways to promote a "secularism" that was actually Christianity without openly proselytizing to and therefore offending various religious groups in India; their solution was the creation of a canon of British literature that was seemingly secular but subtly Christian, and which was initially taught in India before coming back "home" to Great Britain. Thus, canonizations of both English *and* Urdu literatures in India are rhetorically and historically tied to what I am calling the "secular-communal binary."

Oddly, Urdu literature as a whole is tied to both ends of what I refer to as a secular-communal binary. On the one hand, much of the canonical Urdu prose literature today comes out of the resolutely secular Progressive Writers Movement, whose short stories and poetry attempted to unite India's religious communities, often by portraying (and critiquing) the otherwise unimaginable violence of Partition.¹⁸ On the other hand, Urdu today is increasingly Arabicized--solidifying its associations with Islam by tying it to the language of the Qur'an--while Hindi is increasingly Sanskritized, similarly tying it to the language of Brahmanical Hindu scripture; one response to the continued association of these languages with their respective religious communities, then, has been to reinforce the mythos of linguistic and ethnic origins created by these religious categories as a move toward preservation of communal identity against the perceived threat of the other. Much of the rhetoric surrounding Urdu today has to do with the need for preservation of the language against the threat of pro-Hindi and anti-Muslim forces; besides a general lack of government support for Urdu language education in India, the continued violence and discrimination faced by Indian Muslims today--with major communal and largely anti-Muslim riots breaking out during the December 1992 Babri Masjid incident, and

¹⁸ In addition, Kavita Datla's excellent monograph, *The Language of Secular Islam*, documents the efforts of the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu, led by Dr. Abdul Haq in the Deccan, to promote Urdu as a secular language that could serve the entire Indian nation, regardless of religious affiliation. She documents "a concerted effort by Muslim intellectuals to draw from Muslim scholarly traditions and history elements that would be useful to the forging of Indian citizens," such that "the Urdu language in the early twentieth century became a means not only of asserting difference but also of imagining a common secular future" (9). She further argues that analyzing the efforts of this movement allows us to think about "what it means to render traditional knowledge nonreligious, to make a language stand above religion" (9)--a particularly difficult task given the seeming inevitability with which Urdu is associated with Muslims, and Hindi with Hindus in the current nationalist (and even scholarly) discourse. Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India*.

then again in 2002 in Gujarat--is one of the major reasons for anxieties surrounding the preservation of Urdu and its speakers.¹⁹

Today Hindi and Urdu may perhaps best be conceived of as a spectrum: at either extreme--highly Sanskritized Hindi, or highly Persianized and/or Arabicized Urdu--the languages remain distinct and mutually unintelligible, while the middle spectrum consists of various ranges of a generally mutually-intelligible register of speech. For instance, when speaking with my family in public, I have more than once been asked by an eavesdropping stranger if I am speaking Hindi; although in that moment I am not consciously speaking Hindi, my speech could nevertheless easily and even rightfully be mistaken as such--yet to answer negatively ("No, I am speaking Urdu") is to communally, religiously, and nationally align myself against my interlocutor, whereas to answer positively ("Yes, I am speaking Hindi") is to disavow those very alignments that hold meaning for my family and myself.

In this sense, even outside of the differentiated "high" registers of either Hindi or Urdu, the mutual intelligibility of the middle register is also imbued with the political and communal politics of South Asian linguistic nationalism. Today in India, this middle dialect is generally referred as Hindustani--a term leftover from Gilchrist's secularist vision of North Indian language in the early nineteenth century--and is most often associated with Bollywood films,

¹⁹ Christopher Lee, "'Hit It with a Stick and It Won't Die': Urdu Language and Muslim Identity and Poetry in Varanasi, India," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 15, no. 1 (2000). This also explains the section in the declaration that Urdu writers have been asked to sign specifically asking them to avoid inciting communal or sectarian feeling. Lee notes that the ghazal in particular is mobilized to renew Urdu and the Muslim community in India (and particularly in Banāras, where he studied a community of Urdu poets) against the threats of the majority: "The traditional metaphors and imagery of Urdu poetry [...] are being reworked in new and significant ways [...]: for example, the caged bird wistfully admiring the inaccessible garden is no longer the stereotypical lover captured by the birdcatcher-beloved, but is the Banārasī Muslim, who finds himself trapped in his Muslim-only neighborhood by the cage of his fears of communal violence" (347).

where dialogue must reach the widest audience possible; Hindustani represents, along with English, a secular alternative to the communal associations of Hindi and Urdu.²⁰ While Aamir Mufti astutely asserts that both Hindi and Urdu are defined by an inherent desire for the linguistic other such that the two languages "remain articulated as the elements of a single formation in contradiction,"²¹ my work here shows that alternatives to Hindi-Urdu--including and especially those conceived of as "secular" or noncommunal, such as Hindustani--demonstrate the extent to which this tradition exists through comparison, not just between the two languages, but amongst a broad constellation of languages and literatures.

²⁰ "Hindustani" becomes an important concept as an alternative to the polarizing rhetoric of "Hindi" versus "Urdu", even though the historical view of Hindustani as a "covert" form of Urdu continues. However, the term "Hindustani" is limited in its description: one might recognize that a nebulous, widely intelligible language or dialect called Hindustani is spoken in India, but an individual would not likely identify him or herself as a "Hindustani speaker." Furthermore, the notion that Hindustani is code for a "secular" Urdu continues from Gilchrist's historical moment through the present day, so that in celebrating Hindustani, one implicitly denigrates Urdu as excessively or distastefully Muslim.

The language of Bollywood, for instance, is often understood as "Hindustani" because of a) the wide audience that Bollywood movies must necessarily cater to in their linguistic choices; b) the prevalence of words coded as "Urdu," including whole ghazals and other Urdu poetry, in Bollywood songs that continues today and goes back to the Indian film industry's beginnings in the 1920s and 30s, in which many of the writers for Bollywood were themselves Urdu poets and short story writers in their own right.

Some of the most prominent writers for Bollywood films since the industry's inception have been Urdu writers and poets, from Saadat Hasan Manto in the 1930s and 40s (discussed in Chapter 2) to Javed Akhtar today. In addition, while the idea of Bollywood as promoting and celebrating a "universal" North Indian dialect understood as "Hindustani" is often thought of as an important antidote to continuing communal tensions along linguistic lines, this notion of Hindustani is not without its own politics. It is not uncommon, for instance, for Urdu speakers to feel that the "Hindustani" of Bollywood films represents either a) a critique of those Urdu speakers who specifically align themselves with Urdu rather than the "joint" dialect of Hindustani, suggesting that Hindustani actually represents a threat to the current autonomy of Urdu (see coda of this work); or b) a "taking over" of Urdu by Hindi through Bollywood's Urdu-esque dialogues that are nevertheless "issued Hindi certificates." (See Christopher Lee, 2000). For an eloquent treatment of the issue of Hindustani/Urdu in 1940s Bollywood, see David Lunn, "The Eloquent Language: Hindustani in 1940s Indian Cinema," *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015).

²¹ Aamir Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 129.

Indeed, I contend throughout this dissertation that the instability of the Hindi-Urdu complex produces at various moments of narrativization the need for a triangulating third language, such that the very existence of Urdu as a distinct linguistic and literary tradition is predicated upon comparison with and reference to other traditions--whether linguistic "ancestors" like Sanskrit, Persian, or Arabic; or "foreign imports" like the supposedly modern and secular English tradition. For instance, English (and/or Hindi-Urdu written in Roman script) often serves as the palliative for these ongoing language politics, as in this exasperated response to Fran Pritchett's email about the increasingly blurred distinctions between Hindi and Urdu:

Could it be just and still be true for Urdu and Hindi speakers that they are continuously or periodically called upon (by whom?) to add/subtract something from their respective vocabularies, change their script or learn another in addition, call their language something else, to secularize (whatever that means) their respective languages, to obsess about the mid- to late 19th century rather than the post-colonial [or present] period, to only think of themselves as geographically restricted, and finally to borrow from certain 'politically correct' or preapproved sources and no others? [...] Thank God for English which provides such a welcome refuge from this perpetual prodding.²²

Indeed, the "refuge" of English provides the framework for the canonization of the Urdu ghazal and supports the implicit assumption of English's authority, superiority, and/or neutrality in comparison to the politics of the North Indian vernaculars;²³ English operates as a silent standard and terrain of possibility for Urdu literature, on both national and world stages. In this dissertation, I closely read specific literary and historical texts to show how the ghazal genre particularly exemplifies the nexus of cultural and linguistic systems entailed in the broader

²² Omar Qureshi, email, June 10, 2015. Cited with permission.

²³ This view of English as the secular and "sensible" alternative to other global languages, particularly Hindi-Urdu, comprises a major theme of Aamir Mufti's recently published monograph *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (2016). Mufti's work examines English as "the quintessential world-encompassing language, of literature as a world-encompassing reality" (13), using Urdu and the institution of Indian literature as a case study for the idea that English acts as the means via which we understand global culture through (world) literature.

existence of the Urdu language and literature. Indeed, closely reading texts from a wide variety of genres and discourses allows me to disrupt nationalist narratives that prescribe particular reading practices for Urdu ghazal that result in understandings of the form's cultural significance for Indian Islam that misleadingly appear inevitable.

Orality versus Script: The Mushaira Imaginary

That the ghazal comes to perform seemingly contradictory cultural work as both distastefully communalist and redemptively secular in the national Urdu imaginary largely occurs through the binary of oral versus written transmission--a duality in the language established by early canonizing texts and continually narrativized through the present day. The 1977 hit film *Amar Akbar Anthony* provides an illustrative example of the varying roles of orality versus script in the national Urdu imaginary. The film as a whole depicts the relationship between three brothers separated during childhood, and raised in different faiths--Amar, a Hindu; Akbar, a Muslim; and Anthony, a Christian--ultimately coming to establish how the three re-establish loving fraternal bonds for the sake of their mother, Bhāratī (literally, Indian).²⁴ The Muslim sub-plot advanced by the thread of Akbar's narrative suggests the importance of the Urdu imaginary to the Indian nation; Akbar's speech is marked as Urdu given his propensity for Persianate vocabulary and Arabic phrases commonly deployed by Muslims, such as *Inshā'Allāh* ("God Willing") or *Subhān Allah* ("Glory be to God"). The character's full name is Akbar Ilahabadi--a reference to a well-known Urdu ghazal poet of the same name (1846-1921), as well as a locally-inflected and Hinduized geographical marker that rhetorically situates him in

²⁴ For one example of excellent critical work on the symbolism of the Mother India trope, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire*, Radical Perspectives (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Allahabad, a city located in the state of Uttar Pradesh, often understood as the Urdu heartland of India. Furthermore, in the film Akbar is a professional *qawwālī* singer--a genre of Sufi musical performance that in many ways intersects with oral performance of Urdu ghazal--and his songs advance the plot so as to lay bear unrevealed truths or unspoken tensions between characters. Conversely, however, at the end of the film Akbar's ability to write in Urdu allows him to secretly send a message for help in defeating the film's antagonists, which ultimately leads to heroic interventions that save the heroines, reunite all of the couples, and restore justice.

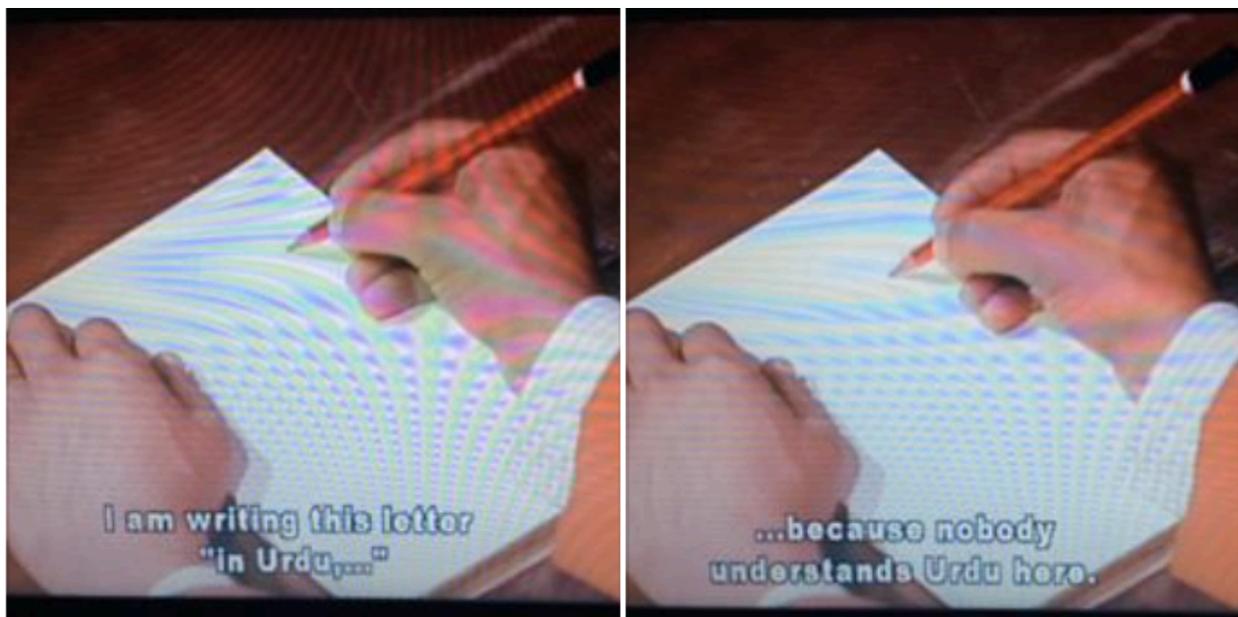


Figure 2: A screenshot of a scene from the 1977 smash hit Bollywood film, *Amar Akbar Anthony*. The film has been celebrated as promoting unity amongst various religious groups in India; this scene promotes the idea of Urdu as a secret (Muslim) code, although in this case, that secrecy helps the Muslim character, Akbar, send a note that ultimately allows him to heroically save all three friends and therefore the day.

Although the plotline positively spins Urdu's symbolism as an enigmatic code, *Amar Akbar Anthony's* broad gestures toward national redemption through cultural harmony--as well as its repeated parody of cultural stereotypes--indicates the pervasiveness of pernicious notions about Urdu script in the national imaginary; the film's troping on these ideas about script also--as

Elison *et.al.* elegantly argue--"assimilates and neutralizes potentially volatile aspects of Indian Muslim identity."²⁵ At the same time, Akbar's success as a performer of Urdu poetry--and the role of sung poetry in allowing the film's characters to overcome physical, linguistic, religious, and cultural barriers--also suggests the importance of the mushaira imaginary as a subset of the national Urdu imaginary that holds equal and opposite cultural weight in redeeming an otherwise suspect Indian Muslim culture. The delicate balance between the suspicion and redemption in which Urdu is situated in India has shaped the patterns of its canonization and narrativization, especially the ways in which Urdu is narrativized in relation to other literary traditions as either oral or written.

The very appearance of Perso-Arabic script, then, and the association of Urdu with this script--and by extension with Muslims and Islam--reinforces Hindu nationalist notions of Urdu, Muslims, and Islam as "foreign" and "impure" dilutions of India's properly autochthonous (Hindu) culture. This view of Urdu script explains the significance of the phrase "Swacch Bhārat Abhiyān" ("Keep India Clean") for the RSS members forcing the mural artists to paint over their

²⁵ William Elison, Christian Lee Novetzke, and Andy Rotman, *Amar Akbar Anthony: Bollywood, Brotherhood, and the Nation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 75. This engaging and erudite analysis of the film argues that the film can be seen as both a celebration and critique of Indian secularism. With regard to Akbar's language use, the authors note that he code switches between a Bombay-style Hindi that mixes in words from English and Marathi and "an elaborate Urdu of a literary sort." However, they clarify: "*Urdu of a literary sort*: In the context of *Amar Akbar Anthony's* place in Indian cinema history, this formulation is actually something of a tautology. For in this film--as established by a generation of films that precedes it--Urdu *is* poetry. As such, the Urdu stratum of the soundtrack is the medium of a certain affective register, and a character who commands Urdu words is thus endowed with a certain special power" (79). This "special power" of Urdu's "affective register" is part of what I call *ghazalization*, which I discuss in the latter chapters of the dissertation. Furthermore, with regard to Akbar, the authors continue: "The connection between poetic declamation and music is very strong in Indian performance traditions, and in the case of *Amar Akbar Anthony* it is fair to say that poetry equals song. At this stage, then, we have formulated a chain of correspondences: Urdu → poetry → song" (79). It is this formulation that I call the mushaira imaginary, which explains how the affect deployed through ghazalization becomes enacted through oral performance in general, and especially through musical/sung performance.

work; the phrase not only contains implications about caste purity, but also, with its heavily Sanskritic register--including the use of "Bhārat" instead of "Hindūstān" as the word for India, revealing a preference for the Sanskritic term that predates the latter Persianate term--suggests a call toward religious, cultural, and linguistic purity in the Brahmanical sense as much as the literal cleanliness of this national anti-littering campaign. This rhetoric demonstrates how the supposed impurity of Urdu reifies and differentiates it from a Hindi tradition idealized as purely autochthonous to India in both script and vocabulary; reading these examples closely also shows how the discourse of purity operates to delegitimize the work of translation as it constitutes the Urdu linguistic and literary tradition.

The incident with the Delhi artists prompted an outpouring of editorials on the state of Urdu in India, most of them seeing the occurrence as further evidence of the already steady decline of the once-grand language in a modern Indian nation that can no longer accommodate the Urdu literary and cultural milieu. Against this trend, however, an article published in the online Indian newspaper *Scroll* rightly insisted that "the death of Urdu in India is greatly exaggerated." While my dissertation takes up claims of Urdu's death (or proximity to death) as central to the trajectory of its canonization within the contexts of both colonialism and postcolonial Indian nationalism, this article more straightforwardly presented evidence as to how Urdu continues to flourish despite claims to the contrary. The article aptly posed the following rhetorical question: "If the very same couplet [...] had been written down in the Devanagiri [sic] or Roman script, would the RSS gundas [gangsters] have gotten so worked up?"²⁶

This question points to the centrality of script within the conflicted debate around Urdu and Urdu literature in India today--the tension between the celebration of Urdu ghazal as it

²⁶ Shoaib Daniyal, "The Death of Urdu in India Is Greatly Exaggerated--the Language Is Actually Thriving," *Scroll*, June 1, 2016.

circulates orally within the mushaira and the mushaira imaginary, and its revilement in the context of a written textual tradition. Indeed, the Perso-Arabic script in which Urdu is traditionally written is often itself presented as evidence of Urdu's backwardness, difficulty, and foreignness, and hence stands in the way of Urdu fully realizing its role as a properly national(ist) language in India. For instance, even though the author of the *Scroll* article makes important points about the fallacies involved in claims of Urdu's death, he still insists that "Even if Urdu hasn't died what has is the Perso-Arabic script historically associated with it."²⁷

Alternatively, the Center for Bio-Medical Research in Lucknow, India has found a "silver lining" within the discourse of Urdu's difficulty, claiming that a study of brain imaging demonstrates that Urdu acts as an "elixir for the brain" because the difficulty of its script challenges the brain so much as to prevent dementia. The study classifies Urdu as a "deep" (difficult to learn) language because of its right-to-left and non-phonemic script, as well as the "visual complexity of its letters," whereas Hindi is classified as "transparent" (easy to learn) because of its left-to-right phonemic script and its supposedly straightforward alphabet.²⁸ This supposedly scientific basis for subjective judgments of complexity or difficulty--even where that difficulty is construed as positive, as in the Urdu script's healthful stimulation for the brain--further solidifies the difference between Urdu and Hindi as fundamentally a matter of script (as opposed to vocabulary or grammar), that at the same time points to the far-reaching consequences of script in terms of overall perceptions of each language in the national imaginary.

²⁷ He claims that Urdu circulates more commonly in Roman or even Devanagari script, or most frequently, orally. For the importance of orality in a "secular" vision of Urdu, see Chapter Five and the coda of this dissertation.

²⁸ Shailvee Sharda, "Urdu Couplets Are Elixir for Brain; Learning the Language Helps Prevent Dementia," *Times of India*, March 2, 2015. The leader of the study, Uttam Kumar, went so far as to claim that Urdu is the "deepest" language.

Indeed, on the opposite side of the debate around the perceived incomprehensibility of Urdu script are numerous incidents, including that of the Delhi artists accosted by RSS members, in which instances of the Urdu script itself is understood as a threat to the security of the Indian nation, against or outside of the actual words written. In one such incident in May 2015, a pigeon flying over Manwal, a small village in Panjab near the India-Pakistan border, was arrested and detained on charges of international espionage. The suspect underwent a full-body search and an X-ray, and specialists were called in to decode suspicious tattoos decorating the feathers of the alleged spy: Urdu words, written in the Perso-Arabic script. Though these inspections failed to produce any evidence of foul (fowl?) play, the police chief on the case insisted, "Till now there is no evidence to suggest it is a spy bird but so long as we are not able to decipher what is written in Urdu, we cannot be absolutely sure."²⁹ Ultimately the police were able to find an Urdu reader trustworthy enough to confirm that the writing on the bird's wing simply identified the district and address of its owner in Pakistan. Though laughable, last year's pigeon incident points to the tenuous status of the Urdu language in the modern Indian nation-state, including the ways in which Urdu is perceived as dangerous, foreign, indecipherable, and outdated--hence the need for Indian police to call in experts to "decipher" the Urdu on the alleged spy's wings, as though Urdu and its script were a secret code or enigma.

I myself had an experience similar to the unfortunate pigeon's, though perhaps not quite so extreme. During my fieldwork in India in 2013, I spent some time at Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) in Amritsar, Panjab. Having found some texts of interest in the library stacks, I settled in to read the books, which were written in Urdu. A few minutes later, I was accosted by an irate woman, who demanded to know who I was, how and why I knew Urdu, who my parents

²⁹ "Punjab Police Seizes Pigeon Having Urdu Script over Spying Fears," *Live Mint*, May 29, 2015.

were, and what I was reading. She claimed that I had no right to read Urdu in the library, even after I pointed out that the books in front of me were procured from the library itself. Finally, she insisted that I read aloud to her from the book so that she could ensure the material was safe and appropriate (though of course I could have said anything, and she would not have known the difference--and what I did read was in an academic register of Urdu that probably did not facilitate her comprehension), and threatened to have me removed from the library if I did not comply. After complaining to the head librarian, I discovered that this woman had absolutely no official relationship to the library or the university; she was simply a private citizen concerned for the safety of her nation.

The role of script in cementing Urdu's status as a non-national language conflicts with overt attempts on the part of the state to mobilize the Urdu imaginary for explicitly nationalist purposes, as in the *Jashan-i Jamhooriyat* (literally, "Celebration of Democracy"), a mushaira held annually in honor of India's Republic Day (January 26) at Delhi's Lal Qila. That an annual celebration of Indian nationalism takes place at the seat of governance of the erstwhile Mughal Empire also evokes in attendees a melancholic nostalgia for Urdu/ghazal as the provenance of the Mughal era at the very site where Urdu is defined as such. The *Jashn-e Jamhooriyat* reinforces this reading of Urdu as symbolic of Delhi, the Mughals, and Indo-Muslim culture more broadly, while also situating the Indian state as the proper inheritor of that legacy. (In fact, the Indian state has literally taken over this site, not only through nationalizing the Lal Qila as a UNESCO heritage site, but also by stationing Indian army troops throughout those parts of the fort not open to the public.) The co-optation of this space as a site for Indian nationalism expressed through Urdu ghazal as a symbol of national culture suggests a neutralization of the unspoken threat of Islam and Muslim culture in India even in the attempt to announce it as an

integral part of secular India; in fact, on this particular day the event began with schoolchildren singing nationalist ghazals in Urdu. The annual Republic Day mushaira represents the state's appropriation of the culture of Urdu ghazal in a manner parallel to the Delhi Government's use of Urdu poetry in the "I Love You, Delhi" initiative; in both cases, the use of Urdu ghazal toward nationalist ends represents an attempt to counter the Hindu nationalist position in which Urdu remains fundamentally incompatible with Indian modernity. However, in so doing, these state-sponsored initiatives acknowledge and in many ways even legitimate the Hindu nationalist perspective by responding to these anti-Urdu cultural claims; as we saw with Mishra's intervention into the mydillistroy mural, the mushaira event appears to neutrally celebrate Urdu literary culture while in fact preemptively appropriating that culture in the context of its perceived incompatibility with Hindu nationalism.

Indeed, the continued popularity of the mushaira particularly suggests the cultural, social, and political importance of Urdu ghazal. Small weekly mushairas can be found in almost any town or city across North India, while government-sponsored mushairas like the *Jashan-i Jamhooriyat* play an important role in local and national elections and holidays. Nathan Tabor notes that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi--then Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat--"organized a mushairah to pander to his state's Muslim community after orchestrating pogroms against it in 2002";³⁰ Tabor's mention of "pogroms" refers to communal violence that flared up between Muslims and Hindus in 2002 after a train arriving in Gujarat filled with Hindu religious pilgrims returning from Ayodhya was burned to the ground, killing 59 people. The incident was blamed on Gujarat's Muslim community, and the media and several local politicians (Modi included) called for mobs to attack Gujarat Muslims as revenge for the burning of the Hindu

³⁰ Nathan Tabor, "A Market for Speech: Poetry Recitation in Late Mughal India, 1690-1810" (University of Texas at Austin, 2014), 8.

pilgrims in the train. During these revenge pogroms, hundreds of Muslim men, women, and children were attacked, raped, burned, tortured, and ultimately killed across 27 cities in Gujarat. Tabor's comment on Modi's mushaira organizing contextualize the continued cultural significance of the mushaira in the present period, even though his dissertation as a whole focuses on the 18th century mushaira; his discussion, however, reveals the extent to which Urdu poetry, particular in the context of public performance, is meant to heal and/or defray the blame for moments of violence, particularly violence between religious communities in India.

The complex relationship between Urdu ghazal and communal violence is reflected in the patterns of its narrativization, where Urdu is used both to politically pacify Indian Muslim communities and to render them suspect. The fungibility of Urdu, ghazal, and Muslims in the national Urdu imaginary³¹ partly explains the threat posed by this literary and linguistic tradition; ghazal's wide popularity represents not just a unique cultural cache, but also the potential for social power if or when wielded against the state. While the ghazal's popularity continues in the ready audiences available for mushairas throughout India, the idealization of this space as secular and apolitical in what I am calling the mushaira imaginary represents a disingenuous repudiation of the communalist politics otherwise embedded in the national Urdu imaginary.

³¹ As Christopher Lee puts it in his work on Urdu mushaira poetry in Varanasi, India: "The Urdu language, when presented in Urdu poetry, shares a metonymous relationship with the Muslim community." Christopher Lee, "In a Single House: Fluid Boundaries in Performed Urdu Poetry," in *Lines in Water: Religious Boundaries in South Asia*, ed. Eliza F. Kent and Tazim R. Kassam (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 231.

One should note, however, that Urdu holds an entirely different set of significations in Pakistan, where its status as a state or official language puts it at odds with the ethnic languages that many of Pakistan's peoples consider their mother tongues (i.e. Sindhi, Balochi, Panjabi, and Pashto, among others). In this case, Urdu is often perceived as a hegemonic language, complicit with state suppression of various ethnic groups, and (often rightly) blamed for the languishing of these ethnic languages. Although this context provides an important counterpoint to Urdu's status as a "minority" language in India, my dissertation does not focus heavily on Urdu's cultural significance in modern-day Pakistan.

In this dissertation, I use close reading to examine contradictions in the prevailing cultural narratives that portray Urdu and Urdu ghazal as either idealized cultural products of a secular Muslim culture (as in the mushaira imaginary); questionable imports from a degenerate foreign tradition; or anachronistic relics of a past age--as ultimately part of a dead cultural tradition whose continuing circulation is more ghostly than truly living, or ruined and only partly revived. Indeed, the notion that Urdu ghazal is "left over" from a previous time is one of the ways in which historicism and historical consciousness operates within the logic of nationalism, so that even while the mushaira imaginary enables Urdu ghazal's continued circulation within the contexts of both national and world literature, the logic of historicism prompts us to read the redemptive qualities of the mushaira as a benefit of Urdu's ghostly afterlife in the national present. Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us:

In the awakening of this sense of anachronism lies the beginning of modern historical consciousness. Indeed, anachronism is regarded as the hallmark of such a consciousness. Historical evidence (the archive) is produced by our capacity to see something that is contemporaneous with us [...] as a relic of another time or place. The person gifted with historical consciousness sees these objects as things that once belonged to their historical context and now exist in the observer's time as a 'bit' of that past. A particular past thus becomes objectified in the observer's time. If such an object continues to have effects on the present, then the historically minded person sees that as an effect of the past.³²

The precarious state of Muslims in India, then, is played out on the terrain of linguistic and literary affinity as imagined through various narratives--particularly historical narratives--surrounding the Urdu ghazal and its supposed demise. Indeed, Urdu's canon-makers repeatedly turn to the genre of literary history in order to reify the Urdu language and its cultural sphere--a move which continues both in fictionalized histories that narrativize Urdu ghazal, and in academic works that historicize the form.

³² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 238-39.

Urdu Literary History: Forming the Canon

These reified notions about Urdu ghazal as a decadent cultural form are based on the assertions in explicitly canon-making texts that began to appear around the middle of the nineteenth century, including (but not limited to) Karimuddin's *Tabaqāt-i Shūa'arā-i Hind* ("Stages of Indian Poets," 1848), Muhammad Husain Āzād's *Āb-i Hayāt* ("Water of Life," 1858), and Altāf Husain Hālī's *Muqaddamah-i Sha'ir-o Shā'irī* ("Introduction to Poetry and Poetics," 1893); and in the twentieth century, three successive English texts each called *The History of Urdu Literature* (Rām Bābū Sāksenā, 1927; Thomas Grahame Bailey, 1932; Muhammad Sādiq, 1965 and 1984).³³ These texts, particularly *Āb-i Hayāt*, continue to be widely influential in popular ideas (and often myths) about Urdu and Urdu literature; while each of these texts in some way purports to represent an existing literary history, I argue in this dissertation that the very project of producing a literary history has worked to create the Urdu language and its literature with a particular historical consciousness (see Chapter 2).

While these literary histories of the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries helped to form, shape, and reinforce the boundaries of the Urdu cultural sphere, their translation and interpretation in academic circles from the 1980s onward has resulted in increased visibility for these works, even when the prevailing academic conversation worldwide aims at refuting the positions put forward in the texts themselves. Two scholars in particular have more recently continued to influence and dominate the scholarly conversation throughout the late twentieth century and into the present day. The first is Frances Pritchett--cited above in her role as the moderator of the Urdulist listserv of Urdu scholars and enthusiasts--who has been a Professor of

³³ This is not a comprehensive list of important canonizing texts, but rather an overview of the texts that I will address throughout the dissertation. Other important canonizing texts could include

South Asian Literature at Columbia University since 1982. She has produced a voluminous online compendium of Ghalib's ghazals along with translations of existing commentaries, relevant biographical details, and her own translations and explications of each verse of his *dīvān*; her prominent monograph, *Nets of Awareness* (1994), presents a cultural and literary history of the so-called demise of the Urdu ghazal, especially via the canonizing works of Azad and Hali.

The second is Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, who is a scholar as well as a litterateur in his own right; now retired, he was formerly a full-time writer and editor of the Urdu literary magazine *Shabkhoon* (published from the aforementioned Allahabad) and part-time Professor of South Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania from 1966 to 2006. Among his many novels, critical essays, and academic works, Faruqi's most influential scholarly work in the West has been *Early Urdu Literary Culture* (2001, also published in Urdu as *Urdū kā Ibtedā'ī Zamānā*), a monograph that dispels the myths of Urdu's linguistic and literary origins and establishes instead its own more historically-rigorous narrative. These scholars also appear as the only Urdu scholars in Sheldon Pollock's influential edited volume, *Literary Cultures in History*, and a significant portion of the journal *The Annual of Urdu Studies* consists of articles by these two scholars, often responding to one another. They have also jointly translated into English, with critical introductions, Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt*.

Pritchett writes in the introduction to this translation that she and Faruqi chose to translate *Āb-i Hayāt* in order to open the text to more extensive and careful scholarly critique; however, the translation itself ultimately reinforces and extends the pervasive reach of the text's cultural and scholarly influence, especially through the reiteration of historical discourse as the most important method of scholarly intervention in Urdu studies. For indeed, each of these canonizing

texts--whether the earlier set from the 1840's to the 1960's, or the later works of scholars from the 1980's onward--includes a history (of varying degrees of accuracy, and often differing significantly from histories presented in other texts) of the Urdu language as prelude to establishing the history of its literature. Azad, for instance, begins his literary history by arguing the Urdu descended from Braj Bhasha (now most often considered a dialect of modern Hindi).

Where Azad creates a history, Pritchett and Faruqi translate and then correct it, pointing out Azad's logical fallacies and blatant inaccuracies in their introductions to the main text of *Āb-i Hayāt*.³⁴ Significantly, Pritchett corrects Azad's assertions about Braj Bhasha, asserting instead that Urdu and Braj were both common descendants of Kharī Bolī--again following the pattern of rigorous linguistic analysis as a necessary preface to even a translation of Urdu's literary history. Similarly, in a 2008 Keynote Address at a major academic conference held at the University of Virginia called UrduFest, Faruqi calls on scholars to produce a "proper" history of Urdu literature--one that does not subscribe to the cultural self-loathing that Azad began and propagated onward into the present day, but that nevertheless responds to the nationalistic logic that motivated the trajectory of canonization as it already exists.

These moves toward historical discourse demonstrate the extent to which the Urdu language itself exists in and through Urdu literature (and vice versa), and furthermore, betrays the extent to which the very existence of the language depends upon the repetition of its literary history. As foundational as the works of Pritchett and Faruqi have been--indeed, my own work would not have been possible without theirs--their uncritical acceptance of the discourses of both history and translation limits the reach of their critique. Their work tends to melancholically focus on recovering lost "original" histories and reading practices for Urdu ghazal, and in this

³⁴ Or, in Pritchett's terms, Azad "erases and reconstructs a history"--and, I would add, Pritchett attempts to tear down Azad's reconstruction and rebuild the erased history in its place.

sense can never fully move beyond the intellectual framework established by the disdainful early canonizers that they overtly write against. Without acknowledging the extent to which historical consciousness itself underwrites the very existence of Urdu--where Urdu is necessarily and by definition the backward, underdeveloped, and/or elitist foil to other properly national traditions like Hindi, Persian, and English--academic moves toward history, no matter how rigorous, will continue to propagate the dominant Indian narrative of Urdu's status as a non-national language.

In contrast, my focus on narrativization and close reading allows me to focus on the ways in which the "false" histories of the early canon makers actually circulate in the textual traces that make up the otherwise nebulous national Urdu imaginary. Because narrativization focuses on the dissemination of ideologies contained within the Urdu literary canon in both scholarly and popular texts, I can trace the rhetorical underpinnings of the canon not only as it was established during a moment of historical crisis just before and after the 1857 Rebellion, but also as it has continued to circulate from that time to the present moment amongst wide audiences both in India and throughout South Asia and the diaspora. Rather than reiterating the move toward historicism--which contains its own fraught history--I use narrativization to show that the discourses of history and translation dovetail to repress difference in the creation of seemingly transparent and objective representations. Furthermore, the work of translation theory in taking up poststructural critiques of the authority of the original text informs my understanding of the movement of Urdu's narrativization between genres and languages.³⁵

Rather than aiming to establish a more "proper" history, or imagine a moment before translation, then, my work focuses on the traces of past texts and events as they continue to

³⁵ I am thinking here especially of the following: Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translating: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Christi A. Merrill, *Riddles of Belonging: India in Translation and Other Tales of Possession* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

operate within the present. For this reason, I take up the notion of historicity, or effective history, as a way to make visible the work of both History and translation by capturing that part of the past that continues to operate (or gets translated into) the present.³⁶

For example, Pritchett rightly claims that "Most of what the man-in-the-street Urdu-speaker today knows about classical poetry comes, directly or through a thousand indirect channels, from Azad."³⁷ Although Pritchett herself engages more often with Azad in order to refute derogatory claims about Urdu, my emphasis on narrativization in this work allows us to see that it is perhaps through these "thousand indirect channels" that the RSS members in Delhi came to understand Urdu as incompatible with Indian modernity--as Azad himself did--and hence saw fit to threaten the mural artists and destroy their work. This phenomenon of Azad's remarkably enduring legacy and the manner in which it shapes daily realities within the Urdu imaginary is what I refer to as historicity.

My emphasis on historicity also points to the significance of "close reading" as a methodology, which allows me to point out the complicity of particular forms of academic discourse--including world literature, historicism, and traditional translation studies--with the repression of difference in otherwise heteroglossic texts and languages, while also revealing the

³⁶ In this line of thought regarding the discourses of history and translation, and the use of effective history as an alternative, I am especially indebted to and in conversation with the following text: Niranjana, *Siting Translating: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. Lydia Liu also touches on the importance of historicity in the following work: Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity - China 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

³⁷ Frances Pritchett, "'Everybody Knows This Much...'," in *Āb-I Hayāt: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry* (Digital South Asia Library, University of Chicago, 2001).

significance of the contexts of Orientalism and colonialism to the development of these discourses.³⁸

In short, my work addresses the contemporary political context as a necessary and inescapable frame for any reading of Urdu ghazal today. Closely analyzing translation as both historical fact and interpretive mode in approaching texts of and about Urdu ghazal allows me to critique the melancholic attachment to original texts,³⁹ reading practices, and historical contexts that have haunted scholarly approaches to the form since the mid-nineteenth century. Instead of attempting to recuperate a prior moment in the history of Urdu ghazal, then, my work here focuses on the historicity of Urdu ghazal by making visible those moments in which Urdu ghazal productively destabilizes the received narrative of Indian nationalism in the present moment.

The Narrativization of Urdu: Rethinking the Canon

By focusing on the historicity of canonical texts as they circulate in the national Urdu imaginary, I argue in the chapters that follow that the boundaries of the Urdu language are demarcated through the canon of its literature. When these canon-making texts portray the ghazal as the defining genre of Urdu literature, and then add cultural judgments about the ghazal, these judgments come to pervade the cultural status of Urdu as a tradition distinct from other proximate languages and literatures, including Hindi, Persian, and English. Thus, even as this

³⁸ Other texts that brilliantly uncover the complicity of academic discourse with the contexts of Orientalism and colonialism, and to which my own thought is indebted here, even if not explicitly cited, include: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*; Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1993); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

³⁹ For the notion of "melancholic attachment to an original text," see Merrill, *Riddles of Belonging: India in Translation and Other Tales of Possession*.

project is fundamentally concerned with Urdu literature, its canonization as such presents particular discursive problems, in that both the terms "Urdu" and "literature" are themselves fraught cultural outgrowths of the contexts of colonialism and, later, Indian nationalism. One challenge of this work, then, has been to present an analysis of the canonization of Urdu literature without endorsing either the terms "Urdu" or "literature"; I have navigated this problem of terminology by coining the term "narrativization," which demonstrates how the cultural meanings of "Urdu literature" are continually determined by a concomitant set of narratives that constitute the textual traces of a commonly circulating (national) Urdu imaginary.

Because ghazal has been overwhelmingly narrativized as the defining genre of Urdu literature, we are prompted to read the ghazals themselves through an overdetermined affective and cultural lens. Furthermore, as I will show, when we read uncritically through the lens of the received canonizing narratives, we unwittingly reproduce late colonial and postcolonial ways of thinking about both Urdu and literature that remain entrenched within our current reading practices--as in the remarkably enduring circulation of Azad's misinformation about Urdu literature.

The five chapters of this dissertation are organized into roughly two parts: the first part, consisting of the first three chapters, examines the narrativization of the Urdu literary tradition within the national context of India; the second part, consisting of the last two chapters, focuses on the narrativization of Urdu literature on a world scale via the mediation of the nation. The coda brings these two parts together to briefly signal toward future work that could more fully explore the significance of musical performance to Urdu ghazal's cultural status as it circulates through the mushaira imaginary both within India and throughout the world.

My first chapter, "Re-Reading Rekhtah: Valī Dakkanī and the Origins of the Urdu Ghazal" takes up the thread of Urdu's precarious place in India within the logic of autochthonous national origins in order to closely read the narrativization of Urdu's linguistic and literary origins as a mix of Persian and Hindi language and aesthetics centered primarily in its historical "home" of Delhi. I focus in this chapter on Rekhtah--the historical name for both the Urdu language and the genre of Urdu ghazal that literally means "mixed" or "scattered." Poets from the 15th to the 18th centuries were actively involved in using Rekhtah to work out and explore the possibilities enabled by a productive mixing of Hindavi and Persian language and aesthetics, while also remaining invested in preserving the ambiguity in the layers of meaning produced by the poetic practice of Rekhtah. However, through the processes of canonization and narrativization begun primarily in the 19th century, we can see how various versions of the narrative of Rekhtah as Urdu's predecessor support conflicting claims about Urdu as either foreign or indigenous, natural or artificial, backward or progressive. By locating the "founding" of Urdu ghazal in different originary figures, including Amir Khusrau, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, and Vali, we can see how the story of ghazal becomes the story of Urdu, variously told; in this collapse between the language and its most prominent genre, we can see the significance of historical and literary narratives about ghazal in defining the very boundaries of the language of its composition. Similarly, by unreading the telos via which Rekhtah "becomes" Urdu, we can revisit Rekhtah as a destabilized idiom of translation that resists the nationalist reification of language and literature into discretely bounded entities.

Where Chapter One focuses on Rekhtah as a language in and of translation, Chapter Two, "Tazkirah and Narrativization," examines the process of generic translation in creating a canon for Urdu literature through literary history that then gets narrativized into a variety of genres and

media. I track the narrativization of tazkirah (poetic anthologies and biographies) into tārikh (history), as well as the fictionalization of historical narrative through other narrative genres like essays, short stories, and films; in so doing, this chapter provides an overview of the process via which historical and literary narratives come to define and canonize both Urdu ghazal specifically and Urdu literature as a whole textual body. Specifically, I analyze two mid-nineteenth century tazkirahs--one in French by Garcin De Tassy and another in Urdu by Karimuddin--that each claims is a translation of the other, and both of which translate the tazkirah genre into the burgeoning genre of literary history. I then closely read the translation of Karimuddin's text into a fictionalized historical novella written in Urdu by Farhatullah Beg, published in 1927, in order to demonstrate how closely the seemingly abstract national Urdu imaginary today mirrors the concrete textual chain narrating Urdu's literary history. By analyzing the discourses of literature and history (whether literary history or historical literature) as they replace and redefine indigenous forms of memorative texts like the tazkirah, this chapter demonstrates at length what Aamir Mufti elliptically states in *Forget English!*--that "to ask the question--what is the history of Urdu literature?--is to mask the historical violence of the question itself."⁴⁰

Where Chapter Two tracks the narrativization of the Urdu canon as a whole, Chapter Three focuses on the narrativization of the specific figure of Mirza Ghalib as the most canonical Urdu poet; in this chapter, "Urdu's Death and Afterlife: The Canonization of Mirza Ghalib," I demonstrate that the canonization of Ghalib and his work through literary and historical narratives translates historical events into events of national significance, thereby bringing Urdu literature and the Urdu imaginary as a whole into the service of the Indian nation. This

⁴⁰ Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 140.

nationalization of the Urdu imaginary has occurred through a triangulation between Hindi, Urdu, and English that reflects historical moments of tension between Hindu, Muslim, and British populations--specifically, the 1947 Partition and the 1857 Rebellion. The narrativization of Urdu ghazal has facilitated the retrospective "translation" of the 1947 Partition into the 1857 Indian Rebellion (and vice versa), where both historical moments of violence against Muslims are canonized, memorialized, and nationalized through the institution of Urdu literature, and especially through the tragic figure of Ghalib as a metonym for Urdu ghazal, language, and Indo-Muslim culture as a whole. By closely reading narrativizations of Mirza Ghalib that paint him simultaneously as historical person, literary persona, and personification of Urdu within the national imaginary, I show how moments of historical significance for the nation are recuperated via Ghalib's prominence as a national literary figure. Such a move necessarily invites a rethinking of the very operation (and definition) of translation.

Chapter Four, "William Jones and the Invisibility of Urdu," begins the second part of my dissertation, which will focus on how the national Urdu imaginary and its narrativization in India get translated on a global scale via the institution of world literature. This chapter likewise rethinks translation by demonstrating the pivotal role that William Jones played in the canonization of Urdu, despite his focus on primarily Persian and Sanskrit in his endeavors as an Orientalist scholar and colonial administrator in the late eighteenth century. Jones's work in creating the tradition of national literatures via the recuperation of languages and their properly autochthonous scripts mobilizes the discourse of world literature in which Urdu's use of Perso-Arabic script becomes evidence of its foreignness in India. At the same time, because English provides the linguistic and cultural system that underwrites the institution of world literature as it developed within the context of Orientalism, Anglophone translation and script play a key role in

Urdu's status as a nonnational language in India.⁴¹ I argue that Jones's legacy with later colonial administrators in the Victorian period, especially Charles Trevelyan, was co-opted to repress Urdu within the triangulation of English, Persian, and Sanskrit/Hindi; this desire to repress Urdu reflects a Victorian anxiety around the naturalization of English and the English literary canon within India. This anxiety around English not only sets the stage for the later triangulation of Urdu, Hindi, and English explored in the previous chapter, but also demonstrates the precariousness of autochthony as a standard for canon formation within the inherently heterogeneous cultural reality of India both before and during colonialism. This chapter also builds on the argument put forward in the first chapter about the reification of Urdu through a selective recuperation of Rekhtah by showing how the colonial standardization of language in India has occurred through both translation and transliteration.

In contrast to the vilification of script explored via the legacy of William Jones in Chapter Four, Chapter Five, "Ghazalizing Faiz: Oral Performance, Lyric Subjectivity, and the Mushaira Imaginary," demonstrates the ways in which the idealization of oral performance in the mushaira imaginary affects our reading of contemporary Urdu poetry within the context of world literature. This chapter examines the lyricization⁴² of ghazal and the ghazalization of all Urdu poetry in the 20th century through a reading of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's non-ghazal political poetry. Using the notion of lyric as a world genre to examine the translation of ghazal into lyric, I show how South Asia appears on the world stage through the mediation of these terms and forms. In

⁴¹ Of course, Urdu does become the national language of Pakistan, which also shapes suspicion around Urdu in India today.

⁴² I am indebted to the work of Yopie Prins and Virginia Jackson for the concept of lyricization, in which they argue that the ballooning of this genre to encompass all poetic forms constitutes a modern retroprojection of the lyric ideal onto antiquity and/or the Romantic period. For a succinct summary of the lyricization argument, see the Introduction in Virginia Walker Jackson and Yopie Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

this chapter, I focus on ghazalization--a term I use to refer to the ballooning of the ghazal genre to encompass and override all other genres within the Urdu literary canon--as a byproduct of the patterns of narrativization I have been tracing throughout the dissertation. I particularly emphasize the importance of oral performance--particularly musical and/or sung performance--to the worldwide circulation of ideas about Urdu as a language fundamentally defined by its most prominent poetic genre, which stands in stark contrast to the contested status of script in the national Urdu imaginary within India.

Finally, I will briefly demonstrate in the coda how the multiple linguistic and literary constellations that make up the Urdu universe come together when we read Urdu's place in India and the diaspora today. This chapter uses examples of popular media like mp3s and YouTube videos to focus on how contemporary oral performance of ghazal often comes to represent modern Indian secularism by providing a space for linguistically and religiously diverse audiences to appreciate Urdu poetry (i.e. Indo-Muslim culture) without culturally marked and exclusive signifiers like script. By drawing from fieldwork completed in 2012-13, I will show how the historical arguments I have been making play out today--both through the widespread popularity of fictionalized narratives about major canonical figures of "high" literary culture, like Ghalib, and through the popular oral circulation of ghazal in poetry readings (mushaira) and sung musical performance. In this final coda, I show that the historicity of the canonization of Urdu ghazal on the world stage is most clearly visible today in the circulation of texts within the mushaira imaginary.

Throughout the dissertation, by focusing on narrativization as the textual trace of the national Urdu imaginary, I closely analyze the works that apply historical narrative to Urdu texts in order to canonize them into a body recognizable as "Urdu literature," where Urdu ghazal

features as the defining genre within this textual body. Narrativization includes the translation of the genre of tazkirah into a type of historical writing through the insertion of chronology and homogeneous historical time; it also refers to the proliferation of fictional histories about Urdu, and especially Urdu ghazal, and the repeated slippage between history and fiction in both scholarly and popular understandings of this form.

Narrativization solidifies the Urdu canon in seemingly contrary ways--as both elitist and vernacular, historical and ahistorical, national and non-national, foreign and indigenous, backward and progressive, distinctly Muslim and virulently secular. Additionally, narrativization relies on the *triangulation* of Urdu and Urdu ghazal with other cultural traditions, so that Urdu is both made visible and rendered invisible through its relationship to proximate languages and literatures--including Persian, Hindi, Sanskrit, and English. Urdu's legacy as a "mixed" language--which, I argue, helps us think about translation as mixing rather than carrying across--has been appropriated in favor of a Western model of translation that emphasizes a binary of source versus target languages. This triangulation not only explains the contradictory aspects of Urdu's narrativization within nationalist binaries--of, for instance, autochthony versus foreignness, or elitism versus vernacularism--but also shows how Urdu repeatedly appears suspended between "pure" linguistic and literary traditions. The historicity apparent in these patterns of narrativization demonstrates how the Urdu canon exists in and through comparison, such that any serious consideration of Urdu literature must necessarily address these literary traditions with which Urdu intersects, and against which Urdu is often defined.

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CHAPTER I

Re-reading Rekhtah: Valī Dakkanī and the Origins of Urdu Ghazal

شیری غزل انگیخته شیر و شکر امیخته
در ریخته در ریخته هم شعر هم کیت ہے

*Shīrī ghazal angīkhtah shīr o shakkar amīkhtah
dar rekhtah dorr-i rekhtah ham sha'ir ham gīt hai*

Shīrī has created a ghazal; he has mixed milk and sugar
In rekhtah, the pearls of rekhtah (the scattered pearls) are both poetry and song¹
Mullah Shīrī (1586 CE)

In this verse, cited by scholars as an early foray into what we now know as Urdu ghazal, Mullah Shīrī composes a verse entirely in Persian, except for the Indic *radīf* (refrain), in which he reflects on the nature of the confluence of languages and poetic modalities exemplified by his work. This mix of languages, known as *Rekhtah* ("mixed" or "scattered"), forms an important part of the early Urdu canon; the word *Rekhtah* as the term for both the poetry composed in a mix of languages and the language characterized by this mixing came into use in the sixteenth century and continued as a term for Urdu and Urdu ghazal until the mid-nineteenth century.

Yet, as Mullah Shīrī's verse demonstrates, the nature of *Rekhtah* as a linguistic and poetic mode fundamentally resists the reification of idiom that has dominated both popular and scholarly understandings of Urdu language and literature since the nineteenth century. By imagining *Rekhtah* as both *sha'ir* (poetry) and *gīt* (song), Shīrī simultaneously references Persianate and Indic linguistic and aesthetic traditions, written and oral modes of performance,

¹ This and all translations that follow are mine, unless otherwise noted.

spoken versus musical modes of orality, as well as registers of language that span high and low, urban and rural. Furthermore, in the metaphor of *shīr o shakkar* (milk and sugar), Shīrī envisions the ghazal as a mix of both the substance of content and the sweetness of style. With these layered metaphors, playful punning, and remarkable appeals to aurality through assonance, consonance, and rhyme, Shīrī's verse exemplifies the productive possibilities of *Rekhtah-gūī* (a Persian phrase, meaning "speaking or composing Rekhtah") as a destabilized idiom that moves between linguistic traditions, registers, and modalities in order to produce new and "fresh" aesthetics.²

However, Rekhtah's productive destabilization of language--especially the ways in which language gets mapped onto particular nations and communities--is often interdicted through the existing discourse on Urdu. In other words, Rekhtah's widely accepted role as the historical name for and/or precursor to Urdu prevents us from fully appreciating the imaginative possibilities enabled by Rekhtah's resistance to linguistic and aesthetic reification. In direct contrast to the multiplicity of Shīrī's vision of Rekhtah, we encounter multiple popular and scholarly narratives since the mid-nineteenth century that support a vision of Urdu as backward, foreign, deprived, overly stylized, and elitist; ironically, this characterization of Urdu occurs at least partly through the various ways in which scholars narrativize Rekhtah's position at the origins of the Urdu tradition. This particular characterization of Rekhtah as the antecedent of Urdu occurs largely through the figure of Valī Dakkanī (1667-1707 CE) as the originator of Urdu ghazal; although poets like Mullah Shīrī had been composing Rekhtah since at least the sixteenth century, Valī's

² In Persian, a *misra'-i Rekhtah* also refers to a line of poetry that is pleasantly unmetrical, such that it appears "unaffected and uncontrived." This version of Rekhtah supports the notion that Rekhtah may be read as any sort of destabilized/nonstandard version of poetic speech. Many thanks to Nathan Tabor for this reference.

poetry is the first to achieve universal recognition and continued circulation within the historical narratives that have shaped the formation of the Urdu literary canon.

Indeed, every literary history of Urdu, from *tazkirahs* (compiled biographies and selected works from prominent poets) written in the nineteenth century to histories written in English in the twentieth century, devotes significant space to Valī's importance as a historical figure for Urdu literature. At the same time, these accounts of Valī's role within the canon of Urdu poetry are almost always limited to debate about Valī's biographical details and a few examples of his most famous couplets. While Valī is frequently invoked as an originary composer of Urdu ghazal, existing work on Urdu literature emphasizes his symbolism as a literary figure whose decision to compose in a "mix" of Hindi and Persian set off a chain of events that led to the glorious but decadent "Age of Urdu Ghazal" that begins with his *dīvān* in 1700 and ends along with the Mughal Empire in 1857.³ One consequence of this overemphasis on Valī's historical role in establishing the canon of Urdu literature has been the lack of any serious consideration of his poetry in the existing historical and literary scholarship. In what follows below, I will address this gap by closely reading Valī's poetry in order to theorize Rekhtah as a destabilized mode of language; this conception of Rekhtah is currently obscured by anachronistic retroprojections of a reified notion of Urdu ghazal onto Valī's work in the process of canonizing him as founder.

Envisioning Rekhtah as an idiom that operated historically prior to and ideologically against the reification of Urdu as we know it today emphasizes the necessity of comparative work in approaching the ghazal tradition in India. This dissertation as a whole contends that any study of Urdu must necessarily take into account Urdu's relationship to proximate and parallel

³ While this chapter focuses on the origins of this narrative with Valī Dakkanī, we will examine the narrativization of the telos of 1857 for Urdu literature in Chapter Three, "Urdu's Death and Afterlife: The Canonization of Mirza Ghalib."

traditions;⁴ however, this chapter will demonstrate how a comparative lens becomes all the more crucial when we examine the "beginnings" of the Urdu tradition because the distinctions between linguistic traditions in India as we know them today did not solidify until the nineteenth century. Indeed, positing "Urdu", "Hindi", and "Persian" as distinct linguistic entities in their modern senses when we examine early moments in what we now think of as Urdu ghazal prevents us from examining the complex and shifting idioms at play prior to the rise of these linguistic constructions. In particular, the association of modern Urdu, Hindi, and Persian with particular nations and/or religious communities anachronistically obscures the complexities of linguistic and literary production at the turn of the eighteenth century.

At one level, conceiving of the triangulation between Urdu, Hindi, and Persian as a relationship of translation would provide one possible comparative approach to these traditions and their various intersections. Yet the existing discourse of translation theory does not allow us to examine the linguistic robustness within South Asia precisely because theories of translation modeled primarily on European contexts take the association between language and nation as a given, while also resting on reified notions of languages easily recognizable as distinct. In this chapter, I put forth a notion of *Rekhtah* as an alternative idiom of translation that allows for the complexity of linguistic encounters in South Asia to remain intact, without implicit recourse to notions of linguistic nationalism; closely reading instances of *Rekhtah* and *Rekhtah-gū'ī* will allow us to suspend the accumulation of reified narratives around the nature of the Urdu language and literary tradition.⁵

⁴ In Chapters Three and Four, I will show how Urdu, Hindi, and English form one linguistic triangulation in the narrative of Urdu ghazal, while Persian, Sanskrit/Hindi, and English form another.

⁵ In a sub-genre of *Rekhtah* poetry referred to as *Rekhtī*, the "mixing" implied also includes gender mixing, which Ruth Vanita explores in her impressive monograph, *Gender, Sex, and the*

First, I will provide an account of the dichotomization of North Indian language--which I will refer to as Hindavī--into the modern languages of Hindi and Urdu beginning the nineteenth century; in describing this historical process, I will also emphasize the various contexts in which "Rekhtah" was used as a name for both a poetic genre and a language, while then demonstrating how this idiom has been narrativized as part of the Urdu tradition in three different twentieth century texts, each entitled *A History of Urdu Literature*. These narratives enact the ghazalization of the Urdu language by citing Valī and his *dīvān* at the origins of Urdu ghazal while also claiming that his work and its reception in Delhi led to directly to the Persianization that has ultimately come to characterize the Urdu language as a whole.

In the following section, I will analyze how Valī and other *Rekhtah-gū* poets engaged with the aesthetics of early modern Persian ghazal known as *tāzah-gū'ī*, or "speaking the fresh," while self-consciously resisting Persianate cultural dominance. In particular, I will demonstrate how the poetics of *tāzah-gū'ī* informed the rise of the Urdu ghazal, with Hafez in particular as an important conversant for poets of Rekhtah; at the same time, over and against the assertions of twentieth century historians of Urdu literature, Valī, like Mullah Shīrī, appropriates Persianate aesthetics without hierarchizing Persian over Hindi. By examining Valī's allusions to Hafez--a poetic practice known as *jawāb-gū'ī*, or "speaking an answer"--I will read his practice of *rekhtah-gū'ī* as an appropriative and transgressive linguistic mode.

City: Urdu Rekhtī Poetry in India, 1780-1870. Vanita emphasizes how Rekhtī's "mixing" disturbs, rather than reinforces, gendered binaries "like courtesan/respectable woman, mistress/servant, high/low language, and lover/loved" (3). Although I do not focus on gender here, Vanita's work on Rekhtī both inspires and complements my own examination of Rekhtah's destabilizing qualities. Ruth Vanita, *Gender, Sex, and the City: Urdu Rekhtī Poetry in India, 1780-1870*, Literatures and Cultures of the Islamic World (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

I will continue this thread in the final section, where I focus specifically on Vali's work and the vision of Rekhtah it puts forth. By close reading several couplets, this section brings together the two threads of argument running through this chapter: first, that Rekhtah, when narrativized as the historical name for or linguistic precedent of modern Urdu contributes to the ghazalization of the Urdu language; and second, that returning to Rekhtah outside of these pat narratives demonstrates Rekhtah as an alternative linguistic mode that helps both demonstrate and avoid the nationalist and communalist politics associated with Urdu today.

From "Hindi" to "Urdu" via Rekhtah

Any study of Urdu must necessarily account for its relationship to parallel linguistic and literary traditions in the Indian Subcontinent and beyond. This comparative lens becomes all the more crucial when we examine the "beginnings" of the Urdu tradition because of the manner in which Urdu has been narrativized as uncomfortably poised between Persian and Hindi. For instance, any narrative of Urdu ghazal and its origins necessarily includes a discussion of the genre's relationship to Persian, and concomitantly, its relationship to India and Indian-ness; one remarkable tendency in every account of the Urdu ghazal's origins is that any consideration of the form gives rise to questions of the nature of Urdu as a language, as well as either an assertion or denial of its fundamental Indian-ness.

This debate around Urdu as a questionably autochthonous language stems at least in part from the shifting terms used to describe Urdu and Hindi. Today, Urdu and Hindi are thought of as distinct linguistic traditions that, while mutually intelligible in some registers, stem primarily

from the Perso-Arabic and Sanskrit traditions, respectively;⁶ one of the ways in which the narrative of the radical divergence of these languages is conceived is through their differing scripts, where Urdu is written in Perso-Arabic script, while Hindi is written in Devanagari. These false linguistic histories for Urdu and Hindi provide a "classical" ancestry for these modern languages that correspond with the similarly inaccurate notion that Urdu is the language of Muslims, while Hindi is the language of Hindus. With the rise of linguistic nationalism in the nineteenth century, Hinduism and the Hindi language became narrativized as properly and classically indigenous to India--encapsulated through the slogan "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan"⁷--over and against Urdu and Islam as the foreign impositions of a series of Muslim empires in India stretching back to the twelfth century.

In reality, Urdu and Hindi in their modern iterations have been self-consciously dichotomized from a single linguistic antecedent that was the indigenous language of North India, variously referred to prior to the mid-eighteenth century as *Hindī*, *Hindūī*, or *Hindavī*. These terms were used to distinguish indigenous North Indian languages from Persian. In fact, one of the most defining usages of "*Hindūī*/*Hindavī*" as the authoritative names for Indic language

⁶ This claim, in addition to the history of the Hindi and Urdu languages that follows here, is based on a wide body of scholarship on this linguistic and literary tradition, including: Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997). Christopher Rolland King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in the Nineteenth Century North India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1994); Amrit Rai, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi/Hindavi* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984); Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001); Tariq Rahman, *From Hindi to Urdu: A Social and Political History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012). For a very helpful summary of the main points of these works, see: Christopher Lee, "'Hit It with a Stick and It Won't Die': Urdu Language and Muslim Identity and Poetry in Varanasi, India," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 15, no. 1 (2000): 340-44.

⁷ For more on this slogan and its history in Indian nationalism, see: Gyanendra Pandey, "'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'," in *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

comes from Amīr Khusrau, who is considered one of the founders of both the Urdu and Hindi literary traditions.⁸ Even five hundred years after Khusrau, as ghazal poetry that mixed Persian and Hindavī came into vogue through the wide circulation and success of Valī Dakkani's *dīvān* in 1700, this "Persianized," courtly, and urbane dialect was still referred to as Hindi, in contrast to "bhakha," which was considered the more rural and nonstandard dialect.⁹

As this urban dialect of Hindi received extensive court patronage and became increasingly associated with Delhi, the term "Urdu" came into fashion as a shortening of the phrase "*zabān-i urdū-i mū'allā-i shāhjahānabād*", which Faruqi translates as "the language of the exalted City/Court of Shahjahanabad, that is, Delhi."¹⁰ While this divide between urban and rural became more pronounced, especially after British interventions into colonial language policy, the gap between these two dialects--"Hindi" as opposed to "bhakha"--became mapped onto the newly created and standardized languages that we now know as Urdu and Hindi, respectively.

As Vasudha Dalmia points out, then, the self-conscious creation of a Modern Standard Hindi turned on the codification of an existing perception of an urban-rural divide that expanded to encompass a divide in religion, culture, and script:

Hindavī was neither exclusively the language of the Hindus, nor written only in Nagari, nor banned entirely to the countryside as against the more urbane Urdu. However, there was a larger percentage of Muslims in towns and this was increasingly to support the general conclusion, both in the self-perception of its courtly users in Delhi and Lucknow, as well as later in the circles of colonial officers, that the urbane speech was that of the Muslims written in the Perso-Arabic script.¹¹

⁸ I discuss Khusrau as a shared literary figure for Hindi and Urdu in more detail below.

⁹ Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras*, 152.

¹⁰ Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*, 25.

¹¹ Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras*, 160-61.

But if "Hindi" was the term used to distinguish the indigenous language from Persian, then the naming of Modern Standard Hindi represents a deliberate obfuscation meant to assert the historical continuity and autochthony of this language against the reality of Modern Hindi as a deliberate fabrication and retroprojection by British colonialists and Hindu nationalists.¹² In contrast, the shift from "Hindi" to "Urdu" as the term for the "non-Persian" Indic language comes to symbolize the de-indigenization of Urdu as unduly influenced by Persian's foreignness. The previous two chapters have examined the ways in which the desire to naturalize the English language in India led to a displacing of the anxieties around English's foreignness onto the Urdu language and literary tradition; this chapter demonstrates how the narrativization of Urdu's supposed artificiality also stems from the displacing of similar anxieties around the self-conscious fabrication of the Hindi language and literary canon in the nineteenth century.

Accounts of the gradual reification of the Urdu language, as well as its dichotomization from Hindi, reveal the pivotal role that ghazal played in defining Urdu, first in contrast to Persian, and later in contrast to Hindi. In particular, the success of Valī's ghazals as a mix of Persian and Hindavī has since been narrativized as an originary moment for the Urdu language in and through the development of the Urdu ghazal. Dalmia's argument that the response to Valī's *dīvān* included both imitation and standardization suggests that ghazal formed the contested terrain on which Urdu came into being as a language.¹³ And yet, if ghazal constituted the context in which Urdu came to be defined by a "mix" of languages, then this narrative only further emphasizes

¹² Ibid., 148.

¹³ Indeed, the phrase *zabān-i urdū-i mu'alla* referred to Persian--not Hindavī in any of its dialects or registers--until Shah Alam II's role in both patronizing and composing ghazals (under the pen-name 'Āftāb', or 'Sun') made "Persianized Hindavī"--i.e. Urdu--the standard language of the Mughal court, rather than Persian itself. Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*, 36.

Urdu's debased quality in contrast to the supposed purity of Hindi; indeed, the language of linguistic nationalism depends upon these very metaphors of mixing versus purity.

This metaphor of mixing gets deployed in the ghazalization and narrativization of the Urdu language through the term "Rekhtah"--a historical name for the Urdu language and Urdu poetry that remained in common parlance through the mid-nineteenth century, and which literally means "mixed". Faruqi writes that "[in] the North, both 'Rekhtah' and 'Hindi' were popular as names for the same language from sometime before the eighteenth century." However, the fact that the "spoken language was almost always referred to as 'Hindi'"¹⁴ suggests that the term "Rekhtah", by contrast, referred to a particular register or context of language not encompassed by the term "Hindi." In fact, "Rekhtah"--which means not only "mixed," but also "scattered," "poured," "dropped," or "the mixture of lime and mortar used for building activity"--initially referred to a specific genre of poetry, "the language of which either Hindi/Hindvi was added to a Persian template, or Persian was added to a Hindi/Hindvi template."¹⁵ Gradually, the word "Rekhtah" came to refer to either the genre of ghazal that involves this "mixing" of Persian and Hindi, *or* to the language characterized by this mixing; this overlap demonstrates that the Urdu language and the Urdu ghazal (as we know them today) have been conflated and mutually defining--a process I term *ghazalization*--even and especially through the term "Rekhtah."

In contrast to the arc of narratives that posit Rekhtah simply as the antecedent to modern Urdu, I will show below how Rekhtah--particularly in the way it appears in the work of Valī Dakkanī--sits in productive tension with each of the languages variously identified as Urdu, Hindi, or Persian, allowing us to imagine the relationships between these languages in unusual ways. First, however, I will show how the ambiguity in the term "Rekhtah" has allowed scholars

¹⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹⁵ Ibid., 117-8.

to understand the encounter of Persian and Hindi in various ways that have significant consequences for the extent to which Urdu may be conceived as a properly "Indian" language. Indeed, given that the term "Indian" was still in flux in these early to mid-twentieth century accounts of Urdu literature, Rekhtah becomes an important terrain for defining Indian-ness in relation to Urdu.

For instance, in his 1932 *History of Urdu Literature*, Thomas Grahame Bailey lists the following ways that "Rekhtah" might be understood:

1. It meant 'verse in two languages,' e.g. one line Persian and one Arabic, or one Persian and one Urdu. The earliest verse in north India was sometimes of this kind and was called rekhta. The name once given remained.
2. It meant 'fallen,' and Urdu, supposed to be fallen and worthless, received the name.
3. Urdu was called rekhta because it consisted of Hindi into which Arabic and Persian words had been *poured*.
4. It is a musical term introduced by Amir Khusrau to mean a harmonising of Hindi words with Persian melodies.
5. It means a wall firmly constructed of different materials, as Urdu is of diverse linguistic elements. This is the opposite of (2).¹⁶

Bailey's list self-consciously points out the inconsistencies in these various meanings of Rekhtah, especially in his deliberate flagging of the opposite meanings implied by Rekhtah as both "fallen" and "a wall firmly constructed." Each of these items also assumes the ontologically prior existence of the Urdu tradition, which must then account for a historical moment in which Urdu was known as "Rekhtah." For instance, Bailey's second definition of "Rekhtah" rests on a Hindu nationalist understanding of Urdu developed in the nineteenth century that he then retroprojects into a prior historical moment; this retroprojection is further supported by his anachronistic claim that "Urdu received the name [Rekhtah]," rather than the reverse. His first suggested etymology also rests on a tautology in which the term Rekhtah arose to describe Urdu verse because that was the current term; in other words, "Rekhtah" meant a verse composed in two languages,

¹⁶ Thomas Grahame Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: S. Sethi Publications, 1932), 4.

which is why it came to be applied to verse written in two languages--where Urdu is always already understood as an internally bifurcated language.

At the same time, the fourth definition hearkens to a much earlier origin for Urdu, which retroprojects not only "Urdu" but also "Rekhtah" into a moment in the thirteenth century in which Khusrau can represent both the Hindi and Urdu literary traditions. Citing Khusrau as a composer of Rekhtah at a moment prior to the historical currency of that term allows for a pluralistic vision of the North Indian linguistic tradition in the single antecedent of Khusrau as founder of both modern Hindi and modern Urdu literary traditions.¹⁷ The association of this early pluralism with the idealized space of oral, and specifically musical, performance also helps avoid the divisive issue of script in the fabrication of separate histories for Urdu and Hindi.¹⁸

Bailey also notes that "In Delhi, Rekhta continued in use down to the mutiny."¹⁹ With this rhetorical move, Bailey locates both the origins and telos of the narrative of Urdu ghazal in the use of the term Rekhtah--Urdu ghazal begins with and as Rekhtah, and continues as such until its demise with the 1857 Mutiny (explored in Chapter Two). On the evolution of Rekhtah within that timespan (roughly 1700 to 1857), he states that "polishing the language was really

¹⁷ Indeed, Khusrau is cited as an important foundational figure for Urdu in the most canonical literary history/tazkirah of the Urdu tradition, Muhammad Husain Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt*, from which most subsequent literary histories draw heavily. For Azad, Khusrau "used 'the salt of Persian' to season his Urdu; in fact, he and other early poets used Persian and Bhasha 'like salt and pepper, such that the language makes you smack your lips.'" Quoted from Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 140. Similarly, Ramchandra Shukla's canonical *Hindī Sāhitya Kā Itihās* cites Khusrau's work as the ideal representation of Kharī Bolī Hindī--i.e. the most widely spoken iteration of Hindī, which formed the basis of Modern Standard Hindi; Shukla also notes that Khusrau effectively used Braj Bhasha in combination with Persian in some of the verses that form the basis of the Urdu tradition. Ram Chandra Shukla, *Hindi Sahitya Ka Itahas* (Varanasi: Nagari Prachini Sabha, 1965), 55.

¹⁸ I focus on issues of script versus sound in Chapter Four, "William Jones and The Invisibility of Urdu" and in the Coda, "Oral Performance and the Mushaira Imaginary"

¹⁹ Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 4.

Persianising it; poetry became more and more artificial and un-Indian."²⁰ Again, this history of Urdu language and literature rests on the idea that Urdu in its ideal historical iteration consisted of a primary substance called Hindi, where that term simultaneously refers to the historical name for the North Indian language that we now know as Urdu, *and* to the contemporary name for a modern language imagined as continuing a pure tradition undiluted by Persian.

Similarly, Ram Babu Saksena opens his 1927 *History* with the careful and explicit proviso that Urdu is not just the language of the Muslims, but rather a "dialect of Western Hindi spoken for centuries in the neighborhood of Delhi and Meerut and is directly descended from Saur Senic Prakrit [...] which clearly points to its Indian parentage."²¹ In this account of Urdu's lineage, Saksena furthers his expressly stated purpose in composing his *History*, which is to promote unity between Hindus and Muslims by encouraging wide, cross-sectarian appreciation of Urdu literature. For Saksena, positing Urdu as a "dialect of Western Hindi" legitimizes the Urdu language as autochthonous through its subordination to the undeniable autochthony of the Hindi language; in other words, Urdu becomes a particular "dialect" within the larger and more legitimate--although equally fabricated--linguistic tradition of Hindi.

In reference to *Rekhtah*, then, Saksena notes that "*Rekhta* or Scattered (with Persian words) was coined by scholars to distinguish the literary language they used, from the colloquial, disdaining even to use the word 'Urdu' which smacked of the bazaar and rough uncultured armies."²² Saksena deploys the meaning of "*Rekhtah*" as "scattered," and extrapolates this to mean "Hindi scattered with Persian words"; this imagery preserves a notion of the language as

²⁰ Ibid., 40.

²¹ Ram Babu Saksena, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1927; repr., 1975), 1. This account matches both Azad's and Shukla's reading of Braj Bhasha as a dialect of Hindi that also formed the basis of what is now Urdu.

²² Ibid., 10.

fundamentally Hindi, with a smattering of Persian additions, as opposed to the creation of a new language created by the equal "mixing" of two distinct linguistic traditions. Saksena also distinguishes between "Urdu" and "Rekhtah," relying on the myth of Urdu as "the language of the camp"--a pidgin concocted by the Turkish- and Persian-speaking soldiers as a way of communicating in the army camp market. In other words, Saksena's (historically inaccurate) account of Rekhtah in relation to Urdu bifurcates Urdu's origins into the elite world of ghazal and the royal court, denoted by the name "Rekhtah," on the one hand, and the debased world of "colloquial" pidgin speech and the bazaar, denoted by the name "Urdu," on the other. When the term "Rekhtah" falls into disuse after the Mutiny, "Urdu" comes to signify both high and low registers simultaneously, reflecting the conflation of everyday speech with poetic speech in our understanding of Urdu today.

In direct contrast to Bailey and Saksena, who both attempt in varying ways to find a common heritage for Hindi and Urdu, Muhammad Sadiq describes the origins of Urdu ghazal in his 1964 *History* as follows: "The themes of Urdu poetry, its forms, its metrical system, its imagery and figures of speech are all Persian. Urdu poetry is therefore an exotic. With the country of its birth it has very slender links."²³ For Sadiq, Urdu ghazal's association with the Mughals necessarily implies its degeneracy even from its outset, and, since the Mughals were foreign rulers, their poetry was also necessarily and ineluctably foreign.

In fact, Sadiq never mentions the term "Rekhtah"--a significant exclusion in the history of Urdu that gestures toward Sadiq's discomfort with Rekhtah's destabilization of language and the discourse of linguistic purity. Indeed, even Bailey's and Saksena's characterizations of Urdu's history, we see idiosyncratic attempts to reconcile popular narratives and myths surrounding the

²³ Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1964), 14.

Urdu tradition with the discourse of scholarly, (pseudo-)philology. Each of these scholars grapples with *Rekhtah* as a slippery term that must be recuperated in support of nationalist narratives of linguistic purity that support the dichotomization of Urdu and Hindi-- even where the logic of dichotomization is explicitly recognized as false, misleading, and/or destructive, as in the case of Saksena. In the following section, I will provide a more historically plausible account of the rise of *Rekhtah-gū'ī*, as well as its transgressive possibilities, by situating this practice within the broader context of the early modern Safavid-Mughal aesthetic movement referred to as the *shīvah-i tāzah*, or "fresh style."

Hafez as Pre-Originary Figure: Urdu and the Poetics of *Jawāb* and *Tāzah-gū'ī*

In the previous chapter, we saw how Sir William Jones used his translation of Hafez's "Shirazi Turk" ghazal to provide a model for the reinvigoration of English poetry through wholesale borrowing from Eastern poetry and its themes. In fact, this very idea was prevalent in the Safavid and Mughal contexts two hundred years before Jones made his proposition for English poetics; using Hafez and other classical Persian poets to reinvigorate the genre of ghazal constitutes the primary aesthetic principle of the Safavids and Mughals in the early modern period--a movement referred to as the *shīvah-i tāzah* ("fresh style"). The *shīvah-i tāzah* stemmed from an overwhelming concern amongst Persian poets of the early modern period with acknowledging the vast and exceptional tradition bequeathed to them by their predecessors, such as Hafez (d. 1390) and Khaqani (d. 1190), while also contributing something "new" or "fresh" to the already overwrought genre of ghazal.

This aesthetic movement consisted of poetic practices known variously as *istiqbāl* ("welcoming"), *jawāb-gū'ī* ("speaking an answer"), *nazīrah-gū'ī* ("speaking the similar"), or

tāzah-gū'ī ("speaking the fresh")--the practice of writing ghazals using the same meter and rhyme scheme of a particular work, whether contemporary or classical. The *shīvah-i tāzah* also included the widespread use of allusion, including the recycling of particular well-known phrases or themes, in order to reference previous works. It was precisely through the revisiting of well-known or already used metrical, rhyming, and linguistic patterns that poets of the *shīvah-i tāzah* simultaneously paid homage to and moved beyond the classical tradition of ghazal.²⁴

Unsurprisingly, given the cultural cache and literary output of Persian poets in seventeenth and eighteenth century India, we find poets of Rekhtah also engaging with the aesthetics and conventions of the *shīvah-i tāzah*.²⁵ For instance, the "fresh style" placed a strong emphasis on the aesthetic value of ambiguity (*īhām*); this celebration of ambiguity becomes a key feature of Urdu ghazal, especially in the notion of *mā'ni āfrīnī* ("meaning creation") in Urdu aesthetics, which holds that a couplet's aesthetic value is directly proportional to the number of possible meanings one could derive from the verse. Furthermore, poets of the *shīvah-i tāzah*

²⁴ This summary of the "fresh style" and Safavid-Mughal poetics draws heavily from Losensky's introduction: Paul Losensky, *Welcoming Fighani: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal*, Bibliotheca Iranica: Literature Series (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1998), 1-16. See also: Rajeev Kinra, "Fresh Words for a Fresh World: Taza-Gu'i and the Poetics of Newness in Early Modern Indo-Persian Poetry," *Sikh Formations* 3, no. 2 (2007).

²⁵ Losensky summarizes some features of the *shīvah-i tāzah* as follows: "Most of these features [...of the *shīvah-i tāzah*] are direct consequences of an overriding concern for the startling and unexpected metaphor or turn of thought. Both inanimate objects and concepts are frequently personified, and concrete images often become elements of abstract thought. On the linguistic level, grammar and meter are pushed to their limits, and the sonority and niceties of poetic language are sometimes neglected. Under these circumstances, ambiguity (*īhām*) can flourish on many levels, syntactical, referential, and metaphorical. [...] Poets of this school often turned to colloquial language as yet another source of novelty, disrupting the long-established poetic lexicon and stock of topoi with popular idioms, informal usages, and folksy aphorisms. By the standards of earlier periods, these are perhaps stylistic lapses, brought about by ever more elaborate chains of poetic reasoning forced into the compass of a single verse; in the context of the fresh style, they appear as yet another manifestation of the new, another way of catching the reader's or listener's attention." Losensky, *Welcoming Fighani: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal*, 202-3.

often played with grammatical and metrical convention in the service of creating new expressions; they also often turned to colloquialisms or vernacular speech to "freshen" the discourse of "high" Persian often found in classical ghazal. In the context of these aesthetics, the movement from Persian to Rekhtah was a natural outcome of the *shīvah-i tāzah's* penchant for poetic innovation through acknowledging and stretching classical norms. In short, the *shīvah-i tāzah's* willingness to draw from multiple registers allowed for the entrance of a local and/or colloquial register of language that we now think of as Rekhtah: *Rekhtah-gū'ī*--speaking Rekhtah--was simply another form of *tāzah-gū'ī*--speaking the fresh.

As in the case of William Jones and English Romanticism, one of the most prominent Persian poets influencing the development of the Urdu ghazal was Hafez--and, also like Jones, one of the ways in which Hafez's work appears at the origins of Urdu ghazal is as the source text for translations into Hindavī. Indeed, because of both his own Hindavī compositions and his translations of Hafez, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (1580-1611 CE) is sometimes referred as an originary figure for Urdu ghazal predating or foreshadowing Valī Dakkanī.²⁶ Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah was the fifth sultan of Qutb Shahi dynasty in the kingdom of Golconda in central India, and is perhaps best known for founding the city of Hyderabad and commissioning one of India's most famous architectural monuments, the Charminar. As a poet, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah composed under the pen-name 'Ma'ani' or 'Meaning', and was extremely prolific, composing several hundred verses per day. He is credited with bringing Persian aesthetics into Urdu, primarily through his translation²⁷ of Hafez's *dīvān* from Persian into Urdu. Some sources

²⁶ See: Kāmil Quraishī, ed. *Urdū G̃Hazal: Hind O Pāk G̃Hazal Semīnār Meṅ Paṛhe Gãe Maqālāt Kā Majmū'ah* (New Delhi: Urdu Academy Delhi, 1987). Masud Husain Khan, *Mohammad Quli Qutb Shah*, trans. Mehr Afshan Faruqi (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1996).

²⁷ The word used to describe this activity in Urdu is *tarjumah*, which is the most straightforward word for translation in the general sense. At the same time, *tarjumah* also refers to

claim that he is the first "*sāhib-i dīvān*" of Urdu poetry, meaning he was the first to have a complete book of ghazals with refrains spanning the entire alphabet.²⁸

Citing Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah as a founder of Urdu poetry supports the narrative thread that characterizes Urdu as foreign, imitative, derivative, and unoriginal. For instance, Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah was an infamous imitator of all things Persian: in founding Hyderabad, he explicitly modeled the city after Isfahan, the Safavid capital; he is also as well known for his translations of Hafez into Urdu as he is for his own compositions. Narrativizing Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah as a Persophilic imitator and poet-translator reinforces the notion that the entire corpus of Urdu poetry both began and continued as a type of translation--where translation, like Urdu as a whole, is viewed as derivative, imitative, and unoriginal. Focusing on Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah as translator also reifies a notion of translation as the straightforward, one-to-one substitution of Persian words with Hindavī words, which captures neither the linguistic complexity of the Indian context nor the creative potentiality involved in interpretive and alternative modes of translation, including but not limited to *Rekhtah-gū'ī*.

"interpretation," such that translation always already implies an act of interpretation. Still, with Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah in particular, describing his translations of Hafez as *tarjumah* does not imply the same linguistic transgression that I argue is entailed in the discourse of *Rekhtah*.²⁸ A *dīvān* is a complete series of poems composed by a single author. The poems in a *dīvān* are arranged alphabetically by the last letter of the refrain word (*radīf*). A *dīvān* must be complete in the sense that the *radīfs* run through the entire alphabet--each letter of the alphabet must be represented by at least one poem with a refrain that ends with that letter. The difficulty of producing a complete *dīvān* makes the achievement notable, so that such a poet would be called *sāhib-i dīvān*, and this information would likely be recorded about him in *tazkirahs*, or biographical anthologies of poets. The claim of being the "first" *sāhib-i dīvān* for Hindavī (often in the sense of "proto-Urdu") is also made for other poets cited as founders of Urdu ghazal, including Masud Sa'd Salman of Lahore (1046-1121 CE), Amīr Khusrau (1253-1325 CE), and Valī. See: Sunil Sharma, *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Mas'ud Sa'd Salmān of Lahore*, Permanent Black Monographs. The Opus 1 Series (New Delhi: Permanent Black : Distributed by Orient Longman, 2000). *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sultans and Sufis*, Makers of the Muslim World (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005).

These oversimplified characterizations of Rekhtah--i.e. as a combination of Hindavī and Persian that resulted in what we now think of as Urdu--ignore the complex ways that poets of Rekhtah engaged with and negotiated the tensions between Hindavī and Persian in their work. In the following two examples, I will show how poets' allusions to and engagement with Hafez's "Shirazi Turk" ghazal demonstrate creative, multifaceted, and mutually influencing notions of the encounter between Persian and Hindavī represented by Rekhtah as an extension of the principles of *tāzah-gū'ī*. The relevant verse from Hafez's ghazal is as follows:

غزل گفتی و در سفتی بیا و خش بخوان حافظ
که بر نظم تو افشاند فلک عقدِ ثریا را

*ghazal goftī wa dorr softī biyā wa khūsh ba-khwān Hāfez
ke bar nazm-i to afshāned falak eqd-i sorayyā rā*

You have spoken a ghazal and strung the pearls, come and sing it sweetly, Hafez
For the heavens have scattered the necklace of the Pleiades upon your poetry

Besides the continued fame and wide circulation of this ghazal more than two hundred years after its composition, we can imagine several reasons why Rekhtah poets would engage specifically with this verse: the verse not only reflects meta-critically on what it means to compose ghazals, but also suggests the act of "scattering" (*afshāned*) as fundamental to that process. For those engaging with Hafez, re-imagining this scattering as "Rekhtah" could produce new and "fresh" meanings in the early modern Indian context; for the following poets, *Rekhtah-gū'ī* allows for the destabilization of language boundaries as well as the revitalization of the Indo-Persian poetic tradition through appropriative and transgressive responses to Hafez.

In a particularly stunning instance of early engagement with Hafez's verse in Rekhtah, with which I opened this chapter, Mullah Shīrī (d. 1586 CE) composes a ghazal entirely in Persian, except for the *radīf* (refrain), which is in Hindavī:

شیری غزل انگیخته شیر و شکر امیخته
در ریخته در ریخته هم شعر هم گیت ہے

*Shīrī ghazal angīkhtah shīr o shakkar amīkhtah
dar rekhtah dorr-i rekhtah ham sha'ir ham gīt hai*

Shīrī has created a ghazal; he has mixed milk and sugar
In rekhtah, the pearls of rekhtah (the scattered pearls) are both poetry and song

In comparing the "mixing" of milk and sugar to the process of composing in Rekhtah, Shīrī emphasizes Rekhtah as a "mixed" genre, using the unambiguous Persian word *amīkhtah* to refer to this mixing.²⁹ At the same time, Shīrī describes Rekhtah not simply as a mix of "milk and sugar," or even as a mix of languages, but as a mix of poetry and song that, in the contrast between *sha'ir* and *gīt*--where *sha'ir* is both Indic and Persian, while *gīt* is strictly Hindi--also implies a mix of elite and vernacular culture. The wordplay at the beginning of the second line--*dar rekhtah dorr-i rekhtah*--alludes to Hafez's famous comparison of the ghazal with pearls, while also allowing the meaning "scattered" to add to the imagery of mixing in Shīrī's description of Rekhtah. In addition, this phrase provides visual wordplay, since in the Persian script, *dar rekhtah* and *dorr-i rekhtah* would be identically written homonyms. At the same time, the incredible internal rhyme and assonance within the couplet provoke oral recitation--indeed, the Persian word *angīkhtah* means "to provoke" as well as "to create"--so that the verse also

²⁹ Notably, Muhammad Husain Azad takes up this metaphor when he describes Valī's Rekhtah as follows: "An example [that illustrates Valī's language] is as if someone had put sugar in milk, but it had not fully dissolved (*achhī tarah ghalī nahīn*): one sip is excessively sweet, one is completely bland; then in another, a sugar crystal [*misrī*] comes uncomfortably between the teeth." Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, *Āb-I Ḥayāt* (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdū Academy, 1982), 31. Note that Shīrī makes exactly the opposite claim to Azad: that Rekhtah represents the perfect mixture of sugar and milk, implying that language mixes in Rekhtah the way that sugar dissolves and merges entirely into milk; Azad appropriates this metaphor to insist that the sugar will always remain distinct from the milk--that the mixing of Rekhtah, especially as represented by Valī, is not complete, and its linguistic components (Persian and Hindavī) remain distinct. This metaphor is also addressed in: Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*, 140.

emphasizes a mixture of written and oral culture in the mixing of *sha'ir* and *gīt*. The remarkable combination of rhyme, assonance, consonance, allusion, and visual and aural wordplay within the short space of this couplet performs the "mixing" and "scattering" of *Rekhtah-gū'ī* while also providing a unique internal cohesion suggestive of a third notion of *Rekhtah* as a sort of glue, or mixture of lime and mortar used for building. In deploying these multiple meanings of *Rekhtah*, Shīrī's verse exemplifies the poetic possibilities of both style and content allowed for by the transgressive linguistic crossing of *Rekhtah-gū'ī*.

Over a century later, we find Valī responding to the same Hafez verse; Valī's *jawāb* to Hāfez verse appropriates the easily recognizable phrase '*eqd-i sorayyā* ("necklace of the Pleiades") in order to provide a response to Hāfez's poem:

سلونی سانوری پیتم تیرے موتی کی لڑیاں نے
کیا عقدِ ثریا کو خراب آہستا آہستا

salonī sāṇwari pītam tere motī kī laṛiyāṇ ne
kīyā 'iqd-i sorayyā ko kharāb āhistā āhistā

O dark-skinned beloved, your string of pearls
Has slowly ruined the necklace of the Pleiades

In Hāfez's verse, the phrase "necklace of the Pleiades" is deployed to indicate the value, skill, and beauty of Hāfez's poetry. In Valī's appropriation of this imagery, the extreme beauty of the beloved adorned with a simple string of pearls ruins even the beauty of the necklace of the Pleiades. Valī's first line uses markedly colloquial vocabulary; for instance, the word *pītam* is not only Indic, but is a colloquial iteration of the word *prītam*. In addition, his emphasis on the beloved's dark skin represents a pointed departure from Persian poetry's celebration of the

beloved's fair skin.³⁰ The combination of Valī's language and imagery use suggests his assertion of the primacy of Indian, as opposed to Persian, aesthetics: the colloquial *motī kī laṛiyāṇ* (string of pearls) puts to shame the Persianate *'eqd-i sorayyā*, suggesting by analogy that the seeming simplicity of colloquial poetry surpasses the affected beauty of Hāfez's language--a notion further emphasized by Valī's borrowing of Hafez's pearl imagery, while translating the Persianate *dorr* into the Indic *motī*.³¹

Furthermore, Valī's use of enjambment represent a stylistic anomaly within the ghazal tradition, producing a jarring effect because of its rarity, and thereby highlighting the Indic grammatical marker of past tense, *ne*. We may also see this shift in Valī's "translation" of the Persian marker of the direct object *rā* into the Indic marker *ko*. This example of *jawāb* emphasizes the act of appropriation by co-opting the metaphor of the necklace, while also demonstrating its linguistic and stylistic difference from the original via his use of colloquial language, reversal of tropes, and enjambment.

The couplet also helps to illustrate a central problem with the notion of "Urdu ghazal": the phrase "Urdu ghazal" implies its distinctness from its generic predecessor, which we now think of as "Persian ghazal"--and yet, both Shīrī and Valī defy these distinctions through their clear engagement with Persian aesthetics and language, which exists alongside their equally clear insistence on the value of the vernacular to the Persian tradition. These early instances of Rekhtah remind us that the traffic between Persianate and Indian cultural idioms was two-way;

³⁰ *Saloni* and *sāṇwari* are both words that indicate "nut-brown" or "dark" skin, while also connoting positive qualities such as intelligence, beauty, wit, and piquancy. In contrast, Persian poetry often focused on dark skin--and, by extension, Indians ("*Hindus*")--as dangerous or depraved.

³¹ *Sādagi*, or "simplicity", is also an aesthetically prized feature of Urdu ghazal; under this poetic principle, the more straightforwardly a poet can make a point or create an image, the more impressive the verse.

besides Persian's well-known contributions to the vocabulary of Indian vernaculars, Indian vernaculars also contributed significant vocabulary to Persian. Although it is all too easy to conceive of the "mixing" of Rekhtah as a simple confluence of two distinct languages--"Persian" and "Hindavī"--these couplets force us to reconceive of "Rekhtah" as a language moving so freely between these two idioms that the linguistic distinctions themselves become blurred.

Originary Figures: Amīr Khusrau and Valī Dakkanī Compared

One consequence of the narrativization of Urdu texts into a canonized body of Urdu literature has been the necessity to locate a specific origin for the Urdu tradition from which the narrative can begin. Scholars cite various poets as the "first" writer of Urdu ghazal--most often either Valī Dakkanī or Amīr Khusrau. As I will show, the symbolism of each of these figures as originary has varying consequences for the broader trajectory of the narrativization of Urdu ghazal--and these differences have partly to do with the very nature of Urdu as a language. Locating the origins of Urdu and Urdu ghazal in various ways reveals a range of symbolism associated with the retroprojection of a tradition of "Urdu literature" into an originary moment well before the idea of "Urdu"--especially with its contemporary connotations as a uniquely Muslim idiom--would have existed.

As mentioned above, there are two main figures who stand at the "origins" of Urdu ghazal: Amīr Khusrau and Muhammad Valī. While Valī and his practice of *Rekhtah-gū'ī* forms the central focus of this chapter, putting his work into conversation Amīr Khusrau's demonstrates how their varying roles in Urdu literary historiography reveal differing visions of the relationships between Urdu, Hindi, and Persian through the stories we tell about the genre of ghazal.

Amīr Khusrau was born in 1253 CE to a Turkish father and an Indian mother, and served as a court poet in Delhi, most famously under the patronage of the illustrious Sufi master Nizamuddin Auliya. With these biographical details, we can already see the symbolism involved in locating Amīr Khusrau at the origins of Urdu ghazal: he embodies the confluence of Turkish and Indian cultures through his mixed parentage, while his role in the Delhi court and in specifically Muslim devotional practice aligns with the later canonization of Urdu and Urdu ghazal as a Muslim tradition with Delhi as its literary center. In fact, Khusrau explicitly identifies his biographical origins as influencing his language of composition in two of his Hindavī verses that have survived orally: first, "I am a parrot of India if you ask me candidly / Ask me in Hindavī so I can answer you correctly"; and second, "I am a Turk of Hindustan, I answer in Hindavī / I don't have Egyptian sugar to speak Arabic."³² These verses explicitly link cultural and proto-national identity with language choice--an ideology easily co-opted by proponents of linguistic nationalism in the nineteenth century dichotomization of Urdu and Hindi.

Khusrau is also highly regarded by his sixteenth century successors of the *shīvah-i tāzah* in Persian, especially because Khusrau was known for his skill in producing couplets with a high degree of *thām* (ambiguity)--a highly prized indicator of literary value in early modern poetic practice in both Persian and Rekhtah. Even stylistically, then, Khusrau prefigures the aesthetics of the Urdu ghazal, while his canonization within the Persianate tradition further emphasizes Urdu's closeness to Persian, over and against its ties to India.

Khusrau is particularly known for producing three *dīvāns*--Persian, Hindavī, and Arabic--although the latter two are no longer extant. In some of his prose works, Khusrau mentions his Hindavi *dīvān* as a boastful demonstration of his skill in composition, even while the Hindavi

³² These verses cited in Sharma, *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sultans and Sufis*, 78.

poetry itself was not taken seriously by Khusrau's contemporaries as "literary" verse; modern literary historians speculate that the Hindavī's lack of literary value explains the disappearance of Khusrau's Hindavī *dīvān*. Despite this disappearance, however, Khusrau's verses remain popular in India via the genre of Sufi poetry performed to music called *qawwālī*; Khusrau's Persian and Hindavi verses provide some of the most well-known texts for these musical performances which are commonly performed throughout North India, Pakistan, and the diaspora even today. Again, Khusrau's symbolism as a founder of the Urdu ghazal tradition can be partly linked to the contexts of orality in which his work continues to circulate, as well as to the lacuna of the missing written manuscript of his *dīvān*.

Comparing Khusrau's and Valī's works demonstrates key differences in these poets' respective approaches to linguistic difference, revealing a historical shift in the language politics at play between the traditions of Persian and Hindavī. Significantly, both Khusrau and Valī use types of intermodal puns to work out the relationship between Persian and Hindavī that complicate existing models of translation as linguistic encounter; indeed, these linguistically transgressive intermodal puns illustrate Christi Merrill's suggestion that "[t]ranslation should be understood [...] as a performance in the sense of a 'telling,' as the act of passing along a text from one to the next, as we do when we repeat a joke or a riddle."³³ The emphasis on the act of speaking--*gū'ī*--in the phrases *jawāb-gū'ī* and *Rekhtah-gū'ī* in combination with the performativity of ghazal poetry and the orality of the pun are especially suggestive of the relevance of this notion of translation to our understanding of Urdu ghazal at the supposed moment of its inception.

³³ Christi A. Merrill, *Riddles of Belonging: India in Translation and Other Tales of Possession* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 43.

Valī's punning couplet points to the pun words' simultaneous existence in both idioms, while also emphasizing the extra meanings that obtain in the vernacular alone. We may see this emphasis on mixing even in his choice of genre: while the pun appears in the couplet of a ghazal, Valī also announces that he is participating in the genre of colloquial pun (*jugat bole hain*):

وہ یوسف کنعانِ دل کس کا رواں میں ہے ولی
جس کے زرخندان کوں جگت بولے ہیں چاہِ عاشقان

woh yūsuf kan'ān-i dil kis kā-ravāṇ meṇ hai, Valī
jis ke zanakhdān koṇ jugat bole haiṇ chāh-i āshiqāṇ

In whose (caravan/mind/text) is that Joseph of the heart, Valī
Whose dimpled chin they³⁴ have punningly called the (chin/well/desire) of lovers

The schematic translation above is meant to emphasize the two key instances of play-on-words which primarily produce the proliferation of meanings in this verse: first, *kis kāravāṇ* can be read as two separate words, meaning "what caravan", or as three words, *kis kā ravāṇ*, meaning "whose mind" or "whose text"; secondly, the word *chāh* means "chin", "well", and "desire".

Valī uses the well-known story of the prophet Joseph to make a pun that plays on the colloquial resonances of Hindavī that effervesce beyond the Persian. Because Joseph is believed

³⁴ Although I will continue to translate *bole hain* as "they have called", using the third person plural, it could also be first or second person plural ("we have called" or "you have called"). The first person plural is the most likely reading of these two alternative options, especially since, given that "we" is commonly used to mean "I", it would self-referentially refer to Valī's own punning--in other words the second line could read "whose cleft chin *we* have [here] punningly called...". I have not included the multiple readings of this verb conjugation in my count of nine meanings, and will only mention this ambiguity when necessary to a particular reading. Furthermore, while the full phrase *jugat bole hain* may be translated as "[we/you/they] have punningly called", the word *jugat* may also be read as *jagat*, which would produce the meaning "the world has called." This multiplies the possible meanings of the verse, which I also have not included in my count of nine meanings, but, for the sake of space and scope, I will not be considering the various implications of the readings produced by the *jugat/jagat* ambiguity in my explication of the verse.

to have been the most beautiful man ever created,³⁵ he has often been imaginatively described as having had a cleft or dimpled chin; in his verse, Valī alludes to this tradition of describing Joseph by placing the word *zanakhdān*, which unambiguously refers to a dimpled chin, alongside the word *chāh*, which also contains the meaning "chin". However, *chāh* also means "well", so that Valī's verse puns on these two meanings of *chāh*, comparing the dimple in Joseph's chin to a deep well. This second meaning allows for a further allusion to an episode in the story of Joseph in which Joseph's brothers, jealously and wrongfully perceiving their father's (Jacob's) greater affection for Joseph, decided to throw him in a well and wait for a passing caravan to find him and take him away as a slave, meanwhile telling their father that Joseph had been attacked by a wolf and killed. This story helps link the two lines of the couplet through the reference to a caravan in the first line and to a well in the second; while Joseph was taken away by a caravan after having been throw into a well, his beauty--and specifically the beauty of just his chin--metaphorically throws lovers (*āshiqān*) into wells of desire (a third meaning of *chāh*), where they yearn only to be picked up by the same caravan in which Joseph rides.

The first line also reads differently depending on whether we read the punning word as one word (*kāravā*□) or two (*kā ravā*□). Although the word *ravān* exists in Persian (meaning "mind" or "soul") as well as in the vernacular, the separation of *kā ravān* into two separate words relies on the Hindavī possessive preposition *kā* ("of"); in addition, the word *ravān* also means "text" in Hindavī, a meaning that it does not hold in Persian. In this sense, there are two levels of meaning that emerge when one reads the first line through a Hindavī lens: first, the vernacular allows for the separation of *kāravān* into two words, but remains purely grammatical if one

³⁵ According to a *hadīth* (saying of the Prophet Muhammad), Joseph was "the embodiment of half of all beauty"--in other words, he himself had half of all the beauty ever apportioned to man. See: Sahih Muslim, *hadīth* 309.

considers the meaning "mind", which exists in both Persian and Hindavī; and second, if we read the phrase through a purely Hindavī lens, we get the meaning "text" in addition to the separation of the word *kāravān*.

If we read the first line with the meaning "mind", we find Valī asking a more abstract question: in whose mind does a Joseph of perfect beauty exist? This reading also brings out the resonances of the notion of "that Joseph of the heart"--while the construction could straightforwardly refer to a beloved of such perfect beauty that he easily conquers hearts, it could also suggest a beloved with a heart, as well as a face, of perfect beauty. While Valī describes Joseph as the paragon of a kind and beautiful beloved, he also rhetorically asks who would be interested in the beloved's heart when he possesses such profound beauty that just his chin inspires lovers to jump into wells with desire.³⁶ In addition, if we read the couplet with the second meaning of *ravān* as "text", we find Valī emphasizing the cleverness of the couplet by provoking an answer before the question is fully asked--the "Joseph of the heart" about whom "they" have punned exists primarily in the very text before us. This interpretation is especially salient if we read the verb phrase *bole hai* in the second line as a turn to either first or second person ("we" or "you"). In the former case, Valī takes credit for the pun and for the fact that this pun exists specifically in his text; in the latter case, the second person would be a form of congratulatory self-address. Alternatively, Valī may be recontextualizing the the allusion to Joseph as a form of *jawāb-gū'ī*, and then pondering to "whose text" the Joseph trope belongs if it exist in multiple iterations and poetic contexts.

³⁶ For instance, in the well-known story of Joseph and Zuleikha, Zuleikha was so entranced by Joseph's beauty that she attempted to seduce him, even though she was married to 'Aziz, who owns Joseph as his slave. Joseph rejects Zuleikha's advances because of his righteousness, and Zuleikha, furious at his refusal, tells 'Aziz that Joseph was trying to seduce her. 'Aziz believes her accusation and puts Joseph in prison. Valī may be alluding to this story in suggesting that those who desire Joseph are not interested in the purity or integrity of his heart.

In contrast, Khusrau uses a genre of intermodal pun called *dosukhane* to play on the linguistic distinctions between Persian and Hindavī. The genre consists of two questions, one in Persian, the other in the Hindavī, while a single-word homonym answers both questions via its differing meanings in these two languages, as in the following example:

کوه چه می دارد؟
مسافر کو کیا چاہیئے؟
سنگ

Kūh che mīdārad? (Persian: What does a mountain have?)
Musāfir ko kyā chāhiye? (Hindavī: What does a traveler desire?)
Answer: *Sang* (Persian: "rock"; Hindavī: "companionship").³⁷

This genre provides a convergence of meanings in a single word that answers both questions and exists simultaneously in both languages--in fact, another Hindavī meaning of *sang* is "convergence". But even the term for this type of pun, which literally means "of two languages," suggests a total divergence of idiom: Khusrau's pun above suggests that the meaning "rock" belongs specifically to a Persian context, while the meaning "companionship" belongs to Hindavī, when in fact "sang" also means "rock" in Hindavī. The two-question format composed in different languages allows the answer to converge into a single word, even while implying that that each meaning exists solely in one language and not the other.

In contrast, Valī's placement of the pun into couplet form allows a single word to diverge and expand into multiple interpretations in the context of the verse. This allows the pun words--*kāravān* and *chāh*--to exist simultaneously in Hindavī and Persian while playing between their multiple meanings. By self-referentially invoking his use of *jugat*, which is a colloquial form of punning, Valī further activates the Hindavī linguistic context, even while the ghazal in which he situates the *jugat* gestures toward the Persian. Valī's couplet remains suspended between idioms,

³⁷ Sharma, *Amir Khusraw: The Poet of Sultans and Sufis*, 79.

in which the pun operates through single words that open out into different meanings--including readings that exist only in Hindavī and not Persian.

We refer to Khusrau's work in the colloquial idiom as Hindavī, rather than Rekhtah, for perhaps precisely the reasons indicated by this pun: the genre of *dosukhane* necessarily presumes the existence of two different languages, while Valī's use of *jugat* exists in a state of translation between these two idioms through the mixing that characterizes Rekhtah as a language and a genre. In this sense, then, Valī's position as "founder" of Urdu poetry serves to emphasize Urdu's difference from modern Hindi, especially because Valī's use of Rekhtah ties into the narrative of Urdu discussed above. In contrast, Khusrau's use of Hindavī and the ways in which he indicates Hindavī's separate-ness from Persian--via his composition of separate *dīvāns* and his use of *dosukhane*--are easily co-opted for the conservative Hindi establishment, who can ignore Khusrau's Persian output because it exists alongside his Hindavī work, rather than "mixed" with it. Citing Khusrau as a founder of Urdu ghazal emphasizes Urdu's indigeneity to India because it suggests that Urdu begins with "pure" Hindavī verse--which is separate from Persian verse--while also invoking Hindi and Urdu's common origins. Khusrau's use of *dosukhane* mirrors his role as an originary figure for multiple literary canons: three different linguistic traditions converge into the single figure of Khusrau, even while remaining distinctly separate in that convergence.

In contrast, Valī's use of mixed registers to pun in ghazal form allows for his "raising up" of otherwise degraded registers of speech through the literary finesse of his couplet. By conforming to Persian aesthetics via the use of ghazal and the prized aesthetic of ambiguity (*ihām*) while also deploying colloquial language to achieve this effect, Valī reverses language

hierarchies while creating an "in" audience for those fluent in both Persian and Hindavī.³⁸ We may think of Valī as "signifying" on the Persian tradition in the sense that his poetry is double-voiced, deploying tropes of high culture in order to simultaneously subvert them for an "in" audience that can read the double-voicing. It is precisely this sort of double-voicing in *Rekhtah* that I identify as an idiom of translation; it is also what contributes to the appeal of the narrative that names Valī founder of Urdu ghazal because it identifies the Urdu language as a whole as a rarefied dialect that only "elite" and/or "in" audiences can understand. In Valī's time, however, this sort of double-voicing may have allowed for a reversal of the hierarchy in which literary Persian stood above Hindavī and other colloquial usages, whereas today this same narrative is used to support the idea that Urdu is only "elite" to the extent that it eschews colloquialisms in favor of literary Persian.

Valī as the Founder of Urdu Ghazal

As I have mentioned above, Valī stands out as the poet most commonly invoked as the "founder" of Urdu poetry: although many poets chose to write poetry in Indian vernacular languages prior to the early eighteenth century, Valī was the first to do so successfully enough to make these compositions acceptable to the literary establishment, thereby inaugurating an epoch of poetry that we now know as the "Age of Urdu ghazal." While I will briefly outline the narrativization of Valī's founding of Urdu ghazal, this final section devotes significant attention to Valī's stylistic and linguistic innovations, with particular focus on *Rekhtah-gū'ī* as a destabilizing and non-reified idiom of poetic composition.

³⁸ See: Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Literary histories of Urdu, beginning most famously with Muhammad Husain Azad's canonical and pervasively influential *Āb-i Hayāt* (1880), approach Valī through his biographical details, focusing particularly on the unusual detail of his Southern origins, which require explanation since Delhi and Lucknow have acted as Urdu's literary centers since 1700. Indeed, although Valī was from the Deccan--though he has some connection to Gujarat--the language of his poetry closely matches the Delhi idiom. This similarity in language--along with a certain historical snobbery amongst Delhi poets as to their ownership of literary activity and innovation³⁹--has led to the myth, circulated primarily through the wide acceptance of Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt*, that Valī originally composed in Dakkani, but later switched to Urdu upon traveling to Delhi and receiving the advice of Shah Gulshan, a well-known Persian poet. Shah Gulshan is said to have suggested that Valī use Persian themes in his verse, and that he write in an idiom closer to the Delhi style of the vernacular; Valī supposedly returned to the Deccan, followed Shah Gulshan's advice by producing a *dīvān* according to his specifications, and returned to Delhi, where his *dīvān* took the literary scene by storm.

Some aspects of this story are accurate--Valī did travel to Delhi in the year 1700 and most likely met Shah Gulshan, and his *dīvān* did produce a furor for Urdu ghazal that thrived for 150 years, and which still continues today. However, as Shamsur Rahman Faruqi points out, this narrative was most likely fabricated to give credit for the idea of Urdu ghazal to the members of its literary center in Delhi;⁴⁰ Faruqi suggests instead that Valī had already composed his *dīvān* prior to traveling to Delhi in 1700, and that "it is extremely unlikely that Valī's poetry owes

³⁹ The notion of Delhi as literary and linguistic center is embedded in the language name "Urdu," since this term represents a shortening of the phrase *zabān-i Urdū-i mu'alla-i Shāhjahānābād*, or "the language of the court in the area of Shāhjahānābād," where Shāhjahānābād refers to Delhi.

⁴⁰ Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History*, 131.

anything to Shah Gulshan's instruction or example."⁴¹ Instead, Faruqi (and others) argue that the similarity of his language to the Delhi idiom stems from the fact that Aurangzeb had established a Mughal city at Aurangabad in the Deccan, to which many people from Delhi migrated; this accounts for the fact that "in the first half of the eighteenth century, the language registers of Delhi and Aurangabad were indistinguishable."⁴² Furthermore, I would argue that it is partly Valī's remove from the literary center of Delhi that allowed him to write innovatively in the vernacular and ultimately displace Persian as the primary language of poetic composition.

I have rehearsed the details of these apocryphal tales about Valī because these are the primary contexts in which Valī is discussed in the existing scholarship on his life and works. However, in this section, I will close read some of Valī's poetry to show how, rather than reading Valī within the discourse of Urdu and its origins, a more productive reading situates Valī's poetry within a discourse of *originality*. I have already gestured toward the importance of viewing Rekhtah as a transgressive, destabilizing idiom; here, I emphasize that Rekhtah's crossing of linguistic and literary traditions may be viewed as a type of translation. Thinking of Rekhtah as a translative idiom not only expands the body of translation theory beyond its generally Eurocentric focus, but in so doing moves translation away from the discourse of derivation and imitation. Indeed, in *Rekhtah-gū'ī*'s reliance on the "fresh" aesthetics of the *shīvah-i tāzah*, its translative qualities are precisely those that impart originality to the poetic texts. If Rekhtah allows for the destabilization of binaries--including high versus low registers, speech versus poetry, poetry versus song, Persian versus Hindi--this section emphasizes how Valī's work also destabilizes the binary of original versus translation.

⁴¹ Ibid., 138.

⁴² Ibid., 139.

For instance, in a couplet from one of his most famous ghazals, Valī emphasizes the uniqueness and originality of poetic discourse, explicitly referencing the practice of *jawāb* for the continued life⁴³ of poetry:

ہے سخن جگ منیں عدیٰ المثل
جز سخن نئیں دوجا جوابِ سخن

Hai sukhan jag maneiṅ 'adīm ul-misāl
Juz sukhan na'īṅ dujjā jawāb-i sukhan

In this world, poetry is without parallel
There's no response to poetry except poetry

The main point of the couplet--that only poetry can answer poetry--unequivocally voices the aesthetic principle of *jawāb* as a practice of original ("without parallel") translation that propels the discourse of poetry. A clear parallelism exists between the two lines, both of which end with compound constructions and begin with a monosyllabic word followed by "*sukhan*." Each line also centers around two words that exist only in colloquial usage: "*jag maneiṅ*", or "in this world"; and "*na'īṅ dujjā*", or "no other"--in fact, these two phrases would be considered a "low" register of colloquial language today. The presence of these words in Valī's couplet defies the urban/rural and high/low class binaries upon which the differences between Urdu and Hindi were mapped in the nineteenth century; the fact that neither of these phrases would be standard Urdu or Hindi today also suggests that for Valī, "Hindi" as it appears in Rekhtah could refer to a wide swath of languages, dialects, and registers that spanned regional and classed geographies.

⁴³ This phrase of course has resonances of Benjamin's famous essay, *The Task of the Translator*. While I do intend to productively allude to Benjamin's notion of translation as a sort of afterlife, my vision of Rekhtah's translative qualities approaches this idea specifically through the aesthetics of the *shīvah-i tāzah*, while also positing broader possibilities for linguistic and cultural destabilization beyond the pale of Benjamin's original argument. See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*," in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969).

In contrast to these colloquial phrases, the compound constructions at the end of each line--'adīm ul-misāl and jawāb-i sukhan--represent grammatical constructions that derive from Arabic, but have become so naturalized into Persian that their roots in Arabic seem almost irrelevant to their presence in Persian; nonetheless, these constructions mark a high register of speech that contrasts with the colloquial register of the central phrases mentioned above. By employing phrases and constructions that have successfully traveled from Arabic into Persian in conjunction with markedly colloquial phrases, Valī prefigures a similar process of naturalized borrowing into Rekhtah through the "unparalleled" vehicle of poetry--a process cut short by the interdiction of the discourse of Urdu, which, as we have seen, relies on the continued perception of Persian's foreign-ness in contrast to Hindi's indigeneity. In contrast to these nationalist constructions of the Urdu, Hindi, and Persian languages, Valī's use of Rekhtah debunks the importance of linguistic origins, and represents a further illustration of how Rekhtah may itself be understood as a unique space in which multiple idioms (Arabic, Persian, Hindavī) and registers (high, middle, and low) exist alongside one another.

In another couplet from the same ghazal, Valī mixes Hindavī with Persian in order to emphasize the significance of Rekhtah's possibilities for originality and freshness:

راہِ مضمونِ تازہ بند نہیں
تا قیامت کھلا ہے بابِ سخن

rāh-i mazmūn-i tāzah band nahīn
tā qayāmat khulā hai bāb-i sukhan

The road of fresh themes is not closed
The gate of poetry will be open until the Day of Judgment

The only words in this verse that are exclusively Hindavī (rather than existing in both Hindavī and Persian) are "*nahīn*" ("not") and "*khula hai*" ("is open"). These are the words upon which the

meaning of the verse turns: the refutation of the idea that there are only a limited number of fresh themes comes with the emphatic use of the Hindavī "nahiḡ", while further emphasis comes with the word "khula" in the second line. Grammatically and linguistically, Valī's use of Hindavī "opens" the "road of new themes" and the "gate of poetry," preventing this discourse from becoming stale. This couplet's emphasis on *mazmūn-i tāzah* ties into the poetics of *tāzah-gū'ī*; Valī's allusion to these aesthetics suggests that it is only through the "mixing" or "scattering" of Hindavī words that Persian themes in the ghazal can be renewed; indeed, Rekhtah's cultural importance stems precisely from its resistance to the discourse of linguistic purity.

Also within the same ghazal, Valī explicitly acknowledges his Persian predecessors such that he pays homage while also delivering a backhanded critique:

عرفی و انوری و خاقانی
مجکوں دیتے ہیں سب حسابِ سخن

'urfī o anvarī o khāqānī
mujkoḡ dete haiḡ sab hisāb-i sukhan

'Urfī, Anvarī, and Khāqānī
Provide for me all the standards of poetry

Here, Valī suggests an awareness that his own poetry must live up to the standards established by these Persian poets; his choice of poets further suggests his investment in the practice of *jawāb-gū'ī*, not only because he himself cites these Persian predecessors, but also because 'Urfī (d. 1591) is well known for writing *jawābs* to the poems of Anvarī and Khāqānī, poets who preceded him by roughly four centuries.⁴⁴ In this sense, then, it is not only these poets who individually bequeath the standards of poetry to Valī, but rather, their poetry along with its translation over time. Furthermore, the rhyme word *hisāb* allows for a proliferation of meanings

⁴⁴ Paul Losensky, "'Orfī Širazi," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Online Edition 2012). Valī has also composed a nazm as a *jawāb* to 'Urfī, meaning he uses the same meter and rhyme scheme.

and connotations in the second line of the couplet. For example, in addition to the implication that 'Urfī, Anvarī, and Khāqanī bequeath certain standards, this line could contain the meaning "Give me the charge of poetry," with an intentional play that matches the English connotations of "charge" as both responsibility and demand of payment; Valī plays on the monetary connotations of the word to literalize his indebtedness to his poetic predecessors. However, another translation of the second line might read "Give me the limits of poetry," implying through this secondary meaning that this homage to his predecessors limits his own possibilities for poetic innovation, or that he learns to exceed these poets' skill through his recognition of their limitations. Furthermore, in reading Persian as "limited," Valī implies the broader poetic possibilities enabled by the linguistic border crossing of Rekhtah; in this verse, we find Valī identifying originary figures for his poetry while simultaneously questioning and/or subverting the value of locating those origins in the context of Rekhtah's radical originality.

In a verse from another ghazal, Valī plays on the linguistic and geographical transgressions of Rekhtah by privileging his southern origins while also claiming that he has achieved fame throughout the Persianate world for his poetry, "despite"--or perhaps because of--his place of birth:

ولی ایران و توران میں ہے مشہور
اگرچہ شاعر ملکِ دکن ہے

*valī īrān o tūrān meiḥ hai mashhūr
agarche shā'ir-i mulk-i dakkan hai*

Valī is famous throughout Iran and Turan [Transoxania]
Although he is a poet of the country of the Deccan

Valī emphasizes his geographical distance from the centers of literary production, while also suggesting that his poetry successfully traverses that distance; he claims a place within the

literary center despite his biographical origins in a land "south" of these centers. At the same time, however, the only uniquely Hindavī element in this particular verse is the postposition *meiṇ* ("in"); even the word *hai* ("is") matches the colloquial pronunciation of the Persian copula *ast*. In other words, only a single word in the couplet distinguishes it as Rekhtah rather than Persian; Valī's claim suggests the striking closeness of the "two" languages, and insists on a level of mutual intelligibility that holds not only in the Indian context, but also in the wider Persianate spheres of Iran and Transoxania, especially because Valī evokes colloquial or spoken, rather than strictly literary, Persian. Given the proliferation of colloquialisms in poetry of the "fresh style", we may read Valī's couplet as an example of colloquial usage which complicates the boundaries between Persian and Hindavī through Rekhtah as a translative idiom.

By examining this ghazal, we can see the various ways in which Valī engages with the question of origins and originals: by using Rekhtah as an idiom of translation ideal for the practice of *jawāb*, or appropriative translation, Valī subverts the existing language hierarchy in which literary Persian supersedes colloquial registers and alternative languages like Hindavī. In insisting on the artistry of hitherto devalued linguistic registers and idioms, Valī creates a "fresh" idiom that follows many of the principles of the Persianate *shīvah-i tāzah* even while championing the local.

In taking a broader historiographical view of these moves, I have shown how Valī's questioning of origins allows us to maintain a productive skepticism toward linguistic nationalism, particularly because viewing Rekhtah as a destabilized, non-reified idiom makes it difficult to maintain the linear progression of the current narrative of Urdu's origins that moves from Hindavī to Rekhtah to Urdu. Indeed, within the dominant Indian nationalist narrative that defines Urdu against Hindi, Rekhtah acts as a disruptive Persianization of Hindavī that leads to

the artificial creation of Urdu, in contrast to Hindi's straightforward progression from Hindavī to its contemporary Modern Standard iteration. However, viewing Rekhtah's "disruption" as transgressive, translative, and productively destabilizing shows how Valī's mixing of languages, registers, themes, and geographies allows us to reconsider his work as de-centering "standard" language and the nationalist discourse of origins--whether for Persian, Hindi, or Urdu.

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CHAPTER II

Tazkirah and Narrativization

The history of tazkirahs reveals a more serious approach and a greater desire for authenticity and fair play as time passed. The earlier tazkiras, for the most part, confined themselves to notes on the poets and drew heavily on their predecessors. Subsequent writers enlarged the sphere of their research by including discussions on prosody, diction, and the history of the Urdu language, some of them discarding the alphabetical order in favor of the chronological. They also tried to establish contact with their contemporary poets, and obtained first-hand information about them from their friends and relatives.

We may say, therefore, that the history of tazkiras shows a steady advance in research; and what was once a pastime, a desire for personal recognition, or a means of expressing one's approval or disapproval, became a really responsible undertaking.

- Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (1957)

In his *Tabaqāt-i Shū'ara-i Hind* (1848), Karimuddin includes an entry on a young poet with the pen-name Tamkīn. Although the *Tabaqāt* is a translation of Garcin de Tassy's *Histoire de la littérature hindoue e hindoustani* (1839), Karimuddin adds this original entry to his text based on his personal knowledge of the poet. Karimuddin writes:

محمد یوسف تمکین ایک طالب علم مدرسہ دہلی کا ہے۔ اسی شہر کا باشندہ۔ طبع مستقیم اور ذہن سلیم رکھتا ہے۔ شوخ مزاج ملیح گفتار ظریف آدمی ہے۔ اگر اپنا تخلص نمکین رکھتا تو بہت اچھا تھا کیونکہ سوا اچھی طبیعت کے رنگ بھی سانولا سا نمکین رکھتا ہے۔ باروین رجب ۱۲۶۱ ہجری کو میرے سامنے اپنے شعر پڑھے۔ ان ایام میں اس کی عمر پندرہ یا سولہ برس کی تھی۔ اس سال میں کہ ۱۲۶۳ ہجری ہے مدرسہ میں سے بسبب اس کی معاد پوری ہونے کی نام اس کا خارج ہوا۔۔۔ عمر اس کی اب انیس برس کی ہے۔ شعر اس کی یہ ہیں جو مجھ کو باروین رجب کو سنائی ہے۔

Muhammad Yūsuf Tamkīn ek tālib-i 'ilm Madrasah-i Delhi kā hai. Isī shahr kā bāshindah, taba' mustaqīm, aur zahn salīm rakhtā. Shokh mazāj, malīh guftār, zarīf ādmī hai. Agar apnā takhallus 'Namkīn' rakhtā toh buhat acchhā thā kyūnke siva acchhī tabīyat ke, rang bhī sānvalā sā namkīn rakhtā hai. Bārvīn Rajab 1261 Hijrī ko mere sāmne apne sha'ir paRhe. Un ayyām mein us kī 'umar pandrah yā solah baras kī thī. Is sāl mein, ke 1263 Hijri hai, madrasah mein se ba-sabab us kī m'ād pūrī hone kī.nām us kā khārij hū'ā. [...]

*'Umar us kī ab unnīs baras kī hai. Sha'ir us kī yeh hain jo mujh ko bārvīn Rajab ko sunā'ī hai.*¹

[Muhammad Yusuf, pen-named Tamkīn, is a native of Delhi and a student at the Delhi Madrasa. He is a talented and brilliant young man, of joking disposition, easy speech, and sparkling wit. If his pen-name were 'Namkīn' [piquant, witty; also, "nut brown" in color], it would be most fitting, because besides an excellent disposition, he also has a wheatish complexion. On the 12th of Rajab 1261 AH, he came before me and read his poetry; at that time, he was fifteen- or sixteen-years old. This year, which is 1263 AH, he left the Madrasa because he had finished his studies. [...] As of this writing, he is nineteen-years old. Below are some of the verses he recited before me on the 12th of Rajab.]

Thereafter, Karimuddin gives several couplets for two of Tamkīn's compositions, which the poet had recited at a mushaira (poetry gathering) hosted by Karimuddin himself. Here, as is typical for the tazkirah as a genre of anthology/biography, Karimuddin not only preserves in writing some of the verses that had been orally recited in his presence, but also includes unique details about Tamkīn's life and personality that, like these particular verses, could only be known from his personal relationship with the poet.

In the second edition of his *Histoire de la littérature hindoue e hindoustani* (1870), then, Garcin de Tassy adds the following entry on Tamkīn:

*TAMKIN (Muhammad Yuçuf), natif de Dehli et élève du collège de cette ville, qui a eu d'abord à sa tête feu mon ami Félix Boutros, puis le Dr Sprenger, un de mes anciens auditeurs, et enfin Francis Taylor, tué misérablement lors de l'insurrection de 1857, est un jeune homme spirituel, d'une élocution facile et d'une brillante imagination qu'il applique à la poésie. Karīm fait observer qu'il aurait dû s'appeler Namkīn plutôt que Tamkīn, tant à cause de l'originalité piquante de ses pensées qu'à cause de son teint brun et de sa physionomie expressive. Karīm cite de lui plusieurs vers remarquables qu'il lui avait entendu réciter. Il n'avait que dix-neuf ans en 1847, et il venait de quitter le collège.*²

[Muhammad Yusuf, is a native of Delhi, and a student at the college of that city, who first studied under my friend Felix Boutros, then under Dr. Sprenger, an old acquaintance of mine, and finally under Francis Taylor. Sadly, he was killed in the 1857 Mutiny. He was

¹ Karīmuddīn and Maḥmūd Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu'arā-I Hind* (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdū Akādmī, 1983), 410-11. This translation and all that follow from this text are my own.

² Garcin De Tassy, *Histoire De La Littérature Hindouie Et Hindoustanie*, 2 ed., 3 vols., vol. 3 (Paris: A. Labitte, 1870), 215. All translations from this text are my own.

a witty young man, of easy speech and a brilliant imagination which he applied to poetry. Karim has observed that he should have named himself 'Namkīn' instead of 'Tamkīn', because of the witty originality of his thoughts, and because of his brown skin and expressive face. Karim cites a few of his remarkable verses that he had heard him recite. He was nineteen-years old in 1847, and he was about to leave school.]

The strangeness of this manner of marking the poet's age--what does it matter how old he was in 1847?--becomes clearer when we note that De Tassy has translated this information into his French catalogue of poets directly from Karimuddin. Yet De Tassy does not simply copy Karimuddin's remarks, but has followed up on them in light of the historical events in India that have intervened between 1847 and 1870; that such a promising poet died so young adds a certain pathos to this entry that could not have existed from Karimuddin's historical vantage point. De Tassy also chooses to exclude the sample of Tamkīn's verses--which would have been vital to the tazkirah as it has historically been understood--and instead elaborates on Tamkīn's biographical details based on his vicarious relationship with the poet via his friendship with the administrators of the Delhi College.

Farhatullah Beg takes up this nostalgic pathos in his mention of Tamkīn in the context of the pseudo-historical mushaira that he imagines as the pretext for his novella, *Dilli Kī Ākhrī Shama'* (1927). Beg writes: "Tamkeen is between fifteen and sixteen years old. He is a student at the Delhi Madrasa. He is endowed with the most marvelous sense of humor. When he talks words drop like flowers from his lips. He has delicate and fine features, rather plump limbs, and a deep wheat-colored complexion. When he reaches manhood, he will surely turn out to be a handsome man."³ After these comments, Beg proceeds to include a few of the lines that Karimuddin had recorded at the very mushaira that Beg, with Karimuddin as narrator,

³ Farḥatullāh Beg and Akhtar Qamber, *The Last Mushairah of Dehli: A Translation into English of Farhatullah Baig's Modern Urdu Classic, Dehli Ki Akhri Shama'*; with an Introduction, Notes, Glossary, and Bibliography, *Dihlī Kī Ākhrī Sham'*. English (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979). p.76.

imaginatively represents. Beg cleverly exploits the pathos of Tamkīn's death and the telos of the 1857 Rebellion⁴ as the putative "end" of Urdu poetry. His exaggeratedly flowery prose--"When he talks words drop like flowers from his lips," for instance--hearkens back to an imagined historical moment in which even every day speech approached poetry. Similarly, his comment that Tamkīn will be very handsome when he reaches maturity underscores the reader's knowledge that Tamkīn will not, in fact, reach full adulthood before he is killed in the Rebellion. Beg's text exploits the historical vantage point of his readers, who will necessarily read his narrative through the telos of the 1857 Rebellion; in Beg's work, Karimuddin's mushaira becomes Delhi's "last" mushaira.

De Tassy's mention of Tamkīn's death in the 1857 Rebellion underscores an important trend in the broader discourse around Urdu ghazal--namely, the commonly accepted idea that when the Mughal Empire officially ended in 1857, the ghazal died out along with the ascendancy of Indo-Muslim culture.⁵ As I argue in this chapter, marking 1857 as the telos to which Urdu ghazal has always already headed is not only a defining feature of the burgeoning genre of literary history--but also that in linking the end of ghazal as a genre with the end of the Mughal Empire, these narratives posit Urdu ghazal as symbolic of Urdu literature, the Urdu language, and even Indo-Muslim culture as a whole. This broad symbolism of Urdu ghazal--which even today conjures images of the decadent Mughal court and an aristocratic Muslim culture in which

⁴ Although almost all of the texts that I analyze in this dissertation refer to the events of 1857 as "the Mutiny," I will refer to it instead, in line with more recent historical work, as "the Rebellion." The term "mutiny," of course, negatively connotes a lack of loyalty toward the colonial state on the part of the rebels; the prevalence of this term in the work on Urdu literature is telling of the continued influence of the colonial moment on the Urdu canon. On the other side of the spectrum, some nationalist texts refer to the events of 1857 as the "First War of Independence," which anachronistically incorporates this historical moment into the logic of Indian nationalism. (For one example of this phenomenon, see the following chapter.)

⁵ I will elaborate on the importance of this narrative in the next chapter.

flowery Urdu compositions flowed from every tongue--not only bears historicizing, but in fact provokes questions about the very enterprise of history as it pertains to Urdu literature.

For example, how should we understand the relationship between these three texts? What do we make of Karimuddin including a new entry in a work that he insists is only a translation of De Tassy's text? And what of De Tassy translating and expanding on Karimuddin's entry to add to the second edition of the very text that Karimuddin translates? Indeed, while Karimuddin claims to simply translate De Tassy's tazkirah into his own historical work, De Tassy lists Karimuddin's tazkirah--which he insists is not a translation, but rather an original work--as one of his sources for his revised edition of the *Histoire*. And what do we make of Karimuddin as historian/translator becoming Karimuddin the narrator in Beg's adaptation of these texts into a work of historical fiction? How might we see these texts as shaping a linguistic and literary tradition coded as distinctly "Urdu"--and what is that specific designation made to represent?

This chapter examines this historical enterprise in De Tassy's, Karimuddin's, and Beg's texts in order to demonstrate how they play a pivotal but hitherto unacknowledged role in establishing these prevailing views on Urdu poetry. For instance, we may read the entries above such that the poet Tamkīn stands in for Urdu ghazal as a whole: he dies prematurely, along with the Indo-Muslim cultural milieu that produced and nurtured his talent, but not without having contributed something beautiful to the literary world--while, for us readers who participate in the modern Urdu imaginary, the image of that promising, sparkling, witty youth will remain fixed in our minds in this particular historical moment, where our knowledge of his impending death contributes to the pathos of his young life. At the same time, the prominence of Beg's novella as a source of historical knowledge about the erstwhile milieu of Urdu poetry prior to the Rebellion suggests the slippage between history and historical fiction in the narrativization of Urdu ghazal.

Beg's text reveals literary history and historical literature as opposite sides of the same narrative coin, both contributing to the process of ghazalization in India; in fact, Beg's work emblemizes the importance of fictional narratives as a complement to the totalizing yet incomplete ambitions of historical discourse.

This chapter asks: What can we make of these works as mutual, though contested, translations? What are the stakes involved in classifying these texts generically--as tazkirah, literary history, or historical fiction? How does history function as a critical concept that opens a fraught debate on the nature of literature in South Asia, and how does Urdu literature in particular exist at the crux of this debate? How does the opening up of this debate provoke parallel questions about the relationship between Urdu and Muslim-ness in India today? This chapter will address these questions by reading these texts closely in order to historicize three parallel processes: first, how tazkirah came to be understood, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, as a genre of literary history; second, how literary history itself came to be seen as an indispensable part of interpreting Urdu ghazal; and third, how fiction and history have intertwined to jointly produce the modern Urdu literary canon through the process of narrativization.

Urdu Literary History

The word "tazkirah" derives from an Arabic root meaning "to mention" or "to remember," so that the tazkirah is often understood as a written remembrance in a predominantly oral culture. It is difficult to find an appropriate translation for the genre in English (or, as we shall see, in French); scholars variously refer to tazkirahs as anthologies, encyclopedias, biographies, biographical dictionaries or biographical compendiums, or literary canons--but none

of these quite captures the notion of memory as the defining feature of the genre. In an attempt to correct this gap, scholars of Indo-Muslim history Bruce Lawrence and Marcia K. Hermansen suggest the term "memorative communication" to emphasize the importance of memory to our understanding of this genre.⁶ Yet, as we can see from the Muhammad Sadiq's comments on tazkirah excerpted in the epigraph above, the ambiguous nature of this genre in its relation to Western forms has sparked debates about the practice of history in South Asia, especially regarding the extent to which tazkirah does or does not fit the generic conventions of rigorous historical writing, and that the stakes of this debate over tazkirah consist of whether or not South Asian Muslims have entered into historical consciousness--where history is used as a measure of civilizational progress--as well as the extent to which Urdu poetry reflects and/or detracts from this narrative of progress.

In contrast to this Orientalist view of history, I explore tazkirah as a generic site for an indigenous notion of historicity, or effective history, that involves an engagement with poetic memory as the primary means through which poets and their audiences applied historical consciousness to the genre of poetry, and specifically ghazal. In other words, despite the canonization of tazkirah as sub-genre of literary history, this genre in fact forces readers to consider the historicity of Urdu ghazal--to consider the continuing relevance of past poetic compositions to the present moment. However, the rise of literary history as the canonical form of meta-literary discourse obscures the practice of historicity as a means of interpreting the past,

⁶ Bruce B. Lawrence and Marcia K. Hermansen, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications," in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*, ed. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000). I will return to their argument below in order to evaluate the usefulness of this term.

and substitutes historicism, or History-with-a-capital-H, in its place.⁷ I understand this substitution as a process of transcendentalization that occurs, beginning in the early nineteenth century, through a principle of generalized translation.⁸ By "generalized translation," I mean the idea that experience is fully commensurable with the expression of experience in language, or, in other words, the underlying assumption of the fundamental translatability of experience and language.⁹

This transcendentalization of historicity into History occurs through a parallel process of narrativization, which requires the introduction of an origin, a telos, and a subject or self into the realm of poetry and its reception. We may follow this narrativization through the gradual translation of the genre of tazkirah into a genre of literary history, such that the genre's emphasis on poetic memory morphs into an emphasis on poets' biographies and the history of poetry in relation to the history of the Urdu language as it develops in homogenous historical time. This gradual shift toward the importance of biography and linguistic and literary history becomes exaggerated with the marking of the 1857 Indian Rebellion as the "end" or telos of the age of

⁷ My use of historicity here is inspired largely by the work of Tejaswini Niranjana in her *Siting Translation*, in which she argues that historicity is a "radical presentism" that refers to "that part of the past still operative in the present" and allows for a conceptualization of history as "a process without a telos or a subject." Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translating: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 37-8.

⁸ In positing this trajectory from specific historicity to transcendental historicity--of effective history into historicist History--I follow Arvind Mandair's work in *Religion and the Specter of the West*, in which he defines "transcendental historicity" as "having history, being able to define 'what history is' and yet to remain outside of history in the sense of not being affected by it," and, furthermore, as that which "defines what it means to be Western as opposed to Oriental." In other words, the logic of transcendental historicity is based on a historicist logic that valorizes the objectivity of both the historian and the broader historical enterprise. Arvind-Pal Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 139.

⁹ Mandair also uses this term in his work on language and translation in colonial India. *Ibid.*, 104.

Urdu poetry, and hence, the beginning of history and biography (i.e. personal histories) as genres necessary to the reading of poetry.

At the same time that these texts dictate a particular notion of history and translation, they also posit the idea of the "literary" by defining an essentialized field of literature in relation to history, where history and literature mark the cultural and civilizational distance between West and East. Here, "literature" and "history" become mutually reinforcing terms that help to create the canon of Urdu ghazal as we know it today. This canonization occurs both through historical fiction, like Beg's *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'*, and through literary history--especially the proliferation of histories of Urdu literature written in both Urdu and English beginning in 1880 with *Āb-i Hayāt* and continuing through the present day.¹⁰

In a recent monograph, Aamir Mufti takes up the topic of the relationship of tazkirah to literary history, with a special focus on Muhammad Husain Azad's now canonical *Āb-i Hayāt*, which is known throughout the Urdu literary world as both the "last" tazkirah and the "first" literary history of Urdu, and has influenced every major study of Urdu since 1880 with its reformist bent. Mufti notes that Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt* not only disparages the very Indo-Muslim/Indo-Persian literary culture that had launched world literature one century earlier via Jones and Goethe, but does so at the very moment that it creates the tradition it purports to represent on the world stage. In other words, *Āb-i Hayāt* historicizes a centuries-long literary tradition for a language that only came into being as a distinct entity roughly 80 years earlier,

¹⁰ I am thinking here of the following English works, at a minimum: Ram Babu Saksena, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1927; repr., 1975); Thomas Grahame Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: S. Sethi Publications, 1932). Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1964). Annemarie Schimmel, *Classical Urdu Literature from the Beginning to Iqbal* (Wisbaden: Harassowitz, 1975); Ali Javed Zaidi, *History of Urdu Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akedemy, 1993).

producing "a *proprietary* account of the poetic tradition of a distinct language."¹¹ This historicization also allows for comparison within a hierarchized world literary system, such that the moment "Urdu" acquires a history as "the unique expression of a people"¹² (i.e. Indian Muslims), its literature is simultaneously understood as debased and backward. For Mufti, tazkirah functions within this "ascription of historical temporality to a body of writing as literature"¹³ by being "converted into an instance of the 'history' of a language as such and 'its' literature."¹⁴ Just as Urdu literature, and particularly Urdu ghazal, is painted as backward at the very moment it comes into existence as such via the historical enterprise, the tazkirah becomes visible within the Anglophone system of historical writing, mined purely for "historical" information and then discarded as "an insufficient and inferior attempt at history writing."¹⁵ In fact, he lists De Tassy's *Histoire* as one such example of a text that interpellates tazkirah as a debased form of history.

Indeed, in the following discussion of De Tassy's *and* Karimuddin's texts, we will see repeated examples of precisely these patterns of cultural assimilation in the movement from tazkirah to literary history. In fact, Urdu literary histories--such as De Tassy's, Karimuddin's, and Azad's, but also Anglophone texts like those by Ram Babu Saksena, Thomas Grahame Bailey, and Muhammad Sadiq--feature an almost compulsive repetition of content, including anecdotes or apocryphal stories about major poets, historical tracing of Urdu's linguistic roots, and the broader meta-narrative of Urdu's decline as both evidenced in and brought about by the ghazal's backwardness. In fact, these various historical narratives are played out repeatedly under the

¹¹ Amir Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 141.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

auspices of a broader notion of "Urdu literature" as a predetermined canon consisting almost entirely of ghazal poetry that is itself interpellated within the fraught terms of these very narratives.

However, my work here differs from Mufti's in four important ways. First, while Mufti explicitly describes his argument as a "historical (and critical) account of the Orientalist ascription of historicity to the linguistic-textual corpus of the North Indian vernacular,"¹⁶ what follows of my own work avoids historical argument per se, instead focusing on historicity as an alternative to historical work in attempting to grapple with these texts. Secondly, and relatedly, while Mufti astutely describes the broad trajectory of Urdu criticism and the mutually defining relationships between history, literature, and language, this historical work prevents him from closely engaging with individual texts (like Azad's) beyond general summaries of their content and context. In contrast, my focus on close reading allows for the foregrounding of the literary as the means via which historicity operates as a complement to History proper. Thirdly, though Mufti highlights the importance of translation in much of his academic oeuvre, this particular work on tazkirah and literary history does not explicitly use translation--whether linguistic or generic--as a framework for understanding the relationships between texts; conversely, this chapter expressly highlights translation between languages and genres as essential to and constitutive of the historical-literary complex surrounding Urdu ghazal. And finally, my focus on literary narrative beyond literary history broadens the field of relevant texts to include pseudo-histories like Beg's adaptation of Karimuddin's *Tabaqāt* into the novella form, which further demonstrates the complementarity of the disciplines of history and literature via their mutual

¹⁶ Ibid., 143.

imbrication in narrative, while also extending the notion of generic translation to include historical fiction as much as literary history.

In the next two sections, I will show that the canonization of Urdu ghazal as the defining genre of the entire body of Urdu literature and the Urdu language itself occurs at least partly through the appropriation and/or misreading of tazkirah as a genre of literary history. I will argue that the gradual process of narrativization of tazkirah that De Tassy's and Karimuddin's texts begin marks the advent of historicism and its relevance to literature effected by the translation of tazkirah into literary history.¹⁷

Memory to History: Tazkirah to Tārīkh

In his 1848 *Tabaqāt-i Shu'arā-i Hind*, Maulvi Karimuddin clarifies his understanding of the genres of tazkirah and history in a section of his Introduction (*Muqaddama*) entitled "Thoughts on the Difference between Tārīkh and Tazkirah" (*Bayān-i Farq-i Tārīkh aur Tazkirah*). Tārīkh, Karimuddin says, is that genre in which "the realities or circumstances of the time are written in such a manner that one can tell that in such and such time, this event or circumstance occurred."¹⁸ He explains that tazkirah is actually a sub-genre of the broader genre of historical writing (tārīkh), but only when the details of each person's time period (*zamāna*) are known; "if only his circumstances are known, but the dates [of his life] cannot be found anywhere, and it is unclear from the writer's details which time period the person lived in, then this [material] cannot be entered into a history in this form--rather, it will be kept in a section separate from the history itself."¹⁹ In short, he concludes, "in history, the discussion of reality

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¹⁸ Karīmuddīn and Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu'arā-I Hind*, 12.

¹⁹ Ibid.

stems from the time period, whereas in tazkirah, the discussion stems from a discourse on people."²⁰ Tazkirah, then, is a genre intimately concerned with memory and remembrance, and, for Karimuddin, specifically the remembrance of *people*; whereas history--even at the intersection of memory and history, tazkirah and *tārīkh*--is a genre fundamentally connected to the marking of time. Furthermore, unlike tazkirah, *tārīkh* concerns itself with "realities" (*haqā'iq*) as distinguished by the passage of time.

As Shamsur Rahman Faruqi points out in his article on the transition between tazkirah and literary history, there has been no dearth of historical writing in Arabic, Persian, or Urdu--the unusual aspect of Karimuddin's task is that history does not seem to have been a relevant practice for the realm of literature, specifically.²¹ In other words, we may find numerous examples of *tārīkh* in the same historical periods and languages in which we find ghazals; however, we do not find these two genres explicitly coming together until Karimuddin publishes his comments above. Faruqi explains this lacuna by relying on familiar tropes of the ahistorical Orient: "The main reason for the absence of literary histories in Arabic, Persian, or Urdu before the modern age is that present and past cultural production--literary production certainly--was viewed in those centuries as existing simultaneously: there was no past; everything was synchronic." Faruqi goes on to claim that "oral poetry does not recognize time"; that South Asians will frequently quote Persian and Urdu poetry in everyday conversation without regard to the "'modernity' or 'antiquity' of the poet being quoted"; and that because those steeped in a Muslim cultural milieu recognize the Qur'an as "the supreme exemplar of literary virtue," poets and other litterateurs and critics understand all literature as eternal because the Qur'an itself is eternal. In short, because

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "Constructing a Literary History, a Canon, and a Theory of Poetry," trans. Frances Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Ab-e Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Digital South Asia Library, 2005).

"all poetry is simultaneous [...] it never went out of interpretive reach. There was no need to bring in mediators from history to make sense of poetry."²²

Faruqi's comments here bring out an important problem with the current scholarly understanding of how history, and, more importantly, historical consciousness, functioned and functions in South Asia--that is, Faruqi, like many other scholars before and after him, equates "the presentness of the past" with "its essential indistinguishability from the present." However, I argue here that if Indo-Persian poets and critics operate on the basis of "the presentness of the past," then their understanding of literature--rather than being a- or trans-historical, as Faruqi and others suggest--coincides instead with the notion of historicity, or effective history. In misreading this indigenous notion of effective history as a kind of a- or transhistoricism, Faruqi--and perhaps more fatally, the many colonial scholars before him--relies, even if unconsciously, on a historicist argument that I suggest, following Dipesh Chakrabarty, "posits historical time as a measure of cultural distance that supposedly exists between the West and non-West."²³ Historicism--"the idea that to understand anything it has to be seen both as a unity and in its historical development"²⁴--begins to take hold in the context of tazkirah and the newly posited genre of literary history via two views of history that underwrite the broader ideology of historicism: the first is what Peter Osborne calls a "transcendental view of history", and the second, an "immanent view of history."

A transcendental view of history is what allows us to see a historical object "as a unity," and without explaining the exact relationship of time to history, nevertheless posits this unity as

²² Ibid.

²³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7.

²⁴ Ibid., 6.

an a priori assumption necessary to the enterprise of viewing an object historically.²⁵ In De Tassy's text, for instance, this aspect of historicism allows for his positing of an inherent unity in the notions of history and literature that form the premise of *Histoire de la littérature hindoue e hindoustani*: indeed, the very title not only suggests that "Hindavi" and "Hindustani" literature are commensurable entities--thus linking language and nation--but that this body of texts constitutes a unity that is both accessed through and created by the practice of history. The immanent view of history, on the other hand, allows us to see a historical object as "developing over time," because it makes "modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it."²⁶ Indeed, Osborne points out that the development of events over time implied in an immanent view of history "are quantifiable chronologically in terms of a single standard of measurement: world standard-time."²⁷ This immanent view of history, then, underwrites both De Tassy and Karimuddin's emphases on the importance of establishing a biographical chronology for each of the poets represented in their respective texts.

In short, in the shift away from memory and toward an emphasis on reliable, verifiable dates that can be established according to a "world standard-time", we see a concomitant shift away from the importance of effective history in understanding literary and cultural production

²⁵ In Osborne's words, a transcendental view of history is one that presupposes "the notion of a collective singular 'history'" on the basis of it being a "regulative idea implicit within the claim to objectivity of the historian's craft, as the unstated object unifying historians' activities and providing them with the horizon of their intelligibility." Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, Radical Thinkers (London ; New York: Verso, 1995), 32.

²⁶ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 7. Or, to reference Osborne again: An immanent view of history is the view in which the emergence of "world history" is itself a historical event brought about in modernity by the "spatial unification of the globe through European colonialism" and through the processes of global capitalism set into motion by colonialism. Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, 34.

²⁷ *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, 34.

in favor of literature's entrance into the realm of historicism. Counterintuitively, the move toward historicism as opposed to effective history in understanding literary production leads to "one of the classic moves of colonial discourse" which is "to present the colonial subject as unchanging and immutable";²⁸ I argue here that historicity allows for the idea of change in a way that the homogenous historical time of historicist thought cannot. For instance, Faruqi suggests that Muhammad Hussain Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt* fails in its attempt to track historical change in Urdu literature: "He [Azad] was trying to write the history of poetry in a culture that didn't recognize historical change in literature. He wanted to impose a pattern and an organizing principle on material that must have seemed inchoate to his modern (post-1864) sensibility. But there was no sense of history here, no consciousness of change [...]. [T]here was the natural resistance to change, or conscious recognition of change and an insistence on continuity, which is the hallmark of Indo-Muslim culture."²⁹ However, my argument here is that Azad's--and Faruqi's--"modern sensibility" is in fact his sense of historicism, and that any potential difficulty in identifying change over time may stem from their loss of the notion of effective history as a relevant mode of understanding literary and poetic production.

We see the confusion brought about by historicist thinking in Garcin De Tassy's *Histoire*, the text which Karimuddin translates in the first section of his *Tabaqāt*. In his Preface, De Tassy complains that it is impossible to verify the dates on which the samples of poetry given in tazkirahs were actually written:

En effet, comme je viens de le dire, les biographes originaux ne nous font souvent pas connaître l'époque où les poètes qu'ils mentionnent ont écrit; et quoiqu'ils en citent assez souvent des vers, on ne peut guère juger du style, parce qu'il a subi parla transcription des changements orthographiques qui les font paraître modernes, quoiqu'ils soient

²⁸ Niranjana, *Siting Translating: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*, 37.

²⁹ Faruqi, "Constructing a Literary History, a Canon, and a Theory of Poetry."

*quelquefois anciens. Pour les auteurs hindouï, on n'est pas fixé non plus sur la date précise des écrits de la plupart d'entre eux.*³⁰

[In effect, as I have just said, the original tazkirah-writers (les biographes originaux) do not frequently make known the era in which the poets that they cite have written; and although they quote their poetry often enough, one can hardly judge based on the style, because they have undergone orthographical changes through transcription that make them appear modern, although they may sometimes be ancient. For Hindavi authors, one neither establishes nor specifies the date of writing for the majority of these verses.]

De Tassy emphasizes the orthographical changes that have occurred as standardized spellings and styles of print in Persian and Hindi/Urdu change over time, and suggests that the process of transcription obscures the true date of a particular verse. However, implicit in De Tassy's assertion is the idea that "ancient" verses are so frequently re-contextualized in "modern" works that their "ancient-ness" is lost in this process of copying and re-copying--but for Urdu poets, the deployment and renewal of past verses in present contexts is precisely the goal of their aesthetics.

It is here that I would like to return to Marcia Hermansen and Bruce Lawrence's suggestion that we understand tazkirah as a form of "memorative communication"; they argue that tazkirahs are not "commemorative" in that they do not "recall the past for its own sake," but rather, they are "memorative" in the sense that they "[rely] on memory and remembrance to communicate with the living legacy of prior Indo-Muslim exemplars."³¹ Although Hermansen and Lawrence use their notion of tazkirah as "memorative communication" to argue that tazkirahs help to define urban space as marked with a specifically Indo-Muslim identity, I use the clear resonance of this term with Losensky's work on *tāzah-gū'ī* in Mughal-Safavid poetry to suggest that tazkirahs help support a notion of historicity already at work in the poetic production

³⁰ Garcin De Tassy, *Histoire De La Littérature Hindouïe Et Hindoustanie*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Paris: A. Labitte, 1839). 52.

³¹ Lawrence and Hermansen, "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications," 150.

of their time.³² By serving as "memorative communications," tazkirahs make memory, rather than time and its presumed relationship to history, the primary means via which the past is relevant to and intelligible in the present, making historicity the most significant mode of meta-literary discourse.

Tazkirah as Biography, Biography as History, History as Tazkirah: misleading titles, false starts, translation

To understand Karimuddin's translation of De Tassy's work, we first have to understand Karimuddin as a translator. In a short autobiographical entry at the end of his *Tabaqāt* that may shed some light on his position as a translator, Karimuddin explains, puzzlingly, that he has no interest in poetry whatsoever, and that he simply began publishing texts about poetry as a way of making money. As an outsider to Delhi who comes from a family of Islamic scholars, Karimuddin does not have much money, and struggles to even pay the tuition at Delhi College; his financial difficulties only worsen when he gets married. In order to support his family while remaining in Delhi, he opens a printing press, in which his initial aim is to translate difficult and obscure texts from Arabic into Urdu; he believes that if he sells them at a cheap price, the translations will gain a wide reputation, and he will ultimately be able to turn a profit. However, he writes that he was cheated out of this dream by some of his business partners, and his venture is a failure. At this point, by sheer coincidence, Dr. Sprenger, then principal of Delhi College and Secretary of the Urdu Society, asks Karimuddin to translate some texts; out of both financial necessity and respect for Dr. Sprenger, Karimuddin agrees to take on these translation projects.³³

³² For more on the concept of *tāzah-gū'ī* and the aesthetics of historicity in Persian and early Urdu ghazal, see Chapter 2.

³³ Karīmuddīn and Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu'arā-I Hind*, 468-70.

In short, Karimuddin's role as a translator of literary texts is ultimately based on his passion for translation in general and his struggle to make translation a profitable career. Karimuddin's frankness about the extent to which his work is driven by the market is certainly unique amongst tazkirah writers, and further underlines the increasing relevance of global capitalism to a realm of literary production that itself reflects a new emphasis on these global processes, including, as mentioned above, that of world standard-time.

The importance of the Delhi College context to Karimuddin's work as a translator is also key to understanding the "how," "why," and "who" of his undertaking of the *Tabaqāt* as a translation project. Gail Minault provides some important historical background on the Delhi College: "Delhi College developed a high reputation as a center of learning in the Mughal capital, and as an arena of dialogue between eastern and western curricula, carried out in Urdu."³⁴ Furthermore, Minault adds: "Its creative role included not only instruction, but also translation, publication, and popularization. [...] In the development of textbooks and other forms of scholarly prose, Delhi College was at the center of a major effort of translation, further evidence of its mediating role. This linguistic mediation involved translating texts into Urdu out of Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit for the oriental section, and out of English and other western languages for the anglo-vernacular section."³⁵ Minault goes on to note that the College's Vernacular Translation Society, also known as the Urdu Society, calls for teachers and students to write and/or translate textbooks for the College, printing them through local presses and eventually through the college's own press.³⁶

³⁴ Gail Minault, "Delhi College and Urdu," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 14 (1999): 125.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 126-7.

It is in this widespread translation project that Karimuddin becomes involved; at the same time that he must have been translating and compiling the *Tabaqāt*, for instance, he was also involved in writing a tazkirah of Arab poets at the request of Dr. Sprenger, who wanted him "to write a history and a few tazkirahs of Arab poets such that people will become acquainted with poets' lives and works. In doing so, this book will edify the people of India, especially those with a passion for history."³⁷ Karimuddin first composed this tazkirah in Arabic as *Farā'id ul-Dahr* and then translated it into Urdu (again at the request of Dr. Sprenger) as *Tarīkh-i Shu'arā-i 'Arab*:

جب اس سے فراغت ہو چکی صاحب بہادر نے ارشاد کیا کہ اس کا ترجمہ زبانِ اردو میں تیار کرتا کہ شعراِ اردو باشندگانِ ہندوستان کو حالاتِ شعراِ عرب اور ان کی عادت اور بود و باش اور فطانت عقل اور تصانیف کتب سے آگاہی ہو۔ اس لئے بندے نے یہ ترجمہ اس اصل کتاب موعلفہ اپنی سے اردو میں درمیان ۱۲۶۳ھ مطابق ۱۸۴۷ء کے تیار کیا اور نام اس کا تاریخِ شعراِ عرب رکھا گیا۔

*Jab us se (Farā'id ul-Dahr se) farāghat ho chukī, sāhib bahādur ne (Dāktar Sprenger ne) arshād kiyā ke us kā tarjumah zabān-i Urdū mein tayār kartā ke shu'arā-i Urdū bāshindagān-i Hindūstān ko hālāt-i shu'arā-i 'arab aur un ki 'ādāt aur būd-o bāsh aur fatānat 'aql aur tasānīf kutub se āgāhī ho, is liye bande ne yeh tarjumah is asl kitāb mū'alīfah apnī se Urdū mein darmiyān 1263 AH mutābiq 1847 AD ke tayār kiyā aur nām us kā Tārīkh-i Shu'arā-i 'Arab rakhā gayā.*³⁸

[When I became free from *Farā'id ul-Dahr*, Dr. Sprenger asked that I translate the text into Urdu, so that Urdu poets living in India might become aware of the circumstances of Arab poets, their lives, their wise intelligence, and their written works. For this reason, this gentleman translated the words of his own authored book into Urdu during 1263 AH (1847 CE), and he called this book *Tarīkh-i Shu'arā-i 'Arab (History of Arab Poets)*.]

As Mahmood Elahi points out in his introduction to the 1983 edition of Karimuddin's *Tabaqāt*, because the two tazkirahs--*Tārīkh-i Shu'arā-i 'Arab* and *Tabaqāt-i Shu'arā-i Hind*--were written at the same time, it is easy to see them as "different manifestations of the same impulse"--that impulse being the notion that tazkirahs are a branch of literary history, and that

³⁷ Quoted in Karīmuddīn and Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu'arā-I Hind*, jeem.

³⁸ Ibid.

the notion of literary history need be actively applied to Urdu literature.³⁹ Elahi further notes that it is precisely the leaders of the Urdu Society at the Delhi College who made Karimuddin "aware of a new style of tazkirah writing and the origins of literary history."⁴⁰

Karimuddin's *Tabaqāt*, however, was not compiled or translated at the request of the Delhi College Urdu Society, but rather, his own project that he wished to complete. In his *Dībāchah* to the *Tabaqāt*, he writes:

گرچہ میں یہ ارادہ کیا تھا کہ بہت تذکرے جمع کر کے اس تذکرہ کو فراہم کروں لیکن پہلے مجھ سے چونکہ دے تاسی نے زبانِ فرنچ میں درمیانِ ملکِ فرانس کے ایک تذکرہ ان تذکروں مفسلہ ذیل سے بہت اچھی طرح پر تالیف کر لیا۔ اس لئے اردو تذکروں سے جو اس کے دستیاب نہیں ہوئی اور اس کی تذکرہ سے مدد لے کر یہ تذکرہ میں فراہم کیا۔

*Garche main yeh irādah kiyā thā ke buhat tazkire jama' kar ke is tazkirah ko farāhim karūn, lekin pahle mujh se chūnke De Tassy ne zabān-i French mein darmiyān-i mulk-i France ke ek tazkirah in tazkiron muḥsilah zīl se buhat acchhī tarah par tālīf kar liyā, is liye Urdū tazkiron se jo us ke dastyāb nahīn hū'ī aur us ki tazkirah se madad le kar yeh tazkirah main farāhim kiyā.*⁴¹

[Although I had the intention of compiling a single tazkirah from many different tazkirahs, I first found De Tassy's tazkirah, written in French from the country of France--a tazkirah distinct from other tazkirahs, compiled in a most excellent manner. For this reason, for whatever I could not find in Urdu tazkirahs, I found help from De Tassy's tazkirah, and I compiled [my own] tazkirah.]

In Karimuddin's impulse to write a sort of universal tazkirah, we find further evidence of his historicist thinking applied to the field of literature: in compiling this tazkirah, Karimuddin would produce a text that discusses Urdu poetry as a unity complete unto itself--with a clear end and beginning--while also showing its development over time through his approaching the task as a "history" that establishes a certain chronology. Karimuddin felt De Tassy's *Histoire* had

³⁹ Ibid., che.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 8-9.

already fulfilled the criteria for such a tazkirah while also standing as a literary history that must have held a certain textual authority for Karimuddin given its production in Europe.

Indeed, given the environment of widespread translation of Western works into Urdu at Delhi College, Karimuddin had already been trained to look for authoritative works from Western scholars. Speaking about the power of colonial education to interpellate the colonial subject's means of understanding his world, Niranjana writes: "Even when the Anglicized Indian spoke a language other than English, 'he' would have preferred, because of the symbolic power conveyed by English, to gain access to his own past through the translations and histories circulating through colonial discourse. English education also familiarized the Indian with ways of seeing, techniques of translation, or modes of representation that came to be accepted as 'natural.'"⁴² Furthermore, while Delhi College was unique amongst colonial institutions of learning in its emphasis on vernacular instruction, the College's penchant for translation may also suggest a skepticism with regard to the value of original works in Urdu; the tazkirah of Arab poets that Karimuddin wrote, for instance, was first commissioned by Aloys Sprenger as an Arabic "original," and then as an Urdu translation. Karimuddin himself admits to his craze for Urdu translations of English texts: "When the Urdu Society started to commission, publish, and circulate Urdu translations of English books, I read every single one of these translations from English with full delight. Even to this very day, I have made sure that I will definitely read any translation from English that the Urdu Society commissions."⁴³ While Delhi College's unique blend of "Eastern" and "Western" education taught in Urdu flew in the face of the prevailing view in support of Macaulay's 1835 Minute and its unapologetic Anglicism, the College's turn to translation as opposed to teaching texts already available in Urdu perhaps suggests the

⁴² Niranjana, *Siting Translating: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*, 31.

⁴³ Karīmuddīn and Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu‘arā-I Hind*, 469.

administrators' tacit agreement with Macaulay's assertion that Urdu and other Indian languages were unfit "vehicles for conveying knowledge."⁴⁴ Or, as Arvind Mandair puts it, "through the efforts of the Orientalists, a regime of translation was instituted in which English was assumed to provide the very law of translation."⁴⁵

In the case of the *Tabaqāt*, although its "original" text is in French, not English, it seems likely--though it is never expressly stated anywhere--that Karimuddin accessed De Tassy's text through an English translation.⁴⁶ For instance, on the title page of the first edition--reproduced in Mahmood Elahi's introduction to the 1983 edition--we find the following:

A History / of / Urdu Poets / Chiefly Translated From / Garcan de Tassy's Histories de La / Literature Hindoustanie / By / F.Fallon Esqr. And Moulvi_ / Kareemooddeen with Addition.

شعرا اردو کا کذا مسٹر ایف فیلن صاحب بہادر اور مولوی کریم الدین نے گارسان دے تاسی کذا کی تاریخ سے ۱۸۴۸ء میں ترجمہ کیا اور نو سو چونستھ شاعروں اردو گو کے اشعار اور حال بھی داوین مختلف میں سے منتخب کر کے اس میں مدرج کر دیا گیا۔

[*shu'arā-i Urdū kā (kazā) Mister F. Fallon sāhib bahādur aur Maulvi Karīmuddīn ne Garcan de Tassy (kazā) kī Tārīkh se 1848 AD mein tarjumah kiyā aur nau sau chonsaTh shā'iron Urdū-gū ke ash'ār aur hāl bhī davāvīn-i mukhtalif mein se muntakhib kar ke is mein mandarj kar diyā gayā.*⁴⁷

In 1848, Mister F. Fallon and Maulvi Karimuddin have translated a (tazkirah) of Urdu poets from Garcin de Tassy's history and have chosen and included 964 Urdu poets' verses and their life circumstances from various divans.]

⁴⁴ Quoted in Minault, "Delhi College and Urdu," 126.

⁴⁵ Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation*, 91.

⁴⁶ Of the importance of De Tassy's French tazkirah to British colonial servants, Aamir Mufti writes that the *Histoire* is "the first literary history of Urdu literature and marks an odd conjuncture. This text, written by a Frenchman and in French, is nevertheless deeply imbricated within the structures of the British colonial enterprise in the subcontinent. First of all, it was sponsored by British colonial authorities, and a large number of copies were bought in advance of publishing for the benefit of colonial officers at various levels of the colonial bureaucracy--a debt acknowledged by the author in dedicating the book to the Queen." Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 135.

⁴⁷ Karīmuddīn and Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu'arā-I Hind*, baḥi He.

Elahi comments that while this title page suggests that the translation was a shared undertaking between Karimuddin and Fallon (an Englishman who was an Inspector of Public Instruction in Bihar), "Fallon's name does not appear anywhere else in the book."⁴⁸ De Tassy suggests in the introduction to the second edition of his *Histoire* that the text has been "borrowed by" and "given to" Karimuddin from Fallon --"*Ce qui m'a été emprunté a été fourni au savant musulman qui l'a rédigé par Mr. F. Fallon*"⁴⁹--which Elahi interprets to mean that Fallon translated the text into English before giving it to Karimuddin.⁵⁰ In short, although it is impossible to tell whether or not Karimuddin knew French, we can assume based on his education at Delhi College that he had a working knowledge of English, and, in a further leap, that he likely accessed De Tassy's French text via Fallon's English translation, although this English translation is never explicitly mentioned as having existed.⁵¹

As Arvind Mandair reminds us, the notion of generalized translation necessitates that English operates as the invisible standard through which Indian languages are brought into being.⁵² In this case, where Fallon's English translation remains a textual lacuna that Karimuddin

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ De Tassy, *Histoire De La Littérature Hindouie Et Hindoustanie*, 3.

⁵⁰ Karīmuddīn and Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu‘arā-I Hind*, baRi He.

⁵¹ In his entry on himself in his *Ṭabaqāt*, Karimuddin includes a list of his works, the last of which is *Tarjumah-i Kitāb-i Dāktarī*. He notes that this work is a translation into Urdu from Arabic, but that the Arabic text was itself a translation from French undertaken by Vālī Masr Muhammad Ali Shāh. Again, while this does not provide conclusive evidence that Karimuddin does not read French, it is another example of his accessing and translating a text that has itself been translated from French. Ibid., 473.

⁵² Mandair writes: "The operation of this law [of generalized translation] depended on the presence of the Englishman or Orientalist who could bring Indian languages and English into virtual 'contact' through the schema of co-figuration. Once this virtual 'contact' was created, it was necessary for all linguistic relations and transactions to begin with a silent invocation of English as a standard [...]. English had therefore already assumed its place as language-in-general, and therefore as the origin and end of every transaction, compared to which other languages could only be particular languages. The spoken languages of India were charged with

never explicitly acknowledges as having existed, the English text is literally invisible, even though the Englishman's name on the title page of the Urdu work reasserts the context of colonial intervention and authority that made Karimuddin's text possible. If the schema of generalized translation in India operates such that English is the "origin and the end of every transaction,"⁵³ then History's concomitant emphasis on both origin and telos provides the perfect means through which this schema can be enacted.

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. De Tassy's *Histoire*, for instance, is arranged alphabetically like most traditional tazkirahs, rather than chronologically as one might expect of a history. De Tassy explains his choice in the introduction to the first volume of *Histoire*:

*Les biographies originales qui ont servi de base à mon travail sont toutes rangées par ordre alphabétique. J'ai suivi cet exemple, quoique mon premier dessein eût été d'adopter l'ordre chronologique: et, je ne le dissimule pas, cet ordre aurait été peut-être préférable, ou du moins plus conforme au titre que j'ai donné à mon ouvrage; mais il aurait été difficile de l'adopter à cause de l'insuffisance des renseignements que j'ai eus à ma disposition.*⁵⁴

The tazkirahs (*biographies originales*) that have served as the basis of my work are all arranged alphabetically. I have followed their example, although my first intention was to adopt chronological order--and I do not want to hide the fact that that arrangement would have been preferable, *or at least it would have been more suited to the title I have given my book*--but it has been difficult given the incomplete information I have had at my disposal. [Emphasis mine.]

the task of recovering their mother tongues *as compared to English*." Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation*, 91-2.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ De Tassy, *Histoire De La Littérature Hindouie Et Hindoustanie*, 1. Emphasis mine.

De Tassy, then, points out the discrepancy between the generic expectations established by his titling the work a "History"--which would include an established chronology of events and persons--and the organization of the text itself, which focuses instead on including as many biographies of poets as possible, regardless of their relationship to one another in homogenous historical time. Nonetheless, De Tassy's Preface includes a narrative history of the Urdu language, with a special focus on its origins in Braj Bhasha and the later Islamicization of Braj via the Mughals' introduction of the "Muslim" languages of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.⁵⁵

Despite the alphabetical arrangement of De Tassy's text, however, his broad understanding of tazkirah as a genre of biography is what facilitates the further leap to his reading tazkirah as history. In the above passage, for instance, De Tassy translates the word *tazkirah* into French as *biographies originales*, which already suggests that he thinks of the tazkirahs he uses as engaging in a biographical endeavor that should include historical narratives of a poet's life and works. In fact, he insists on this understanding of tazkirah over and against his avowed realization that tazkirahs do not actually satisfy this generic expectation:

Malheureusement ces tazkira sont rédigés d'une manière bien peu satisfaisante. Souvent on ne donne que le nom des poètes dont il est parlé et quelques vers extraits de leurs ouvrages comme spécimen de leur talent. Dans les notices les plus étendues, on ne trouve presque jamais la date de leur naissance, rarement celle de leur mort, et des détails sur leur vie privée. On ne dit rien presque jamais non plus de leurs ouvrages, on n'en donne pas même les titres [...]. La principale utilité de ces tazkira, c'est qu'ils offrent de nombreux fragments de poètes dont les ouvrages sont inconnus en Europe.

Unfortunately, these tazkirahs are written in a manner hardly acceptable. They usually give nothing more than the name of the poet of whom they are speaking and a few extraneous verses of their work as a specimen of their talent. In the most extensive entries, one can hardly ever find their date of birth, rarer still their date of death or details of their private lives. They hardly ever say anything more than their works, and nothing more

⁵⁵ My previous chapter explores this phenomenon in Urdu literary history of conflating the linguistic and literary origins of Urdu.

than their titles [...]. The principle use of these tazkirahs is that they offer a number of poetic fragments in their works that are unknown in Europe.⁵⁶

Here, De Tassy avoids translating the word *tazkirah*, instead choosing to borrow it into French, perhaps because the passage itself avers the explicit lack of biographical information in the genre of tazkirah. On the other hand, De Tassy adeptly identifies the "principal use" of tazkirah as it would have been understood prior to the narrativization of the genre in which he himself plays a significant role--that is, its recording of verses, especially unknown or unusual ones, for the benefit of readers of poetry, whether in Europe, India, or elsewhere.

In the *Tabaqāt*, Karimuddin turns to the strategy of explicit quotation in his translation of this passage; he writes:

دے تاسی کہتا ہے کہ تذکرہ میں بہت کوشش سے فراہم کر کے اپنا ایک تذکرہ زبانِ فرنچ میں جمع کیا،
الا یہ سب تذکرہ میری پسند نہیں۔ کیونکہ یہ سب تذکرے ایسی طرح لکھے گئے ہیں کہ کچھ ان سے
تسلّی نہیں ہوتی۔ اکثر جائی ان میں نام شعرا کا اور کچھ انتخاب اشعار کا لکھا ہے اور حالاتِ خانگی
ان کی بہت کم لکھی۔ تصنیفات کا ذکر بھی بہت کم ہے اور یہ بھی بہت کم لکھا ہے۔

*De Tassy kehtā hai ke "Tazkirah main buhat koshish se farāhim kar ke apnā ek tazkirah zabān-i French mein jama' kiyā, illā yeh sab tazkirah merī pasand nahīn. Kyūnke yeh sab tazkire aisī tarah likhe ga'e hain ke kuchh in se tasallī nahīn hotī. Aksar jā'ī un mein nām shu'arā ka aur kuchh intikhāb ish'ār ka likhā hai, aur hālāt-i khānagī un kī buhat kam likhī. Tasnīfāt kā zikr bhī buhat kam hai aur yeh bhī buhat kam likhā hai."*⁵⁷

[De Tassy says, "I have compiled a tazkirah in the French language after a great deal of effort in bringing together other tazkirahs. But I do not like any of these other tazkirahs because they are all written such that one gets no satisfaction from them--most of them give only the name of the poet and a few selected verses, and the circumstances of his personal life are very rarely written. A poet's works are also very infrequently mentioned."]

Elsewhere in the Introduction, Karimuddin simply translates De Tassy's words into Urdu without explicitly marking that he is doing so (beyond what the title page has indicated to readers as far as the work being a translated one), so that his explicit mention of De Tassy and the use of

⁵⁶ De Tassy, *Histoire De La Littérature Hindouie Et Hindoustanie*, 1.

⁵⁷ Karīmuddīn and Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu'arā-I Hind*, 9-10.

quotation as a translation strategy highlight Karimuddin's mediation as a translator while also emphasizing these ideas as De Tassy's. He does not, however, include De Tassy's comment about the "principal use of tazkirah" being its recording of "unknown verses," whether for European or Indian edification, and instead chooses to focus on the shortcomings of the existing tazkirah tradition vis-à-vis its relation to the genre of history. At the same time, Karimuddin explicitly interpellates De Tassy's text by referring to it as a tazkirah ("De Tassy says, 'I have compiled a tazkirah in the French language..."), whereas De Tassy avoids any such specification about his own text. Even in Karimuddin's time, then--or perhaps because of Karimuddin--De Tassy's *Histoire* was understood as a tazkirah, against its (only partially realized) ambitions of approaching history through an emphasis on biography; this tradition of reading De Tassy's *Histoire* as tazkirah continues into the present day.⁵⁸

But Karimuddin's text not only allows us to think of De Tassy's text as a tazkirah, but, more broadly, forces readers to collapse the genre of tazkirah into the broader genre of history, even beyond the explicit arguments he makes to that effect in his Preface, discussed above. Karimuddin makes this overlap possible by making a major change to the organization of the text which fulfills his own definition of a history (*tārīkh*) as that which includes accurate dating of the historical subjects it includes; while De Tassy arranges his *Histoire* alphabetically according to author, like most traditional tazkirahs, Karimuddin rearranges the text into chronologically successive *tabqās*, or stages of development. In explaining why his *Histoire* is not arranged alphabetically, De Tassy gives a proposed schema that he would have used to

⁵⁸ The text is included in Farman Fathpuri's list of tazkirahs of Urdu literature, published from Lahore in 1972, and still considered authoritative today. Karimuddin's *Tabaqāt* is also included in this list, which ends with Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt* as Urdu literature's "last tazkirah and first literary history"--an understanding of Azad's text also considered authoritative. Fatihpūrī Farmān, *Urdū Shu'arā Ke Tazkire Aur Tazkirah Nigārī* (Lāhaur: Majlis-i Taraqqi-yi Adab, 1972), 627-32.

arrange the text chronologically, had he felt it was possible: "If I had adopted chronological order, I would have created several categories: in the first, I would include those writers whose time period is well-known; in the second, I would include those writers whose time period is in doubt; and finally, in the third, I would include those whose time period is completely unknown."⁵⁹ Karimuddin roughly follows this proposed schema, dividing his book into three parts: the first includes "ancient writers of Hindi," including mostly bhagats like Kabir, Nanak, and Surdas, from the 13th century onward; the second includes "poets of Urdu" and is subdivided into four parts that are roughly chronological and follow the stages of development of the Urdu language that Karimuddin proposes, ending with the author's contemporaries; and the third and last section is a sort of "appendix" that includes poets whose dates of birth or death are unknown. This last section not only follows De Tassy's suggestion as to how to arrange the text chronologically, but is also consistent with Karimuddin's assertion, quoted earlier, that if dates cannot be established for a certain poet, then mention of him "cannot be entered into a history in this form--rather, it will be kept in a section separate from the history itself; in this case, it would be absurd to include this entry within the history."⁶⁰

Unlike his tazkirah of Arab poets, which Karimuddin explicitly calls a "history" (*Tārīkh-i Shū'ara-i 'Arab*), thereby conflating the two genres, Karimuddin's translation of De Tassy's *Histoire* introduces a third category altogether--*tabaqāt*--which perhaps mediates between the poles of tazkirah and *tārīkh*.⁶¹ *Tabaqāt*--which denotes stages, stories, or floors (as of a building); layers or strata; or degrees, ranks, orders, or classes--suggests a hierarchical system of classification that also implies change or development via clearly identifiable steps or stages. We

⁵⁹ De Tassy, *Histoire De La Littérature Hindouie Et Hindoustanie*, 1.

⁶⁰ Karīmuddīn and Ilāhī, *Ṭabaqāt-I Shu'arā-I Hind*, 12.

⁶¹ It is important to note, however, that an alternate title for the work is *Tazkirah-i Shū'ara-i Hind*, which is, for instance, the title that appears above the table of contents.

may see this in the way Karimuddin organizes his work on Urdu poets according to his view of the development of the Urdu language, which he adopts and translates from De Tassy's work in his Preface.⁶² This focus on development over time is what allows Karimuddin to narrativize historical change in Urdu poetry. (We will see this adopted in Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt* (1880) with consequences less favorable to his view of Urdu poetry.)

However, I would like to return here to the notion of tazkirah as a type of memorative communication in order to consider how Karimuddin's narrativization of Urdu language and literature distances this tradition from its own present. Peter Osborne coins the term "memorative communication" in his discussion of Benjamin in *The Politics of Time*; he suggests that Benjamin sees narrative as a form of memorative communication that comes into crisis in modernity by failing to effectively communicate historical experience in that "historical narrative has lost its living relationship to the present" and therefore "is no longer a genuine form of memorative communication."⁶³ In Osborne's reading, Benjamin sees "the increasing distance between historical experience and narrative form" manifest in "the manner in which various discourses of modernity [...] distance themselves from their own performative present by narrativizing the historical conditions of their existence in such a way as to fix them in 'periods', which are then objectivistically misconstrued."⁶⁴ It is this same distancing that, as Chakrabarty shows in *Provincializing Europe*, produces a sense of anachronism, which is one of the hallmarks of the development of a historical consciousness.⁶⁵ In the case of De Tassy and Karimuddin, their narrativization of tazkirah into tārikh destroys the specifically memorative

⁶² My next chapter explores narratives of Urdu's linguistic origins and the ways in which they have affected practices of reading Urdu poetry, and specifically ghazal.

⁶³ Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, 133.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁶⁵ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, 238.

aspect of tazkirah and distances itself from the present by instead investing itself in a historicist model of history that negates historicity's ability to reveal the past as relevant to the present through the action of memory. Karimuddin's fixing of the past into specific "*tabqās*", or periods, only further demonstrates this distancing through his investment in the supposed objectivity of periodization as a way to understand the progress of homogenous historical time--an objectivity which negates the specific meaning of cultural forms of memorative communication and the alternate relationships to time and the past that these forms enable.

In the case of De Tassy and Karimuddin, and the emergence of the genre of literary history out of their historicist readings (and writings) of tazkirah, this principle of generalized translation--that which allows "tazkirah" to be translated as and into "history"--operates through these authors' investment in an immanent view of history based on the existence of a world standard-time that can be apprehended objectively and through the division of the past into distinct periods that may then be linked through narrative. This burgeoning historicism--which underwrites these works' attempt to represent Urdu poetry as a unity in its entirety (from beginning to end, origin to *telos*), as well as in its stages of progressive development--negates the work of tazkirah as a genre of memorative communication that allows readers to access the historicity of Urdu poetry. In the next section, I turn to *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'* by Farhatullah Beg, arguing that Beg's work completes the narrativization begun with De Tassy and Karimuddin, and, by adding historical literature to the field of literary history, completes the linking of literature and history as mutually reinforcing discourses of the canonization of Urdu ghazal and its representation of Indo-Muslim culture.

Imaginary Mushairas and the Transcendentalization of Historicity

Beg's *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'* was first published in 1928, and later translated into English by Akhtar Qamber in 1979 as *The Last Mushairah of Delhi*. In this work of historical fiction, inspired by the *Tabaqāt* as well as other early literary histories such as *Āb-i Hayāt*, Beg makes Karimuddin the narrator of his fictionalized account of a mushaira that the historical Karimuddin organized on 14 Rajab 1261 AH (20 July 1845), and which was attended by every major poet of the era, including several Mughal princes and notables from the Red Fort. Of the 62 poets from the pre-Rebellion era of Urdu poetry depicted in Beg's fictionalized "last" mushaira, half of the sketches are indeed drawn directly from Karimuddin's *Tabaqāt*--as, for instance, the section on the young poet Tamkīn with which I began this chapter; the other half are based on interviews Beg conducted of elders living in Delhi who remembered the pre-1857 era. Beg notes that he was inspired to write this work when he came across a pen sketch of the famous poet Momin Hakīm Khān 'Momin', and decided that he should write a work that would provide living portraits of the major poets who lived in the greatest era of Urdu poetry, just prior to the Indian Rebellion in 1857.⁶⁶ He cites Muhammad Husain Azad's *Nairang-i Khayāl* and the fourth section (*tabqā*) of Karimuddin's *Tabāqāt-i Shu'arā-i Hind* as the sources and models for his work, although, as we shall see, he was clearly also influenced by Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt*, among other works. Beg also based many of his portraits of these poets on information he gleaned from conducting interviews with elderly people in Delhi who had themselves attended mushairas or otherwise been acquainted with the famous personages presented in *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'*. As Dr. Salahuddin notes in his Introduction to the 1986 edition of the text, of the sixty-two poets that

⁶⁶ Farḥatullāh Beg and Ṣalāḥuddīn, *Dihlī Kī Ākhrī Shama'* ([New Delhi]: Urdū Akādmī, Dihlī, 1986), 45-6.

Beg describes, exactly half of them may be found in Karimuddin's *Tabāqāt*; the remaining thirty-one poets and their descriptions come from Beg's other sources.⁶⁷

Here I would like to consider the trope of the imaginary mushaira that Beg adopts, and the importance of this trope not only to his work but to Azad's and to the burgeoning genre of Urdu's literary history. As Nathan Tabor notes in his dissertation on the 18th century mushaira, tazkirah writers from the 1600s through the 1800s commonly used the imaginary mushaira as a trope for discussing poets of varying periods together in a single space; for Tabor, Beg's work is a modern iteration of this historiographic mode. In fact, Tabor's dissertation explores the complex cultural relationship between written tazkirahs and oral mushairas: tazkirahs, as well as their less polished counterparts called *bayāz* (notebooks, diaries), often consisted of particularly witty or piquant verses and anecdotes gleaned from the recitations and events of mushairas, and therefore "reflect a recitational subtext based on the diaries being carried around to record interchanges and [...] recitations."⁶⁸ In other words, the tazkirah has historically existed as the written counterpart to the oral mushaira. Beg's imaginary mushaira hearkens back to the tazkirah genre from which his narrative stems, although it captures "the cultural as opposed to the communicative logic of the mushairah as a literary public."⁶⁹

Beg claims that Muhammad Husain Azad's *Nairang-i Khayāl* (1880)--which is a collection of essays that are translations or adaptations of English works, including those of

⁶⁷ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁸ Nathan Tabor, "A Market for Speech: Poetry Recitation in Late Mughal India, 1690-1810" (University of Texas at Austin, 2014), 38.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 25. Regarding Beg's work, he continues: "[H]is work is understood to be imaginary but true in a paradigmatic sense, capturing the Mughal literary sphere as a cultural entity. However, it is a mistake to read so much of culture, civilization, or even identity into a representational but restrictive communicative realm [tazkirah/mushaira] that had no intent to depict 'culture' according to a self-reflexive 19th-century definition that informs scholarship today. In turn, some historians have uncritically reproduced Beg's idealized and uncritical version of literary sociability."

Addison and Johnson--is the primary inspiration for his idea of bringing these poets together into an imaginary mushaira.⁷⁰ The essay that Beg cites from *Nairang-i Khayāl* is titled "The Royal Court of General Renown and the Everlasting Hereafter" (*shehrat-i 'ām aur baqā-i davām kā darbār*), and seems to adapt the basic plotline of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* into a literary context in which the pilgrim (Azad himself) dreams of traveling to the "royal court" of Heaven and meeting all of the major literary greats--including, for instance, Kalidas, Plato, Hafez Shirazi, and Ghalib, amongst many others.⁷¹ While Beg seems to have found this trope suggestive and inspirational, he struggled with how to bring together poets of different eras into a single literary space (*yeh samajh nahīn ātā thā ke mukhtalif zamānon ke shā'iron ko kis tarah ek jagah jama' karūn*)⁷²--hence his turn to the imaginary mushaira as the central scene of his work of historical fiction.

Although Beg cites other sources of inspiration for how he decided to focus specifically on the era of Urdu poetry just before the Rebellion, the obvious model for literary-historical narrative based on an imaginary mushaira would be Azad's renowned *Āb-i Hayāt*. In this text, Azad separates the history of Urdu poetry into five eras, or *daurs*, and begins his description of each era by narrating an imagined mushaira in which all of the poets of a particular age are gathered together. Azad does not conform to Karimuddin's definition of "literary history" as a sub-genre of *tazkirah* in which the dates of birth and death are specified for each poet; rather,

⁷⁰ Azad is an extremely important figure in the call for reform of Urdu poetry after 1857--especially, as I will argue in Chapter 3, because of his role in cementing the lyricization of the ghazal. Here, though, it may be of relevance to note that both Azad and his father, Maulvi Muhammad Baqir, were, like Karimuddin, educated at Delhi College.

⁷¹ While not a primary focus of this dissertation, this "translation" of Bunyan's explicitly Christian text into the Indo-Muslim *literary* context suggests a secularization of Indian Islam by portraying Indo-Muslim culture as literary rather than religious. We will see further examples of this throughout this dissertation, particularly at the end of the next chapter with adaptations of Ghalib's work.

⁷² Beg and Ṣalāḥuddīn, *Dihlī Kī Āk̄hīrī Shama'*, 45-6.

Azad's version of literary history is heavily anecdotal with an emphasis on the imaginary mushaira as the trope which keeps the narrative of the text as a whole moving forward. On the other hand, Azad follows Karimuddin's practice of opening with a history of the Urdu language, again situating its origins in Braj Bhasha, and then mapping the five eras of Urdu poetry onto the broader schema of development that he laid out for the language as a whole in his introduction. That almost every literary history of Urdu, beginning with Karimuddin and Azad, and moving well into the contemporary period, begins with a history of the development of the language itself points to Mufti's argument that these texts "attempt to *provide a historical basis* to the supposedly distinct languages first standardized at Fort William" in 1800.⁷³

On the one hand, then, Azad's narration of the history of the Urdu language seems to suggest his investment, similar to Karimuddin's, in the notion of world standard-time and the broader historicist narrative of development over time. On the other hand, Azad's (and Beg's) trope of the imaginary mushaira exploits what I am calling the mushaira imaginary--the sense of the timeless quality of Urdu poetry created by the context of oral performance. For instance, the mushairas of each of Azad's five eras all take place along the "banks of the divine stream" through which flows the "water of life" (*āb-i hayāt*),⁷⁴ which suggests that these mushairas and their illustrious attendees exist in an atemporal eternity rather than in a past that becomes intelligible through its existence in the present. This eternity is represented even more literally in Azad's essay from *Nairang-i Khayāl*, in which the relevant poets and writers of the past are gathered together in the eternal hereafter.

In Azad's work, though, the trope of the imaginary mushaira serves to take Urdu poetry out of its historical context by atemporalizing it into a literary world that is eternal and spaceless;

⁷³ Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 140.

⁷⁴ Muḥammad Ḥusain Āzād, *Āb-i āyāt* (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdū Academy, 1982), 526.

Azad's idealization of the mushaira exemplifies Faruqi's assertion that "oral poetry does not recognize time."⁷⁵ This gesture of atemporalization exists simultaneously with Azad's move toward historicization of Urdu poetry--a move which, as Faruqi points out, fails in its attempt to recognize historical change (whether in the direction of progress or decline, although Azad clearly asserts his belief in the latter where Urdu poetry is concerned) precisely because it denies the relevance of time to the enterprise of poetry.⁷⁶

Beg's novella brings together Azad's use of the imaginary mushaira with Karimuddin's attention to historical narrative. Beg's text was first published in book form in 1928, and then a second edition came out in 1936. These dates correspond roughly contemporaneously with the publication of two of the earliest works in Urdu literary history written in English: Ram Babu Saksena's *History of Urdu Literature* (1927) and Thomas Grahame Bailey's *History of Urdu Literature* (1932). These texts take a generally disparaging view of Urdu poetry, not unlike Azad's, in which they see Urdu poetry--and ghazal in particular--as static, degenerate, backward, and feminine. In terms of chronology of publication, these texts together represent a sort of crescendo in the sociocultural demand for historical narratives positing the Urdu language and literature as distinct entities; the pre-Partition context and the communalist tension that often played out on the terrain of language and literature suggests the reasons behind this particular constellation of texts.

⁷⁵ The concept of oral poetry as timeless is itself one that can and should be historicized. For examples of this type of work in historical poetics, see: Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). and Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). In Chapter 3, I will explore how this idea comes to influence readers, writers, and critics of Urdu poetry.

⁷⁶ Again, Chapter 3 will focus on the influence of the idea of "lyric" as applied to Urdu ghazal and how "lyric" as a mediating term for ghazal underwrites the movement we see in Urdu literary histories, beginning with Azad's, in which scholars historicize Urdu ghazal only in order to ultimately assert its trans- or a-historicism.

However, in contrast to the contemporaneous literary histories produced, Beg's view of Urdu poetry is certainly more favorable; he claims to want to tell the story of this particular moment in Urdu poetry in order to create "living portraits" of the protagonists of Urdu ghazal so that readers will be able to further appreciate their works by knowing something about the authors.⁷⁷ Beg makes this assertion based on his understanding that the age of Urdu ghazal has essentially ended, and that future generations will consequently understand less and less about the conditions that produced the works of poets like Ghalib and Zauq. Khwaja Hassan Nizami, the editor responsible for having Beg's work published in book form, similarly seemed to see his text as vital to readers or would-be readers of Urdu poetry: in his introduction to the first edition, Nizami writes, "As soon as I read the text, I immediately told the editor of the English newspaper *Young Muslim* to translate it into English so that readers in Europe and America could also catch a glimpse of the brightness of the last flame of Delhi."⁷⁸ Nizami himself was a journalist, author, and poet with a particular interest in excavating Delhi's Indo-Muslim cultural past, including the tombs of past poets. We should understand Nizami's statement in the context of his personal "relish for creating new pasts"⁷⁹ as well as the broader prevalence of English-language historical works like Saksena's and Bailey's; in complement to these literary histories, Beg's pseudo-historical narrative provides an entertaining favorable glimpse into the culture of Urdu ghazal just prior to the Rebellion, and the Anglophone audience for this work would be considerable, just as it was for De Tassy's *tazkirah* one century earlier.

While histories of Urdu literature celebrate the death of the ghazal by welcoming a new age of supposed cultural progress in which ghazal had no place, Beg's text exploits the pathos of

⁷⁷ Beg and Ṣalāḥuddīn, *Dihlī Kī Āīrī Shama'*, 46-7.

⁷⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁹ Tabor, "A Market for Speech: Poetry Recitation in Late Mughal India, 1690-1810," 60.

Urdu's demise to cast a nostalgic glance at the ghazal's ascendancy in pre-1857 India. Beg's narrative, while not ostensibly purporting to act as a history, nevertheless relies on the same narrative of the decline of Mughal culture and the 1857 demise of the ghazal that serves as the foundation of these other historical works. Indeed, *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'* is often misunderstood or willfully misread as a historical representation of reality--partly because of its claim to represent an actual event (the mushaira hosted by Karimuddin). As Tabor notes, Beg's "work is understood to be imaginary but true in a paradigmatic sense, capturing the Mughal literary sphere as a cultural entity."⁸⁰ Furthermore, the nostalgia for Urdu ghazal and Mughal literary culture in *Ākhrī Shama'* is symptomatic of a *melancholic* attachment to the lost original cultural and historical moment of ghazal's ascendancy, revealing the work of translation inherent not only in Beg's literary undertaking but in historical texts that cite Beg's work.⁸¹

Beg's work represents the complete narrativization of the tazkirah genre--from the tazkirahs De Tassy used as his sources, to De Tassy's tazkirah/history, to Karimuddin's history/tazkirah, and finally to Beg's narrative essay of historical fiction. If we take Niranjana's suggestion that the notion of historicity subverts the logic of historicism by refusing to establish either a subject or a telos, then the process of narrativizing tazkirah into tārikh involves the introduction of a historical subject or subjects (including Karimuddin as narrator as well as the Urdu poets themselves), as well as the telos of the 1857 Rebellion and the demise of Urdu ghazal toward which the process of history proceeds. We have already seen how Karimuddin's text

⁸⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁸¹ Tabor cites the following texts as a few examples of sociocultural histories that cite Beg's novella as a properly historical representation of pre-Rebellion literary culture: William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi 1857* (New York: Vintage, 2006). Jamal Malik, "Muslim Culture and Reform in 18th Century South Asia," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 2 (2003); Margrit Pernau, "From a 'Private' Public to a 'Public' Private Sphere: Old Delhi in Comparative Perspective," in *The Public and the Private: Democratic Citizenship in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. G. Mahajan and H. Reifeld (Delhi: Sage, 2003).

introduces origin and telos into the genre of tazkirah; Beg's text introduces Karimuddin as a subject by establishing him as the character narrating the story of Delhi's "last mushaira," which itself represents the implied telos of 1857 toward which Urdu poetry has inevitably proceeded.

Explaining this narratorial choice in his Preamble, Beg writes: "Given my object, I could have become a 'Mirza Sahib' of the era in which my story takes place, but my heart could not bear the thought of putting on the *sehra* of Karimuddin's success and in turn throwing him out like a fly who has fallen into a cup of milk."⁸² Here, Beg suggests that to adopt Karimuddin's ideas without adopting his character would be like donning Karimuddin's *sehra*, a reference to the veil of flowers that a groom wears to cover his face during his wedding; in other words, if Beg were to appear as himself in the role of narrator, he would not only be wrongfully disguising himself as Karimuddin, but also remaining partially blind to the events that he attempts to relate as the central character in the narrative. For Beg, to cite Karimuddin without retaining him as narrator would not only be a comic but cruel upstaging of Karimuddin as a central subject, but it would also leave Beg himself somewhat in the position of blindly narrating the ostensibly historical narrative that he creates through Karimuddin's work.

Instead, Beg ends his preface by writing, "Here I am now at your service in the body of Karimuddin Sahib";⁸³ rather than simply taking on Karimuddin's dress, or disguising himself as Karimuddin, Beg sees himself transmigrating into Karimuddin's body in the process of translating his work into a narrative while preserving Karimuddin as the ostensible narrator. And yet, he continues, "Since I am dedicating all of my hard work to Maulvi Karimuddin Sahib, then if you have any criticism of this work, please direct it--and without restraint!--to Maulvi Sahib;

⁸² Beg and Şalāḥuddīn, *Dihlī Kī Ākhirī Shama'*, 48.

⁸³ Ibid.

this way, I am happy, and God is happy."⁸⁴ Of course, Beg's reputation as a humorist shines through in these tongue-in-cheek passages in which he claims to avoid taking undue credit for Karimuddin's work, but also avoids the difficulty of holding responsibility for any of its shortcomings. Yet as the historian/translator Beg transmigrates into the body of Karimuddin (who is himself a historian/translator), the work of representation in this history/translation misleadingly appears objective and transparent. Beg's inhabitation of Karimuddin's body leaves him invisible to the eyes of readers, but, unlike the *sehra*, does not block his own vision as he narrates the events of his (imaginary) *mushaira*.

And yet, in comparing Karimuddin's *Tabaqāt* with Beg's adaptation, we find a significant shift in how we read these texts, brought about partly by our own subject positions as modern readers. For instance, in Beg's characterization of Karimuddin as the narrator of the text, Karimuddin's statements about poetry and his preferences for translating other genres take on a different connotation than in the context of the *Tabaqāt*--rather than generating sympathy toward the plight of the penniless, small-town translator seeking to make a profit from the work of translation in the harsh urban environment of Delhi, Beg's Karimuddin comes across as a thoroughly dislikable, pedantic, condescending, and hypocritical character. In fact, Karimuddin's mindset toward poetry appears symptomatic or prescient of the larger (colonial) society's growing indifference toward and/or misunderstanding of the enterprise of poetry; in the context of Beg's nostalgic narration of a dying culture's beautiful "last flame," we are prompted to ask, "What does it mean that the very last *mushaira* of Delhi, which included some of the most canonical and revered poets, was organized by someone who thought of poetry as frivolous at best and evil at worst?" Although Beg uses Karimuddin's words almost exactly--simply

⁸⁴ Ibid.

transcribing whole sentences from Karimuddin's autobiographical entry in the *Tabaqāt*--we find Beg's version of Karimuddin unforgivably hypocritical.

In Beg's version--which opens with the simple statement, "My name is Karimuddin" (*merā nām Karīmuddīn hai*)--Karimuddin explains that he has come to Delhi from Panipat, a small town about 40 miles northwest of Delhi, in order to continue the tradition of scholarly learning in his family; after initially supporting himself by working as a copyist (*kāpī-navīsī*), he decides to enroll in Delhi College when they began looking for students after reorganizing it along the "modern" lines described above. However, being unable to support himself during his education, he decides to open a printing press with some friends, his initial aim being that he will publish and sell translations of famous Arabic texts to make money. This enterprise being unprofitable, he realizes that his printing press could make money if he were to capitalize on the craze for Urdu poetry raging throughout Delhi; with this idea in mind, he decides to organize a mushaira of the most respected poets in Delhi so that he can publish the proceedings and earn some money.

Here, Beg copies Karimuddin's words from his entry in the *Tabāqāt*: "I have never, nor do I now have, any interest whatsoever in poetry. On the contrary, I know the practice of poetry to be bad (*main she'r keh nā burā jāntā hūn*) because it is not the craft or profession of people of knowledge. Those people who have the privilege to be free from the difficulties of seeking daily sustenance write poetry in order to entertain themselves."⁸⁵ In Karimuddin's text, his complaint with poetry ends there; Beg, however, has his narrator continue: "I am an Islamic scholar (*ʿālim*); my father and my father's father were Islamic scholars. Normally, there would be no way in hell that I would direct my attention to this type of uselessness. But what could I do? Necessity falls

⁸⁵ Ibid., 50.

upon everyone at some point, and so I was stuck organizing a mushaira."⁸⁶ To drive this point home throughout the text, we frequently find Karimuddin complaining that his having to organize a mushaira takes away from the time that he would otherwise put toward translating Abul-Fida's *Mukhtasar Tārīkh al-Bashar* ("A Short History of Man").

Again, given Beg's reputation as a humorist, we get a sense that perhaps this portrait of Karimuddin is more caricature than characterization, and that there is a bit of hyperbole in Karimuddin's introduction of himself. At the same time, this hyperbole is meant to dramatize the brewing "clash of cultures" in Delhi at the time--the struggle between supposedly objective, scientific discourses like History, on the one hand, and subjective, frivolous discourses like Poetry, on the other. In the context of Beg's work, and of his larger project that he preserve and memorialize the culture of Urdu poetry prior to its dramatic "end" with the 1857 Rebellion, the organizer and narrator of "Delhi's last mushaira" being utterly opposed to the practice of poetry helps drive the story toward its inevitable denouement, which is the demise of Urdu poetry altogether--it helps explain why Karimuddin's mushaira is, in fact, the "last" mushaira. Karimuddin's narration only exaggerates what the very existence of Beg's narrative already tells us: History, and its appearance in the form of narrative, has won its cultural and social war with Poetry, so that we in the present (we who represent "future generations" according to the text's choronotope) can only interpret the latter through the lens of the former. It is thus in the context of our historical hindsight that we can read Karimuddin's disapproval of poetry as an omen of Urdu ghazal's abrupt "end" with the 1857 Rebellion; we read the type of thinking Karimuddin espouses as responsible for the end of an entire literary culture because we are already aware of the telos toward which Beg's narrative progresses, even if the Rebellion itself does not feature as

⁸⁶ Ibid.

an explicit event in the text. Beg's introduction of Karimuddin as a historical subject hurtling toward the inevitable *telos* of Urdu poetry's end--in which the subject himself plays a role, consciously or not, in the sense that his views on poetry are symptomatic of, if not in some way responsible for, this end--completes the turn from historicity to historicism we see in the *Tabaqāt's* emphasis on homogeneous historical time, periodization, origins, and ends.

The completion of the movement from the tazkirah's historicity to the literary history's historicism effects the transcendentalization of the notion of historicity. Beg's transmigration into Karimuddin's body retains Karimuddin as historical subject while Beg remains outside of the text, unaffected by the historical narrative that Karimuddin relates. At the same time, Beg's work fixes the narrative of Urdu ghazal on the basis of an implicitly historicist understanding of the literary history of that genre as one that includes origin, telos, and subject. In the next chapter, I turn to the telos of Urdu ghazal's death in 1857 through the figure of Urdu's most canonical poet, Mirza Ghalib.

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CHAPTER III

Urdu's Death and Afterlife: The Canonization of Mirza Ghalib

ہندوستان کی الہامی کتابیں دو ہیں: مقدس وید اور دیوانِ غالب۔

Hindustān kī ilhāmī kitābein do hain: Muqaddas Ved aur Dīvān-i Ghālib.

There are two divinely inspired books of India: The Holy Vedas and the Poems of Ghalib.
--Abdul-Rahman Bijnori, *Mahāsin-i Kalām-i Ghālib (The Beauties of Ghalib's Poetry, 1921)*

ہیں اور بھی دنیا میں سخن ور بہت اچھے
کہتے ہیں کہ غالب کا ہے اندازِ بیان اور

*hain aur bhī duniyā mein sukhanvar bahut acche
kahte hain ki Ghālib kā hai andāz-i bayān aur*

True, there are many other excellent poets in the world
But they say that Ghalib's style of expression is something else

Today, Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869) is known throughout North India, Pakistan, and the South Asian diaspora as the undisputed master of Urdu ghazal, to the extent that he has developed into a cult of persona that then becomes the very personification of Urdu poetry, Urdu language, and South Asian Muslim identity--a process that I call ghazalization. In India, Ghalib stands as the most prominent case of ghazalization through the myriad ways that he is reclaimed as a national figure, essential to Indian heritage and culture. In Delhi alone, the Ghalib Academy, the Ghalib Institute, and the Ghalib museum (once the poet's former house) stand as major institutions celebrating the poet's life and promoting his literary legacy. With his life and work having been narrativized in major motion pictures, TV serials, short stories, and plays, Abdul-Rahman Bijnori's seemingly hyperbolic statement that Ghalib's poems stand alongside the Vedas as one of India's two significant literary and religious achievements perhaps

accurately captures the extent of Ghalib's canonization as a major source of Indian national culture.

Ghalib's couplet about his own fame as a poet also prefigures the extent to which Ghalib stands out among poets, not just for Urdu speakers, but throughout the Subcontinent. At the same time, the idea that Ghalib's style is "something else" reflects an ambiguity in Urdu as in the English translation--it connotes both superlative achievement and derogatory befuddlement. Ghalib's poetry is both a cut above that of other poets, and something else entirely beyond the realm of poetry, so that his *andāz-i bayān*--style of "speech" or "expression"--is both equated and contrasted with the *sukhanvar* (poets) of the first line. That Ghalib masters poetry, exceeding it while also somehow falling short, in many ways encapsulates his legacy for Urdu and its place in India more broadly. Indeed, while Ghalib is universally understood as the foremost composer of Urdu ghazal, he is also cited as the progenitor of modern Urdu prose style;¹ while Ghalib's ghazals are known as virtually incomprehensible, and therefore symbolic of the overly stylized decadence of the outdated Mughals, his prose is recuperated as precipitatingly modern in its exceptional elegance and clarity.

The popular circulation of key incidents in Ghalib's biography support this trend in which Ghalib appears as both idealized pinnacle and laughable misfit within Urdu literary culture: several of the most famous stories about Ghalib recounted in various media revolve around his inability to receive an income or patronage not only because of his excessive arrogance, but also because of his seeming inability to understand British norms. In one case, Ghalib was a candidate for teaching Persian at the Delhi College, which at the time was the center of Urdu

¹ For Ghalib's letters as inaugurating a new era of prose, see especially Ram Babu Saksena, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1927; repr., 1975), 263-65.

education and intellectual production in Delhi,² however, when he arrived for the interview, the interviewer failed to come outside to greet him, which Ghalib felt was his due as a person of Mughal descent. He was so insulted that he left angrily, never even completing the interview. Even after the interviewer explained that in this context he was not bound by the rules of the Mughal court, but by British regulations, Ghalib held firm, and refused the opportunity. As Gail Minault puts it, "his pride, and a disjunction between what he and his British interlocutor felt was proper etiquette, got in the way of his securing a post at the college."³

Similarly, we see shifts in the concept and importance of poetic patronage baffling Ghalib, who is portrayed as hopelessly caught between the vastly different linguistic and cultural traditions of his native India versus the ruling British. In Ghalib's time, patronage continued to constitute the primary means via which individuals could make a living as professional poets. Based on this native tradition of royal patronage--whether in the Mughal courts, or in more local courts like those of the Nawabs of Avadh--Ghalib wrote a panegyric poem in praise of Queen Victoria, along with a note reminding her that poets such as himself played an important role in the immortality of royal persons, and as such, requesting her patronage. After first forwarding these materials directly to the Queen herself, he received a reply that this method of communication was inappropriate for one of his (lowly) stature; he then tried again through more

² See previous chapter for more on Delhi College.

³ Gail Minault, "Delhi College and Urdu," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 14 (1999): 126. Saadat Hasan Manto has also written a short play entirely centered around this incident, entitled *Ghālib aur sarkārī mulāzimat* ("Ghalib and Government Employment"). For more on Ghalib and Manto, see the penultimate section of this chapter. For a short summary of Manto's story, see Alain Désoulières, "Images of a Historical Character: Mirza Ghalib," in *Heroes and Heritage: The Protagonist in Indian Literature and Film*, ed. Theo Damsteegt (Leiden: Leiden University, 2003), 228-29.

appropriate channels. However, Queen Victoria never read his poem, and, although he continued to write petitions for British patronage, they remained unacknowledged.⁴

The portrait of Ghalib that these anecdotes suggest supports the broader processes of canonization that have made Ghalib the foremost name associated with Urdu ghazal; these tales portray Ghalib as elitist, yet impoverished; overly concerned with form over substance; hopelessly, even laughably, out of step with the norms and demands of modern society--in short, precisely the same claims made about the ghazal itself. It is the extent to which Ghalib himself stands in as a metonym for the ghazal that has determined the particular shape of the posthumous canonization of both the poet and the genre. For, indeed, the notion of ghazal's death forms a crucial part of the teleological narrative that links this genre with the Urdu language, and, by extension, the Muslim community in India as a whole.

A significant part of this narrative revolves around the 1857 Rebellion--a failed attempt by Indian soldiers to throw off the yoke of British rule through widespread rebellion, which ultimately ended in the solidification of the British colonial enterprise and the official end of the Mughal empire. The fact that Ghalib survived the Rebellion but "never recovered," instead spending the remainder of his life in mourning for the huge losses of life and culture brought about by this event, is yet another example of how Ghalib exemplifies the ghazal form--which, if not fully dead after 1857, from this perspective may as well have been.

In some ways, this narrative appropriately reflects a significant shift in the attitudes of Urdu's celebrity authors and canon-makers: many poets of Urdu ghazal died or scattered during

⁴ These anecdotes are well-known, but one may find further details in: Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). See also: Pavan K. Varma, *Ghalib, the Man, the Times* (New Delhi, India ; New York, N.Y.: Viking, 1989). In the generation immediately following Ghalib, government patronage became the norm, with British support for didactic poetry dictating the shape of Urdu literature after the 1857 Rebellion.

the Siege of Delhi, and after this point, the aesthetics of Victorian era England ruled the Urdu scene, with many of the most prominent post-Rebellion poets producing primarily didactic literature and poetry. Yet, the claim that ghazal "died" in 1857 is itself patently untrue; not only have there been numerous notable ghazal poets since 1857--not the least of which is Faiz Ahmed Faiz (see Chapter 5), but also Daagh, Faraz, Parveen Shakir, and many others--but the ghazal flourishes in South Asia both as an oral and written form: performances of ghazal poetry abound throughout India, Pakistan, and the South Asia diaspora; major vocal performers continue to produce albums of sung ghazals; and ghazal poets can easily publish their work, although the market for books of poetry in any language other than Urdu is virtually nonexistent.

But if the ghazal rhetorically died in 1857, then its proper role thereafter has been to live a sort of afterlife in which it mourns its own loss, or writes its own elegy.⁵ Tying the "end" of ghazal to the end of the Mughal Empire has particular consequences for the trajectory of scholarly and popular understandings of the ghazal form today--and, as I argue, is a rhetorical move that supports the continuation of the ghazal, even while proclaiming its death. This chapter takes these narratives about the Urdu language as a starting point for the development of our modern understanding of the Urdu ghazal, ultimately showing how the fate of the language and its most popular genre have been mutually intertwined through the canonization of Ghalib; I also pay special attention to the role of English in shaping this process of canonization in the numerous Anglophone genres and texts that posit Ghalib as the epitome of Urdu's foreignness and decadence, creating a mythos in which this Ghalib-Urdu complex stands directly opposed to the autochthony and simple vernacularism of modern Hindi. As I will show, if this triangulation

⁵ The number of modern ghazals on the decline of the Urdu language is a testament to this process. For one example, see Christopher Lee, "'Hit It with a Stick and It Won't Die': Urdu Language and Muslim Identity and Poetry in Varanasi, India," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 15, no. 1 (2000).

between English, Urdu, and Hindi first developed in 1857, it was solidified with the 1947 Partition, such that the (Anglophone) narrativization of Urdu ghazal links these two historical events in the national Urdu imaginary.

Two Ghalibs: Urdu's Dual Legacy

ہوگا کوئی ایسا بھی کہ غالب کو نہ جانے
شاعر تو وہ اچھا ہے پہ بدنام بہت ہے

hogā koī aisā bhī kih Ghālib ko nah jāne?
shā'ir toh voh acchhā hai pah bad-nām buhat hai
Is there anyone at all who doesn't know of Ghalib?
Sure, he's a good poet, but he's also very ill-reputed

In this verse, Ghalib foreshadows the canonization he has undergone since his death: although his poetry was not universally appreciated during his lifetime, today one would be hard pressed to find anyone familiar with Hindi or Urdu that has not heard of Ghalib. And yet the second line of this couplet also speaks to the complex place of the Urdu language, and especially the Urdu ghazal in the modern Indian nation. In one sense, Ghalib receives acclaim as the greatest writer of Urdu ghazal; in another, the general reviling of the ghazal form as incompatible with Indian modernity makes his status as the most celebrated ghazal poet somewhat of a backhanded compliment.

Ghalib suffered a difficult life: orphaned at a young age, cheated out of his pension by scheming relatives, scarred by the deaths of all 8 of his children and his adopted nephew, plagued by debt, unappreciated by his contemporaries and mostly unacknowledged by the Mughal court, jailed for gambling, betrayed by friends, and finally condemned to watch his beloved Delhi and its Muslim elite crumble beneath the bloodshed, starvation, and disease of the 1857 Rebellion. Ghalib's Mughal descent and Turkish blood were not enough to prevent him

from a lifetime of financial struggle, artistic failure, and emotional suffering. As Ghalib himself says in an 1861 letter: "There are two Ghalibs: one of them is a Seljuq Turk, who consorts with badshahs, and the other is homeless and humiliated, weighed down by debt."

This duality in Ghalib's personae mirrors the dual streams in which Urdu functions in South Asia, as both the discourse of a privileged elite and as a lingua franca for speakers of various ethnic vernaculars--as the language of both the court and the bazaar. Even varying stories about the origins of the language reveal this duality of class status and linguistic access--on the one hand, Urdu is seen as a literary language traceable to the Deccan courts of Golconda in the 14th century, and later continuing in the Mughal courts, while on the other hand, it is described as a "pidgin" language that organically sprung up to allow for communication between multiple ethnic groups in the army camps of the 18th century.⁶

At stake in the narrative of the death of Urdu poetry and the Urdu language is the question of how and why Muslims belong in India today. The identification of Urdu and Perso-Arabic script with Muslims, and Hindi and the Devanāgarī script with Hindus has featured prominently in the question of Indian national identity since the early nineteenth century; as a result, Urdu is at the center of questions of national belonging even today because the discourse of linguistic nationalism inaugurated in the late nineteenth century and continually proliferated in narratives surrounding Urdu (and Urdu ghazal) paints this tradition as fundamentally foreign to the Indian Subcontinent.⁷ Furthermore, much of how we understand Urdu literature in India

⁶ Amina Yaqin, "Variants of Cultural Nationalism in Pakistan: A Reading of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Jamil Jalibi, and Fahmida Riaz," in *Shared Idioms, Sacred Symbols, and the Articulation of Identities in South Asia*, ed. Kelly Pemberton and Michael Nijhawan (New York ; London: Routledge, 2009). I discussed the significance of these varying narratives of Urdu's origins (especially vis-à-vis Hindi) in greater detail in Chapter One. See the Introduction for a more detailed summary of the linguistic histories of Urdu and Hindi.

⁷ See Introduction.

today comes in the wake of Partition, and often represents an ex post facto attempt to understand how or whether the Muslims who remained in India after 1947 can be recuperated as faithful Indian national subjects. As I mentioned in the Introduction, and as I will further explain in Chapter 4, the very name "Urdu"--as opposed to the many other names historically used for the language of the ghazal--developed in the context of growing linguistic nationalism such that to refer to "Urdu" is to always already capitulate to the logic via which this language necessarily and inevitably refers to the Indian Muslim community.

In his own time, for instance, Ghalib referred to the language he wrote and spoke variously as "Hindi," "Hindustani," "Rekhta," and "Urdu," using these terms interchangeably like most of predecessors.⁸ Yet the very fact that Ghalib's work is today held up as the apex of a body of literature specifically coded as "Urdu" is itself a move that necessitates that we read Ghalib's work as evidence of a specifically Muslim culture that is distinct from an Indian culture broadly conceived of as Hindu. Although scholars in academic circles have established the common origins of Hindi and Urdu, the prevailing narrative throughout the Subcontinent today continues to support the myth of Urdu's foreign origins, whether as a source of pride or denigration. Indeed, as Kavita Datla points out, "Even though Urdu has never *in fact* been an exclusively Muslim language, from the turn of the twentieth century, writers, educators, and literary critics had certainly to address the assumption that it was."⁹

⁸ Note that Urdu is actually the most recent of these, and that Ghalib seemed to be particularly suspicious of this term: "As late as December 1858, Ghālib was uncomfortable with 'Urdu' as a language name, and used it as masculine in a letter to Shiv Nārā'in Ārām. Language names are invariably feminine in Urdu, but *urdū* in the sense of 'camp, camp-market' is masculine." Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *Early Urdu Literary Culture and History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 38.

⁹ Kavita Saraswathi Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 8.

One of the most important ways in which Urdu ghazal has been aligned with the Urdu language as a whole, and hence with the Indian Muslim community as a whole, is through the various ways in which the 1947 Partition and the 1857 Rebellion have been connected through the construction of the Urdu canon. If the Partition and the Rebellion are both key moments in which the Muslim community becomes defined through the violence perpetrated against it, then Urdu literature has made that violence legible--not only through its straightforward narration of these major historical events, as in the wide circulation of short stories about Partition written by the Progressives in the 1950s, but also by itself standing in for the violent deaths perpetrated against Muslims during these moments of historical crisis. While there are two Ghalibs to represent Urdu's dual legacy within both high and low/popular culture, we also see Ghalib (and, through him, Urdu) put to double use in redeeming the Muslim community in India through his prominence as a representative figure for both the Rebellion and Partition. In the following sections, we will see how this "double Ghalib" plays an essential role in shaping the Urdu literary canon in seemingly contradictory ways, and furthermore, that the narrativization of Ghalib, Urdu ghazal, and Urdu as fungible entities connected with the major historical tragedies of 1857 and 1947, occurs primarily in and through English and Anglophone genres.

Death in 1857: Urdu through English and the Canonization of Ghalib

Consider the following passage from Anita Desai's widely celebrated English novel *In Custody*: "Urdu poetry? How can there be Urdu poetry when there is no Urdu language left? It is dead, finished. The defeat of the Moghuls by the British threw a noose over its head, and the defeat of the British by the Hindi-wallas tightened it. So now you see its corpse lying here,

waiting to be buried."¹⁰ In this passage, Desai specifically cites the 1857 Rebellion and the 1947 Partition as the historical moments of Urdu's death--with the Rebellion portrayed as a precursor to Partition, and Partition specifically coded through language as the triumph of the "Hindi-wallas" (Hindi speakers). At the same time, if Urdu and its poetic tradition are "dead," they are not yet buried, and the imagery of a rotting corpse without anyone to bury it continues not only to haunt the Urdu canon, but to ensure its continued afterlife.

And yet the significance of Urdu's prominent appearance in Desai's Anglophone novel should alert us to the extent to which Urdu and its ghazalization--including the canonization of Ghalib--has occurred in and through English.¹¹ In fact, the mediation of English helps explain the duality of Ghalib's reputation and its consequences for the tenuous state of Urdu language and literature in South Asia today. In Pakistan, this tenuousness occurs because Urdu operates hegemonically as a constructed national language that gets promoted to the detriment of ethnic vernaculars such as Sindhi, Balochi, Panjabi, and Pashto; the general sentiment is that Urdu "belongs" nowhere because an individual's "mother tongue" would be his or her ethnic language, rather than the unclaimed lingua franca of Urdu. In India, Urdu is seen as the proper language of the Muslim minority, and is perceived as in danger of either dying out completely or supporting Islamic fundamentalism, even while signifying the faded glory of Mughal culture. In both countries, Urdu fails to properly compete with English as the language of the privileged classes, despite its cultural cache and its practical importance as a lingua franca across Pakistan and Northern India.

¹⁰ Anita Desai, *In Custody* (New York: Random House, 2013), 42.

¹¹ Regarding Urdu's appearance in Anglophone novels of South Asian authors, including Desai's *In Custody*, see Aamir Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 169-70.

Given these language politics, Urdu maintains a fraught relationship with English as its other, which allows for the modern perpetuation of 19th-century stereotypes of the backwardness and artificiality of Urdu compared to the refinement and naturalism of English. At the same time, many of these misconceptions about and anxieties around the Urdu language in India--as foreign, imposed by tyrannical rulers on unwitting subjects, or as beautiful but incomprehensible in its high literary form--represent sentiments that should more properly be applied to English, but instead get displaced onto Urdu.

As we have seen, the biographical details of Ghalib's life symbolize the popular narratives about the Urdu language in India today: an orphan language, not quite belonging to anyone; constantly seeking state patronage but failing to find any of note; unable to produce anything truly "new" and flourishing; simultaneously beloved and unappreciated; and finally, coming to a tragic end in 1857. The subtext for each of these claims involves an implicit comparison with English; in fact, as I will show below, the prevalence of these narratives and their complicated history ensures that we always already access Urdu through English.

The importance of English in the canonization of Ghalib comes about through the process of narrativization that I began to explore in Chapter 1; histories of Urdu literature, novels, plays, and films portray Ghalib's biography and his oeuvre as the crux of the Urdu literary canon. Whether or not these texts circulate in English (though they often do), they nevertheless represent "the assimilative powers of the English cultural system"¹²--the extent to which the genres of (world) literature, such as History and the novel, are always already interpellated by the politics of the Anglophone. We see these politics emerge through the narrativization, first of the 1857 Rebellion, and then, relatedly, the 1947 Partition, in these various genres. Ghalib

¹² Ibid., 159.

himself, for instance, wrote a memoir of the Rebellion in Persian, called *Dastambu*--though he otherwise disdained such narratives, he had hoped to present this text to the British in order to win back their patronage after the fact.¹³

Although the British East India Company had consolidated its rule in 1757 with the Battle of Plassey, the Mughals continued as symbolic placeholders that unified India under their rule. However, mounting frustrations with British colonial rule exactly one century later led to the rebellion of Indian soldiers (referred to as "sepoys") who clashed with their British masters; Ghalib records his observations of these violent clashes as follows:

On that 11th of May 1857, the walls and ramparts of the Red Fort shook with such force that the vibrations were felt in the four corners of the city. On that infamous day rebellious soldiers from Meerut [...] entered Delhi thirsty for the blood of the British. Swarming through the opened gates of Delhi, the intoxicated horsemen and rough foot soldiers ravished the city like madmen. [...] Some of the soldiers, although they had no leaders, prepared themselves for battle by seizing guns, gunpowder, and gunshot from the British. All the tactics they had learned they employed against their former teachers.¹⁴

This attack by the soldiers from Meerut led to uprisings all over India; Ghalib describes these various armies converging in Delhi and demanding an audience with the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who still held great significance as a symbolic figurehead. After some days of hesitation, Bahadur Shah Zafar agreed to the soldiers' demand to lead the rebellion; as Ghalib describes it, "the emperor could no longer control this army; the army itself took control into its own hands and the king was rendered helpless." Bahadur Shah Zafar was then proclaimed Emperor of the whole of India, with the sepoys pledging allegiance to him.

¹³ Tellingly, Ghalib had failed to produce a historical narrative that would win the patronage of the Mughal ruler Bahadur Shah Zafar. Zafar openly preferred Ghalib's rival poet, Zauq, so that rather than appointing Ghalib as the official court poet, he assigned him the task of writing a history of the Mughals; Ghalib found this task both insulting and uninspiring, so he ultimately never completed the text.

¹⁴ Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib, *Dastanbūy: A Diary of the Indian Revolt of 1857*, trans. Khwaja Ahmad Faruqi (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1970), 31-33.

While the rebellion against the British resulted in battles throughout Northern India, one of the major points of conflict was over Delhi; beginning on July 1, 1857, the British laid siege to Delhi, which began three months of violence, starvation, and disease in the city. Ghalib describes first being able to leave his lane only to get water and a little bit of flour, then not being able to leave at all, with many of his neighbors and servants dying of hunger and thirst. When the British finally took Delhi in September 1857, they retaliated with "mass arrests, assassinations, and slaughter";¹⁵ they also decimated the Mughal family and bloodline, hanging many of the Mughal princes, and imprisoning others.¹⁶ Bahadur Shah Zafar himself was under trial, and ultimately was exiled to Rangoon (now Yangon),¹⁷ where he died in 1862. Thus, the events of the Rebellion and its aftermath marked not only the end of the Mughal Empire, but the official beginning of the British Raj with the dissolution of the East India Company in 1858.

In his *History of Urdu Literature* (1964), Muhammad Sadiq expresses the now widely held belief that "[t]he beginnings of national sentiment go back to the Indian Mutiny"¹⁸--that the seeds of India as a unified nation began with this uprising in 1857 and ultimately flowered with Independence in 1947.¹⁹ At the same time, Sadiq cites the "Mutiny" as the first instance of broadly anti-Muslim sentiment in India: "As regards the Muslims, the Mutiny had completely shattered their power, ruined their prestige, and exposed them to a rapacity of vengeance of which there have been few examples in modern times."²⁰ One century earlier, for his part, Ghalib

¹⁵ Ibid., 43.

¹⁶ Ibid., 57-8.

¹⁷ Rangoon was also a British colony, part of modern-day Myanmar.

¹⁸ Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1964), 217.

¹⁹ I will come back to this idea in the next section. In fact, the 1857 Rebellion is sometimes referred to as The First War of Independence--a change of nomenclature that reflects a retroactive imagining of the process of decolonization in the context of the 20th century Indian nationalism.

²⁰ Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 227.

notes in *Dastambu* that the Hindus were able to return to their homes, but the Muslims remained in exile:

In January 1858, the Hindus were given a proclamation of freedom by which they were allowed to live again in the city, and these people have begun to return from the places where they had found refuge. But the houses of the dispossessed Muslims had long remained empty and were so covered with vegetation that the walls seemed to be made of grass--and every blade of grass tells that the house of the Muslim is still empty. [...] In the entire city of Delhi it is impossible to find more than one thousand Muslims; and I am one of these.²¹

The British antagonism toward Muslims continued even after the Rebellion, and, according to Sadiq, who is writing about the event from a post-Partition vantage point in the mid-twentieth century, left a lasting feeling of anxiety within the Muslim community in India: "The fact is that the Muslims, who had felt themselves at home in India for over eight centuries, had suddenly begun to feel that they were outsiders, having only a precarious tenure in it, after the Mutiny."²² Indeed, the British administrators' unequal treatment of Hindus and Muslims solidified by the Rebellion may be seen as creating a triangulation between Hindus, Muslims, and the British--one that was further displaced onto the language politics of Hindi, Urdu, and English--and that carried forth into the agitation between religious communities in the pre-national period, the creation of Pakistan as a separate state for Muslims, and the resulting communal violence of Partition.

Yet the relevance of Sadiq's comments on the sociopolitical results of the Rebellion to his broader enterprise of constructing a history of Urdu literature is not readily apparent, and bears explaining. To understand the connection between the Rebellion and the history of Urdu literature, let us see how 1857 figures in the fictionalized history of Ghalib's life constructed by Bengali novelist Rabisankar Bal in his 2012 novel *Dozakhnama* (subtitled in its English

²¹ Ghalib, *Dastanbūy: A Diary of the Indian Revolt of 1857*, 58-60.

²² Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 231.

translation as *Conversations in Hell*)--a text I will turn to in further detail at the end of this chapter. Bal's fictional Ghalib writes:

It is true that I lived another twelve years after 1857, but I did not care to talk to anyone. But still I had to speak, for selling words was my livelihood. But other than what was absolutely necessary to earn a living, speech had become haraam to me, it was profane. [...] Not a single ghazal came to me. How could it, tell me, how could it?²³

The notion that Ghalib could no longer compose ghazals after 1857 supports the broader narrative within the field of Urdu studies, which cites the 1857 Rebellion as a watershed moment that signaled the "end" of the era of the Urdu ghazal, and the beginning of the end for the Urdu language. If the Urdu ghazal "ended" in 1857, then in order to properly access this genre we require the intervention of historical narrative--implicitly understood as English because of the nature of the discipline of History, even when the narrative itself is not written in English.²⁴ In other words, when Sadiq describes the Rebellion as both the precursor to Partition and the end of Urdu ghazal, these assertions enable his own historical enterprise, positing History as a necessary discipline both for accessing Urdu literature and placing it within the contemporary South Asian sociopolitical landscape.

The symbolic significance of the Rebellion as the supposed "end" of Urdu ghazal represents the literary extension of the antagonism between the British and the elite Muslim classes during and after the Rebellion; between English and Urdu literature; and in the ways that these political and literary encounters have been read and canonized since that time. In the next section, I will show how Bahadur Shah Zafar himself holds key significance within the canonization of Ghalib and the ghazalization of Urdu more generally. But as we have seen above, Ghalib, too--especially in his role as the most widely celebrated and generally known Urdu poet-

²³ Rabisankar Bal, *Dozakhnama: Conversations in Hell*, trans. Arunava Sinha (Delhi: Random House India, 2012), 26.

²⁴ This idea is taken up in the next section.

-achieves canonicity at least partly because of the historical accident of the Rebellion and its broader implications for the increasingly tenuous place of Muslims in Indian society--a tenuousness that only increases with Partition in 1947.

To return again to Bal's vision of Ghalib--which encapsulates many of the popular ideas surrounding Ghalib and Urdu more broadly--death is essential to poetry: his Ghalib avers that "Poetry [...] is one's final words from the edge of the ravine, face to face with death." Furthermore, Ghalib describes communing with the dead spirits of Delhi, suggesting that they enable his poetry--that his poetry tells their story:

--Aren't you going to write about spirits like us?
--I will.
--No one will understand your ghazals in that case Asad sahib. Sadiq had laughed.
--Why?
--They will only get the stench of death. Do you know what will happen after that? Sadiq mian asked, laughing.
--What?
--You will die like a street dog.²⁵

This disturbing prophecy not only supports the innumerable struggles Ghalib faced throughout his life, not least of which involved a general lack of appreciation for his notoriously difficult poetic style, but foreshadows the extent to which Ghalib's own tragic and largely unmourned death has enabled the renewed afterlife that his poetry has enjoyed. Within this literary inheritance, Urdu poetry--like its paragon, Mirza Ghalib--must be dead to be celebrated; if we find, in the case of the ghazal and the Urdu language more broadly, that rumors of its death have been "greatly exaggerated," then at the same time, the perpetuation of these rumors plays a pivotal role in the continuance of its celebrity.

One comical example of the narrativization of Ghalib (and, by extension, Urdu) having died and come back to life is a play written by Sayyid Alam and performed by Pierrot's Troupe,

²⁵ Bal, *Dozakhnama: Conversations in Hell*, 97.

called "Ghalib in New Delhi."²⁶ Billed as "India's longest running comedy," the play opens with Mirza Ghalib reborn in today's New Delhi. As he wanders about marveling at the changes in the city and the decline of the Urdu language, he repeatedly gets mistaken either for his own ghost, or for the actors who have played him in movies. When a Bihari couple finally recognizes him as Ghalib himself, they initiate a marketing campaign that will allow his work to flourish in the cultural atmosphere of 21st century Delhi. Many of the jokes in the play revolve around Ghalib's inability to understand modern life, and particularly English: although the play is written and performed in Hindi/Urdu/Hindustani, Ghalib's character has trouble communicating with others because he cannot follow the English vocabulary that now populates the modern North Indian vernacular. (In one scene, for instance, Ghalib and his Bihari companion fail to communicate over the word "bathroom," which Ghalib refers to as *bayt ul-khala'*, or "room of privacy"--an Arabic phrase that sounds both archaic and elitist in Urdu--while his 21st century friend uses the English word.)²⁷ "Ghalib in New Delhi" also shows us, however, that Ghalib most effectively lives on while he is dead--though he is recognizable as the actors who portray him in canonizing films, or in the poetry that no longer reflects modern speech but nevertheless continues to inspire poets and audiences today, he struggles with his declining fame and celebrity once he comes back to life as himself.

Ghalib's afterlife--his own haunting of other poets, critics, and authors since his ignoble death in 1869--has been enabled through these types of translation, with English and Anglophone genres featuring as the primary means of narrativization via which Ghalib stands in for Urdu ghazal and the Urdu language as a whole. Not only is Ghalib the most widely translated Urdu

²⁶ Incidentally, Pierrot Troupe performs two different plays about Mirza Ghalib--the one discussed above is a comedy; another is a more straightforward biographical drama, "Mirza Ghalib," based on the popular film (1954) and TV serial (1988) of the same name.

²⁷ My thanks to Jaclyn Michael for her help in accessing this play.

author in a literal sense, with a proliferation of translations of his ghazals into English,²⁸ but he is also the subject of numerous biographical and pseudo-biographical texts that began to be published very shortly after his death, and which help "translate" Ghalib's broader significance for Urdu and its role in the modern Indian nation.

The most prominent of the early canonizing texts are Maulana Altaf Hussain Hālī's *Yādgar-i Ghālib* ("Memories of Ghalib", 1897) and Abdul-Rahman Bijnori's *Mahāsin-i Kalām-i Ghālib* ("The Beauty of Ghalib's Poetry", 1921);²⁹ the former sanctifies Ghalib into his current canonical status through minute biographical details and personal anecdotes, while the latter (quoted in the epigraph to this chapter) consists of an exegesis of his poetry, often through comparison with Western authors--both act as addenda to Ghalib's work that help us decipher his

²⁸ Perhaps the most well-known of these translations in the American academy is Aijaz Ahmad's *Ghazals of Ghalib* (1971), in which he provided prose gloss translations of Ghalib's work to English-language poets, including some as well-known as W.S. Merwin and Adrienne Rich. And yet, Ahmad writes: "This book proposes one thing--only one: translation is approximation" (xviii-xix), and that "I cannot say in what terms Ghalib's poetry is relevant to our times, or to English. I don't know in what sense poetry is *ever* relevant" (xxv). These two statements together seem to suggest an almost total disavowal of both translation and poetry that strikes the reader as an odd way to introduce a book of translated poems. And yet, despite Ahmad's otherwise astutely critiques of the ways in which Ghalib has been appropriated for various practices of Anglophone reading in the Victorian period, these statements are themselves symptomatic of the very reading practices of Urdu ghazal that I trace in this dissertation as a whole: first, a melancholic view of translation that dovetails with a melancholic longing for the former glory of the Urdu language and its most popular poetic genre; a belief in the general irrelevance and/or unboundedness of poetry to society or history in any context.

²⁹ Hālī (1837-1914), whose pen-name means "Modern" or "Contemporary," was the last pupil (*shāgird*) of Ghalib's before the Rebellion; after the Rebellion, he eventually made his way to Lahore from Delhi, and composed the *Muqaddamah-i Shair-o Shā'irī* ("Statement on Poetry"), which is now considered one of the foundational works of Urdu literary criticism along with Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt* (analyzed in the previous chapter). Like Azad's work, Hālī's *Muqaddamah* presented a damning critique of the Urdu ghazal, painting it as hackneyed, backward, and incompatible with modernity, instead favoring the Urdu *nazm* (free-verse poem) as the genre properly suited to Indian modernity.

Bijnori (1885-1918), on the other hand, was a graduate of Aligarh University, and an important Urdu literary scholar, though he gained less recognition than Hālī or Azad, perhaps owing to his short life.

work and its significance to the Urdu tradition.³⁰ Both texts use Western generic models of biography and/or textual criticism to achieve their canonization of Ghalib and his ghazals.³¹ Later texts--the poet Gulzar's mini-series *Mirza Ghalib*, which aired on the national television station Doordarshan in 1989 to wide popularity and critical acclaim, as well as imaginative novels like *Dozakhnama* or stage plays like Pierrot Troupe's "Ghalib in New Delhi" and "Mirza Ghalib"--circulate in English, even when the initial text was not written or performed in English. Gulzar's *Mirza Ghalib*, for instance, was written and performed in Urdu, but the English translation of the screenplay is still widely available in Indian bookstores; in my experience, if one walks into a bookstore in India and asks for any book on or by Mirza Ghalib, the English translation of Gulzar's *Mirza Ghalib: A Biographical Scenario* is almost universally the first, and often the only, suggested text for learning about the poet's life and work.³²

³⁰ In his Introduction to the 1951 edition to the *Mahāsin-i Kalām-i Ghālib*, Abdul Haq (one of the canonizers of modern Urdu literature, known as Bābā-i Urdu, or Father of Urdu) commented that a modern edition of Ghalib's *dīvān* should be published together with Bijnori's text so that readers could easily access Ghalib's poetry through Bijnori's interventions.

³¹ Of these two authors together, K.M. George writes: Hali inaugurated modern style theoretical and practical criticism in Urdu. He taught us comparative literature; he made us look beyond our immediate literary and cultural environment. There is no one writing in Urdu who is not in his debt. But he also gave us a terrible guilt complex. In making us re-value our past, he played in the Indo-Muslim predilection for self-doubt and self-denigration. [...] Also, we had to be reassured that what we had salvaged was of real value; and this could be possible only when we had some western master to say so. Small wonder, then, that Abdur Rahman Bijnori's *Mahasin-e Kalam-e Ghalib* (1921) became the standard point of departure. Bijnori [...] was well-versed in European and Indo-Persian literature. [...] And he peppered his book with first-hand references to Goethe, Rimbaud, Shakespeare, and a host of other European writers. After Bijnori, it became the fashion to plunder whatever western authors one could find (though never with the sensitive finesse of Bijnori) and apply ill-assorted quotes from them to Urdu literature, in order to bestow praise or blame. K. M. George and Akademi Sahitya, *Modern Indian Literature, an Anthology* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1992), 429.

³² Of course, although Gulzar claims that he wanted to clear up some misconceptions about Ghalib and popularize certain aspects of his life, his interpretation of Ghalib's life and work definitely tends toward the aggrandizing and certainly includes not strictly historical incidents that are nevertheless admitted into the broader canon of Ghalibiana, and are largely based on earlier fictional narrativizations of Ghalib's life, rather than biographies per se.

I partly understand the influence of Western aesthetic models on the Urdu tradition, and specifically Ghalib's role in building that tradition, through the extent to which Ghalib's persona easily fits into the Romantic model of art and artistic genius as "the lonely artist-hero whose suffering produces works of awe-inspiring greatness."³³ Indeed, although Ghalib's work was not fully appreciated during his lifetime--his ghazals were considered too obscure and difficult to be fully enjoyable--he has since that time become "universally perceived as the ideal *ghazal* or ghazal composer."³⁴ Although Ghalib's work still represents some of the most difficult Urdu ghazals, this difficulty is now perceived as a sign of the ghazal's greatness, rather than as an obstacle to its enjoyment. While this shift in the general reception of Ghalib's work may seem unremarkable, even cliché--i.e. an artist misunderstood and underappreciated in his own lifetime comes to achieve his full artistic due after his death, while the standards via which we judge artistic works have more to do with its "greatness" and less with its entertainment value--we must understand this change in public opinion, and the prevailing tropes around art and the artistic genius, as part of the broader influence of Western Romanticism on the development of Urdu literature and its canon.³⁵

³³ Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, The Oxford History of Western Music (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 649. Although Taruskin is writing about the canonization of Beethoven, his study also more broadly examines the extent to which canonized artists and authors reflect Romanticist values as they have persisted into the present day.

³⁴ Désoulières, "Images of a Historical Character: Mirza Ghalib," 227.

³⁵ Indeed, the common equation of ghazal with "lyric" poetry is another outgrowth of the multiple encounters between the Indo-Persian tradition and Western Orientalists and colonialists who have influenced the development and reception of that tradition--in this case, encounters that are heavily shaped by William Jones's definitions of lyric in his 1772 essays and translations. In the post-Romantic, Victorian context, we see the following result of the impact of English education: "Indians were themselves alienated from their own language and were brought up on huge chunks of Tennyson, Swinburne, Macaulay, Pater, and others. By the beginning of this [the twentieth] century there were numerous Indians who considered Ghalib both the greatest poet of Urdu that ever lived and a sort of native Tennyson. [...] If he [Ghalib] wasn't already a Victorian Romanticist, he had to be made into one; if the tradition of Urdu poetry wasn't already minor or

In the next section, I will trace the narrativization of Ghalib's canonicity for Urdu through the implicit relationship drawn between him and the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar in an English-language play, *Sons of Babur*. The play explicitly links Ghalib with Zafar, and Zafar with the entire Mughal dynasty before him, as well as the Indian Muslim community as it developed after him; in this play, the ghazalization of Urdu fundamentally shapes the development of the modern Indian nation state via the formation of the national Urdu imaginary.

"We are present and yet we are past": Indian National History in *Sons of Babur*

At stake in the question of Urdu's relationship to India is the broader question of the place of Muslims in the contemporary Indian nation. One legacy of the colonial-Orientalist era leading up to the 1947 Partition has been a nationalist narrative in which India is coded as properly Hindu, such that the question remains if and how Muslims can belong in India today. As I have suggested above, language and literature, and particularly the fabricated distinction between Hindi and Urdu, have constituted the terrain on which this question has been repeatedly posed and never fully answered: "the laborious historical process of creating two distinct language identities--a historical labor undertaken [...] first by Orientalists and then by Indian nationalists (and Muslim separatists)--remains still ongoing and incomplete."³⁶ And, furthermore, the

trivial, the design of the Empire demanded that triviality be imposed upon it. For decades major Urdu poets were being read according to standards set by minor English ones." Aijaz Ahmad, ed. *Ghazals of Ghalib* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), xix-xx. See Chapter Four of this dissertation for a more detailed analysis of the intersections of "ghazal" and "lyric," as well as the ways in which ghazal gets co-opted within Anglophone modes of reading poetry through successive periods from the Romantic to the Victorian to the Modern to the Post-Modern.

³⁶ Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 129.

mediation of English and Anglophone genres, like history, enables the continuation of Hindi-Urdu as a "singularity in contradiction."³⁷

The Hindu nationalist narrative--encapsulated by the phrase "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan,"³⁸ and inaugurated through the cultural logic of indigeneity that British Orientalist research in India then gifted to Indian subjects--is often disrupted through reference to the Mughals. While the Mughals represented for British Orientalists and colonial administrators, and then for Hindu nationalists, an anomaly in India's glorious Hindu past, those seeking to find a place for Muslims in contemporary India turn to historicizing the Mughal empire as deeply attached to the broader development of the nation of India. According to this logic, if the Mughals can be recovered for Indian nationalism, then Muslims in India today can, by extension, remain relevant to Indian society. The discourse of history, then, is the primary means via which the Mughal past is recuperated for the Indian present. As I will show below, Mughal history is made relevant to contemporary Indian culture and society in two interconnected ways: first, through the narrativization-ghazalization of Urdu poetry as an important national contribution that can be celebrated as part of Indian "culture"--with Ghalib as a national(ized) hero; and second, through a reading of the 1857 Rebellion--with Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal emperor, as its hero--as a historical precursor to Indian Independence in 1947.³⁹

As we will see in greater detail in Chapter 4, however, histories of Urdu literature have not generally recuperated the ghazal as a properly Indian form, instead focusing on its

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ For more on the significance of this phrase, see: Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harishchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997). Gyanendra Pandey, "'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan'," in *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³⁹ Not only are these two poets linked both in fact and in the Indian popular imagination, but many scholars also believe that many of the ghazals attributed to Zafar were in fact written by Ghalib. See below for another instance of popular misattribution of couplets to Zafar.

foreignness as a sign of its degeneracy. How, then, does Urdu ghazal come to be celebrated as an important part of Indian national culture? On the one hand, Urdu ghazal gets drawn into the discourse of world literature through its association with lyric poetry, and as such becomes idealized as a highly personal, explicitly apolitical, and transhistorical genre that at the same time emblemizes Indian culture. In this way, the discourse of world literature in fact props up nationalistic narratives by emphasizing national origins when literary texts appear (in translation) on the world stage. On the other hand, the numerous ways in which the ghazal fails to actually live up to the lyric idealization--its lack of any truly personal note because of its formulaic tropes and language, the extent to which it has always been associated with court patronage and politics, its weddedness to the discourse of history even when in seeming opposition to that discourse--become evidence of the form's backwardness, especially within Western academic works.⁴⁰

This apparent contradiction in the ways in which ghazal has been read and canonized--as both personal and impersonal, apolitical and political, transhistorical and deeply historical--comprises one of the primary concerns of this dissertation. As we will see below, whereas History has typically vilified the Urdu ghazal, fictionalized histories--such as *Dozakhnama*, or the film *Mirza Ghalib*, or the television serial of the same name--have aimed at redeeming the ghazal. While histories of Urdu literature have attempted to excise the ghazal as a part of the past that should not be carried into the present, historical fictions have demonstrated the many ways in which the Urdu ghazal, as a feature of the Mughal past, remains relevant to the Indian present. The latter approach more properly acknowledges ghazal's continued popularity, despite academic protestations wishing the genre away by repeatedly declaring its death.

⁴⁰ See Chapter Four for a more detailed presentation of this argument.

Within this literary landscape, one of the ways in which the politics and history of the 1857 Rebellion are wedded to the supposedly apolitical, transhistorical world of Urdu ghazal is through the figure of Bahadur Shah Zafar. As an extremely prolific poet, Zafar also stands out as an enduring symbol for Urdu ghazal. However, his ability to symbolize Urdu ghazal stems directly from his role as a political and historical figure: his embodiment of the Mughal empire, his ultimate defeat at the hands of the British, and his post-1857 exile and eventual death are often seen as metonymic of the fate of Urdu ghazal itself. In fact, several historical works suggest that the Mughal Empire came to an end in 1857 because of Bahadur Shah Zafar's predilection for composing Urdu ghazals, a pastime that came to symbolize his political and personal weakness.⁴¹ At the same time, his ghazals have become canonical at least partly because they are read as emblematic of his pain in losing the Mughal empire and his melancholic longing to return to India after living in forced exile in Burma after the Rebellion. In this sense, the deeply personal aspect of his post-exile ghazals are simultaneously explicitly responding to the historical and political events in which he himself participated as (erstwhile) ruler of India.⁴²

Zafar and Ghalib are therefore read together as mourning the end of the Indo-Muslim milieu that nurtured the very poetic form in which they write; that both of their pen-names mean

⁴¹ Tellingly, the two Mughal emperors most known for their poetry--i.e. Bahadur Shah Zafar (r. 1837-1857) and Shah Alam II, pen-name Aftab (r. 1759-1806)--are also the two most known for their defeats at the hands of the British.

Frances Pritchett cites this trend in *Nets of Awareness*, particularly naming Percival Spear's *Twilight of the Mughals* in the historiographical characterization of Zafar as "primarily a poet." Thomas Grahame Bailey also makes a similar claim in his *History of Urdu Literature*. See Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*. Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals: Studies in Late Mughul Delhi* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1951). Thomas Grahame Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: S. Sethi Publications, 1932).

⁴² Ironically, even while we read the pathos of Zafar's life into the affective power of his ghazals, he is also often perceived as a charlatan who plagiarized the poems of his poetic advisors, including Zauq and Ghalib. In this sense, Zafar is narrativized as both a failed ruler and a failed poet, even though ghazals attributed to him remain popular within the national Urdu imaginary because of their historical association with the decline of the Mughal empire.

"Victory" only further suggests the melancholic irony of their literary success in the context of the (supposed) total decay of their sociopolitical circumstances. The two figures were themselves acquainted: though Zafar continually passed up Ghalib as official court poet in favor of his rival, Zauq, he nonetheless commissioned Ghalib within the court after Zauq's death. Zafar also commissioned Ghalib to write a history of the Mughals--a task that Ghalib never completed due to lack of interest, and which he understood as an insult rather than an opportunity. However, when Zafar declared himself ruler of India during the events of the 1857 Rebellion, Ghalib wrote the inscription for the coins issued in Bahadur Shah Zafar's name.⁴³ The complicated historical relationship between these two figures suggests that they themselves represent two sides of the same coin of Urdu ghazal: where Ghalib--with his supposed distaste for performance and politics--represents the lyric idealization of ghazal, Zafar--with his role as failed political leader--represents the form's lyric shortcomings.

Furthermore, just as Ghalib is touted as both the ideal poet and ideal prose writer, so that he simultaneously represents the backwardness of his time as well as a nascent modernity, Zafar represents the backwardness of the Mughals through his inability to maintain his empire, while also representing the first progenitor of the idea of India through his symbolic significance as the leader of the Rebellion and a unified India. Indeed, in this section, I will show that this dual reading of Zafar's significance for both Urdu literature and Indian national history represents one of the primary ways in which the events of the 1857 Rebellion get translated into the events of the 1947 Partition--and the necessary intervention of Urdu literature in the prevalence of this implicit narrative that itself underpins the very notion of modern Indian selfhood.

⁴³ The issuing of coins was one of the primary ways in which rulers asserted their leadership after assuming the throne. That Ghalib wrote the inscription for Zafar's coins indicates his support for the Rebellion, despite his apparent support of the British in his account of the Rebellion, *Dastambu*, cited above.

Salman Khurshid's (2008) English-language play *Sons of Babur* memorializes Bahadur Shah Zafar's reign and its significance for the development of the Indian nation today. The title represents a translation of the pejorative term "Babur kī aulād," or "child/son of Babur," that right-wing Hindus use as an epithet against Muslims. The implication in this supposed insult is that Babur--the founder of the Mughal empire--was an outsider and foreigner, as well as a Muslim ruler, so that any Muslim in India today is by implication also not properly Indian. Khurshid took this as a starting point, writing a play that runs through the most famous anecdotes associated with each of the major Mughal rulers, and in the process demonstrating their "Indianness." Khurshid's goal, as Ather Farouqi notes in his Preface to the work, was to show that "the argument of [the Mughals'] being foreigners and alien to the land [of India] stands truly refuted by history" (xix). In recuperating the Mughal empire for modern-day India, Khurshid cites Zafar as the early progenitor of the idea of a united, unified India; as the subtitle of the work suggests, this is a "Play in Search of India," specifically through a retelling of Mughal history in light of the telos of Indian independence. In this work, Zafar symbolizes both the end of the Mughal Empire and the rise of independent India almost a century later.

The play opens with a young college student in Delhi, Rudranshu Mitra, who is a historian-in-the-making, and is himself writing a play about the Mughals, also called *Sons of Babur*. The self-referentiality in this frame story acts as a legitimating trope: if Rudra's play *Sons of Babur* represents the culmination of his career as a history student, then Khurshid's play *Sons of Babur* may also be thought of as a properly historical enterprise. In other words, the notion of writing a historical play, rather than a history proper, becomes a key facet in the text's legitimacy as historical narrative--fictionalized historical narrative is more properly historical than History

itself.⁴⁴ This notion is further emphasized by the "hands-on" and experiential nature of Rudra's research: in the process of researching for his historical play, Rudra begins to experience visions that allow him to travel through time to speak with Bahadur Shah Zafar after he has lost the Mughal throne and lives in exile in Rangoon (now Yangon). After their initial meetings during these experiences, Zafar acts as a guide for Rudra, and narrates events for him throughout further time-traveling experiences in which they witness some of the most famous events and anecdotes associated with various Mughal rulers.⁴⁵ Because Rudra's play is based on his direct experience with the Mughal rulers, rather than on historical documents and texts, we are again asked to see the play *Sons of Babur* as more truly historical than History.

Indeed, the role of the discipline of history in narrating historical events constitutes a sub-theme of the play; the narrative technique of time travel in order to depict historical events suggests a unique understanding of the relationship between past and present, as in this dialogue:

Rudra: You truly know more than any historian. But then you are part of history.

Zafar: History, indeed! We are present and yet we are the past.⁴⁶

Zafar's comment presents an organic definition of historicity--"we are present and yet we are the past"--that speaks to the extent to which the present-ness of the past plays a vital role in the canonization of Urdu ghazal as well as the ghazal's importance in translating the 1857 Rebellion

⁴⁴ Note that the importance of fiction or fictionalized history to the twin processes of narrativization and ghazalization was a key theme of the previous chapter: the "first" literary history of Urdu (Karimuddin's *Tabaqāt*) becomes a novella about an imaginary mushaira (Beg's *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'*), and this novella becomes a key text on which future narratives about Urdu are based--including, for instance, a 1953 film about Ghalib called *Mirza Ghalib*, explored in the next section.

⁴⁵ For those familiar with Bollywood, the plot structure very closely resembles that of the movie *Rang De Basanti*, although the film is concerned with some of the early anti-British freedom fighters, as opposed to Mughal history. At the same time, Khurshid's play posits Zafar as an early anti-British freedom fighter, so that the "translation" of this plot line in *Rang De Basanti* is not far off of Khurshid's text.

⁴⁶ Salman Khurshid and Circle Zakir Husain Study, *Sons of Babur: A Play in Search of India* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2008), 23.

into the 1947 Independence. Furthermore, this notion of effective history defines the proper role of the historian and the proper nature of historical narrative in positing these canonizing translations.

In another dialogue with Zafar, for instance, Rudra says: "[Y]ou lit the fire of freedom. You gave the sun of 15 August 1947 its resplendent glory. We discovered our freedom in your poetry."⁴⁷ In this nationalistic account of events, 1857 is directly tied to 1947, but both moments of violence are recuperated as moments of national glory--as an early spark of independence in 1857 that fully came to fruition with the birth of independent India in 1947. Although Zafar maintains a melancholy air throughout the play, lamenting the end of his empire and the rise of the British, Rudra repeatedly insists that "it is only our lack of imagination that confines us in this dark and stained hell-hole of history"⁴⁸ In the context of Khurshid's play, then, it is indeed the nationalistic imagination of historical events that links 1857 and 1947 while skimming over the "dark and stained hell-hole" of violence that these marked these very events.

As Rudra's aforementioned comment about poetry suggests, Zafar's ghazals are a key part of this contradictory legacy: Farouqi suggests of Khurshid that "the last Mughal captured his imagination not only as an intriguing tragic figure in Indian history, but also as one of the most endearing, easy to understand, Urdu poet [sic]. [...] Many of Zafar's mellifluous ghazals like, '*lagta nahin hai ji mera ujare dayar mei / kiski bani hai alam ...*' were extremely popular and, therefore, became for Salman Sahib's the nature stepping stones to the understanding and appreciation of Urdu poetry."⁴⁹ According this account, Khurshid's interest in Zafar as a "tragic" historical figure is inextricably intertwined with his strengths as an Urdu poet; moreover,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Ironically, and perhaps tellingly, it is the discourse of history itself (and its inauguration in 1857) that Ghalib refers to as "hell" and a "black hole" in Bal's *Dozakhnama*.

⁴⁹ Ibid., xv.

Khurshid developed an interest in both Indian history and Urdu poetry history as a whole through these twin aspects of Zafar's fame. However, the ongoing popularity of ghazal as an object of aesthetic beauty and lyrical ideals hides the contexts of violence, such as the 1857 Rebellion, that underwrite the canonization of the form.

The play, then, claims to portray the proper and heretofore untold narrative of Zafar's place in Indian history, but also places Urdu poetry at the center of that narrative. In one such moment, Rudra attempts to "restore" Zafar to India:

Rudra: Delhi lives, Your Majesty! We have rid ourselves of the British yoke more than half a century ago. We can now undo the wrongs of history, well, I mean we can at least take you home with honour to express our gratitude...

Zafar: So Mirza Ghalib laments no more?⁵⁰

While, on the one hand, Rudra's play is meant as a historical enterprise, on the other hand, it also acts as an antidote to the "wrongs of history"--especially through its focus on Urdu poetry as a crucial part of the historical narrative that the play builds. Zafar's response further demonstrates the importance of Urdu ghazal to the broader enterprise of history: Ghalib's canonization turns on readings of both his work and his life as ultimately concerned with lamenting the tragic decline of the Indo-Muslim milieu symbolized by the Mughal empire. At the same time, the question belies the very historicity that this canonization enables--for, indeed, the processes of canonization that have held Ghalib up as a tragic figure in the context of the events of 1857 ensure that we will continue to hear Ghalib's laments over and over again--that our hearing Ghalib's poetry as a lament for the Delhi of 1857 is essential to the teleology of Indian independence and, furthermore, to our understanding of the place of Urdu and Muslims in India today.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

In another scene that demonstrates the need to restore Mughal history to the modern Indian nation through (fictionalized) historical narrative, we see an exchange between Rudra and his friends discussing the former's semi-supernatural experiences communing with Bahadur Shah Zafar:

Rudra: It seemed like he [Zafar] wanted to reach out and share something. He is like a voice from the past clamouring to be heard; an unfinished tale of a storyteller.

Sarah: An emperor's unfinished quest... What were those lines by Bahadur Shah about two days of desire and two days of existence?

Prabhat: Umre daraz maang ke laye the chaar din; do arzoo mein guzar gaye, do intezaar mein [Having prayed for a long life, God gave me four days; two passed in dreaming, two in waiting.]⁵¹

In this brief exchange, Rudra's history becomes Zafar's story, which then becomes emblematic of Zafar's poetry; in this way, Khurshid frames Zafar's poetry within the "unfinished tale" of Mughal history, especially the place of Mughal history within the broader national narrative of a unified, independent India. Zafar's disembodied poetic voice melds with an imagination of his role as a major proto-national figure, and together these abstractions suggest the need for a (historical) narrative linking the two. Thus, the "dream" of the Mughal empire lies "waiting" for history to (anachronistically) redeem it in the context of modern Indian nationalism.

And yet, while this very couplet is one of the most famous attributed to Bahadur Shah Zafar, it was in fact written by Seemab Akbarabadi, a minor, lesser known Urdu poet. This popular mis-attribution of authorship reflects the extent to which Zafar's exile lends weight to the sentiment in the verse: as one Urdu enthusiast put it, "Those words lose all potency when ascribed to some minor poet; even as an anti-royalist one can see their poignancy derives from the personal weight of grief they carry."⁵² This couplet, then, circulates popularly through a

⁵¹ Ibid., 17. Transliteration is as printed; translation is mine.

⁵² Rukhsana Ahmad, email, September 21, 2015. Note that this reader looking for "the personal weight of grief" suggests that a lyricized understanding of poetry is also at play here (see the

process of narrativization that provides compelling context--the story of the exiled Mughal ruler lamenting his fate--for its affective impact; the complementary process of ghazalization ensures that audiences are attuned to the ghazal as a genre reflective of the Indian Muslim community as a whole. Salman Khurshid's play, *Sons of Babur*, participates in both of these processes by canonizing Ghalib and Zafar together in the context of Mughal history re-envisioned as Indian--and more specifically, Indo-Muslim--history. In the next section, I will show how Urdu ghazal's association with death--a theme we have seen repeatedly thus far--plays out in the imagined relationship between Ghalib and canonical Urdu short story writer Saadat Hasan Manto.

Lovers and Graves: Ghalib via Manto

The pre-national period, during which the Hindi-Urdu language debates were raging, also saw the rise of the most important organization for Urdu literature of the 20th century: the Progressive Writers' Movement. Officially founded by Sajjad Zaheer in 1936, the Progressive Writers declared a commitment to Marxist-oriented "vernacular" literature--whether coded as "Hindi" or "Urdu"--that captured the struggles of the proletariat.⁵³ Ironically, however, or a least

following chapter for more on this). In addition, another widely known verse is also falsely attributed to Bahadur Shah Zafar: *nā kisī kī ānkh kā nūr hūn, nā kisī ke dil kā qarār hūn / jo kisī kā kām nā ā sake, main who ek musht-i ghubār hūn* [I'm neither the light of anyone's eyes, nor peace for anyone's heart / I am that fistful of dust that's of no use to anyone]. This misattribution is at least in part due to circulation of this poem as sung by Mohammad Rafi for the Bollywood movie *Lal Quila* (1960), a Muslim historical film about the end of the Mughal empire and the 1857 Rebellion. Recently, Javed Akhtar (a famous Urdu poet and lyricist for Bollywood) has come forward with manuscript evidence that this verse was in fact written by his grandfather, semi-obscure Urdu poet Muztar Khairabadi. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/music/na-kisi-ki-aankh-ka-noor-hoon-was-written-by-my-grandfather/story-GibYWG0IWAePqsoYfGzXfN.html>

⁵³ Premchand, one of the most famous writers of the PWM, wrote in both Hindi and Urdu, often producing "translations" of his stories from one language to another. Other writers attempted to capture local, "rustic" dialects of Hindi/Urdu, such as Braj Bhasha, through their development of agrarian and/or low-caste characters--in some ways, the attention to "lower" registers of

unexpectedly, the literary figure that the Progressives repeatedly turned to as an early example of Progressive ideals was none other than Ghalib himself; Sajjad Zaheer himself insists: "The entire edifice of modern progressive Urdu poetry cannot be conceived, neither could it have been built without the magnificent inheritance of Ghalib. The debt we owe him is immeasurable."⁵⁴ With what we have seen of Ghalib's aristocratic blood and habits, however, elevating him as the progenitor of "modern progressive" literature seems unlikely at best.

However, Zaheer sees Ghalib as ultimately rejecting the aristocratic and elitist conventions of his time in order to celebrate the struggle and perseverance of the universal human spirit in the face of tyranny:

Ghalib is one of those geniuses who, in his broad imaginative sweep, gathered, as it were, all of the rich heritage of our cultural past; the anguish of the Indian soul of the present - that is, the period in which Ghalib lived; the unhappy epoch of the decay of Indian political and social fabric of the 18th and 19th centuries; and finally the irrepressible aspiration and vision of human freedom and of a new life of the future. [...] The greatness of Ghalib lies in the fact that living in a society and belonging to a class-the nobility-stricken, as it were, with a galloping mortal disease of degeneration and decay-- he himself being always in financial difficulties and various other personal unhappinesses, yet had the intellectual and moral strength to see the grandeur and greatness of man as such; to doubt and reject boldly the prevailing superstitions of his time; to proclaim with unsurpassed vehemence and with exquisite artistic beauty his faith, in the elan vital of human beings, which braving all suffering misery, persecution, and injustices, continuously leads them through struggle to higher and higher spiritual, material, and moral heights.⁵⁵

The Progressives see Ghalib as a victim of his own nobility, and a prime example of everything wrong with the elitism of the previous (Mughal) order, while reclaiming his personal suffering as a site of identification with proletarian struggle that informed the artistry of his work and allowed

Hindi/Urdu helped skirt the language question by appealing to primarily oral dialects claimed by both linguistic traditions.

⁵⁴ Sajjad Zaheer, "Ghalib and the Progressives," in *International Ghalib Seminar*, ed. Yusuf Husain Khan (Delhī: Kūh-i Nūr Printing Press, 1969), 121.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 110-12.

for the universal celebration of humanistic ideals in his poetic expression.⁵⁶ In what I have already shown of Ghalib's canonization, we can see how Zaheer's characterization is in many ways far removed, even laughably so, from today's mainstream perception of Ghalib as a national figure known for his aristocratic habits and elitist pride. However, the Progressive view of Ghalib provides yet another example of the contradictory ways in which "Urdu" and "Ghalib" act as signifiers today--as both elitist and vernacular, as both dead and immortal.

Yet Zaheer was not alone in his idolization of Ghalib: of the many now-canonical authors who participated to varying degrees in the Progressive Writers Movement, one of the most significant is Urdu's--and perhaps South Asia's--most famous short story writer, Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955). Born in Amritsar, Panjab, Manto initially began his literary career editing Urdu magazines and working for the Bombay film industry, composing stories and dialogues for major films. After Independence in 1947, Manto reluctantly left his beloved Bombay for Lahore, but never fully reconciled to being in Pakistan. While he had suffered from alcohol addiction for much of his adult life, his alcoholism worsened severely after leaving Bombay, and he was twice admitted to an insane asylum as treatment for his addiction--ultimately dying of liver cirrhosis at the young age of 43. His most well-known short stories deal with the horrors of Partition--its violence, its madness, and its effects on the daily lives of ordinary individuals. He is also known

⁵⁶ As Syed Akbar Hyder notes in his article on the subject, it is through the work of Ghalib's early canonizers--Altaf Hussain Hali, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, and Iqbal--that the Progressives are able to recuperate Ghalib's poetry for the Marxist cause. He writes: "Such a view of Ghalib, of course, camouflages the resolutely aristocratic social code that had prescribed the poet's own life... But Ghalib's playful poetic subversion was what the Progressives are overly prone to see. The verses of this nineteenth-century poet have been dynamic enough to easily gain contemporary valence and rhetorically suit multiple, even conflicting, agendas at once" (472). While Hyder is appropriately critical of the Progressives' rhetoric in their adoption of Ghalib, he nonetheless himself sees Ghalib as an early example of a "cosmopolitan ethos or ethics" that he insists we must reclaim in the contemporary moment as an antidote to communal sectarianism. Syed Akbar Hyder, "Ghalib and His Interlocutors," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 26, no. 3 (2006).

for several short stories that encapsulate the ethos of the Progressive Writers Movement, with which he was loosely affiliated; these texts focus on lower class and socially marginalized individuals, particularly prostitutes and pimps, depicting their humanity within the context of their daily struggles.

In addition, however, Manto also produced multiple works on the life of Mirza Ghalib, with whom he imagined an affinity of personality and artistic spirit. Manto wrote three works on Ghalib's life: a one-act play, "Ghalib aur sarkarī mulāzimat" ("Ghalib and government employment"); a short story, "Āgrā mein mirzā naushā kī zindagī" ("Mirza Nausha [i.e. Ghalib's] life in Agra"); and a short drama, "Ghalib aur chaudvīn" ("Ghalib and Chaudvin"). The last of these later became the storyline for Sohrab Modi's Bollywood film *Mirza Ghalib* (1954); however, because Manto had already left for Pakistan, Rajinder Singh Bedi--another giant of the Progressive Writers Movement--composed the dialogues for the film.

The film plot focuses on Ghalib's romantic relationship with a courtesan, whom he calls Chaudvin. At the beginning of the story, Ghalib fails to impress his contemporaries with the verses he reads at a royal mushaira;⁵⁷ returning home defeated and insulted, he overhears a courtesan singing his poetry, and decides to visit her. She is passionate about Ghalib's poetry, but has never seen him, and so does not recognize him when he appears before her. Although Ghalib recites his poetry for her--the same ghazal that failed at the mushaira--she does not listen, because she is waiting for another client, Hashmat Khan, who has attended the mushaira and will bring the latest of Ghalib's verses for her. Only after Ghalib leaves and Hashmat Khan brings her the same ghazal does she realize she was speaking with Ghalib himself; she immediately falls in love with him, much to the despair of Hashmat Khan, to whom Chaudvin is already engaged.

⁵⁷ This mushaira is based on *Dilli Ki Akhri Shama'*, by Farhatullah Beg, analyzed in Chapter Two.

Angered and humiliated, Hashmat Khan, who is the city kotval (sheriff), seeks revenge against Ghalib; he catches him gambling and drinking (vices for which he was infamous), and throws him in jail. Although in the meantime Chaudvin's singing has helped bring Ghalib to fame and acceptance with Bahadur Shah Zafar at the court, the imprisoned Ghalib can never enjoy this newfound respect; furthermore, Chaudvin has fallen ill, and by the time Ghalib is released from jail, it is too late--she dies in his arms. The film ends with Ghalib and his wife attending Chaudvin's funeral.

The romantic encounter with the courtesan recounted in the film is loosely based on information recorded in Ghalib's letters; however, at the film's outset, the viewer is cautioned not to view the events depicted as historically accurate with the following disclaimer (written in both Hindi and Urdu): "This movie is a dramatized film based on a few real incidents in Mirza Ghalib's life, in which quite a few imaginary incidents are also included, and which should not be understood as historical."

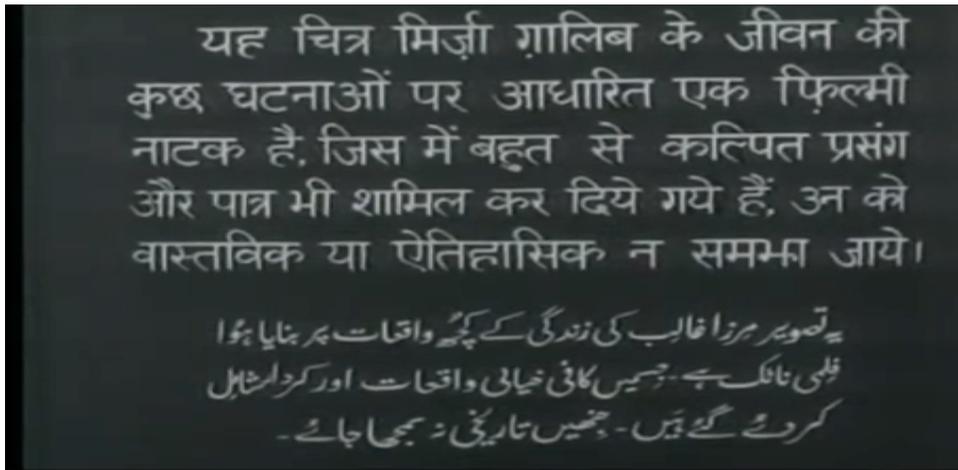


Figure 3: Screenshot of the opening text from the film *Mirza Ghalib*, disclaiming any pretenses to historical accuracy--first in Hindi, with Devanagari script, as follows: "Yeh chitra Mirza Ghalib ke jīvan kī kuchh ghatnāon par ādhārit ek filmī nātak hai, jis mein bahut se kalpit prasang aur patra bhī shāmil kar diye gaye hain, un ko vāstavik yā itihāsik na samjhā jāe." Below this, the message appears written in Urdu, with Perso-Arabic script: "Yeh tasvīr Mirzā Ghālib kī zindagī ke kuch vāq'āt par banāyā huā filmī nātak hai. Jis mein kāfī khayālī vāq'āt aur farad shāmil kar diye gaye hain. Jinhein tārikhī nah samjhā jāe."

At the same time, the extent to which Modi's film--and Gulzar's 1988 Doordarshan serial, which also recounts this plotline--has figured in the broader process of Mirza Ghalib's canonization should not be underestimated. As Alain Desoulières notes in his article on this storyline's appearance in Manto's, Modi's, and Gulzar's texts, the idea of both the "romantic and unhappy poet"--i.e. Ghalib unhappily married, and also caught in a love triangle with his beloved courtesan--and the "rejected poet"--i.e. unappreciated by the court except for the intervention of his paramour--has influenced Ghalib's reception since the mid-twentieth century.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the sung versions of Ghalib's ghazals in both Modi's film and Gulzar's serial have been some of the most popular and widely consumed renditions of Ghalib's work, further supporting a subtext of Modi's film: that while Ghalib's ghazals are notoriously difficult to understand, and hence often go unappreciated, their true worth comes to light via the beauty of sung performance.

Naseem Hines notes that the ghazals performed in both Modi's and Gulzar's portrayals of Ghalib are specifically love-related ghazals; the directors' exclusion of more mystical or complicated verses is a process she terms "romanticizing the ghazal."⁵⁹ Allen and Bhaskar refer to the film itself as both a ghazal and a lyric:⁶⁰ rather than portraying the broad narrative of

⁵⁸ Désoulières, "Images of a Historical Character: Mirza Ghalib," 234.

⁵⁹ She writes: "Film and television directors have contributed significantly to preserve a memory of 'Indo-Muslim' culture. Simultaneously, they maintain an agenda to entertain through love stories. This has caused significant changes to the Urdu literature they present: the ghazal becomes 'tailored'-to-entertainment needs through a 'cut and paste' process. This is not without consequences: the culture it represents also becomes stereotyped." Naseem Hines, "From Ghazal to Film Music: The Case of Mirza Ghalib," in *Indian Literature and Popular Cinema: Recasting Classics*, ed. Heidi Pauwels (London: Routledge, 2007), 162.

⁶⁰ Richard Allen and Ira Bhaskar, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema* (Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009), 136. They also note that the film draws a triangular relationship between Ghalib, Bahadur Shah Zafar, and Delhi, positing them as "the three coordinates through which the end of an epoch, a sense of loss and wistful yearning at this loss are articulated. Ghalib's poetry then becomes the voice through which this elegy for a disappearing world is sung" (125). Note the

Ghalib's life as a traditional bio-pic or historical film would, the film's focus on Ghalib and Chaudhvin's relationship gives "the quality of a lyric where the focus is not on narrative chain of events but on the emotional intensities and variations of feeling of the protagonists."⁶¹

Furthermore, the authors argue that "The ghazal, its poet and his beloved together express in full emotional amplitude and power, the shared yearning, the evocation of all that was lost and the brilliance of 'the flame (that) burns in many coloured hues' before the age died out."⁶²

However, in the historical context of the film's release, there was a felt need after Partition for cultural products that recuperated the Muslim past as Indian--indeed to create a post-national "Indo-Muslim" culture in the wake of some of the most horrific violence the world had ever seen. In that regard, one of the reviews of the film upon its release in 1953 is telling:

The story by S.H. Manto and the screen-play by J. K. Nanda exploit this brilliant array of talent and personality [of the film's actors] to good advantage. They convey the spirit rather than the actual record of the romantic association. But the narrative is close enough to the pattern of the lives it depicts, and it derives from the authenticity of atmosphere, climate, society, and environment sufficient substance to make the departure from recorded fact--dictated partly by dramatic considerations and no doubt by a lively regard for the censors and for unpredictable communal reactions--of little importance.⁶³

The reviewer's emphasis on the "authenticity" of the film's broader depiction of Mughal ("Muslim") culture over and against any departures from historical reality in the story's depiction of Ghalib himself shows the extent to which these two entities--Ghalib and his milieu--are necessarily intertwined and often fungible in the Indian national imagination. Furthermore, his emphasis on the three factors influencing the film's production--dramatic appeal, the censor

slippage between "poetry" and "voice" in Allen and Bhaskar's description. I am thankful to Jaelyn Michael for this reference.

⁶¹ Ibid., 132.

⁶² Ibid., 126.

⁶³ "'Mirza Ghalib" a Feast for Lovers of Famous Poet," *Times of India*, December 12, 1954.

board, and "unpredictable communal reactions"--demonstrate the importance of the post-Partition context to the development of the film's portrayal of Mughal/Indo-Muslim culture.

In short, then, we may see the film as romanticizing not only the ghazal, but also Ghalib himself,⁶⁴ and in so doing, presenting a model of canonization that extends to the Urdu language as a whole. The film supports, and indeed helps create, Urdu's position in India as a symbol of Muslim culture--construed as foreign and obsolete, but nevertheless aesthetically beautiful and ultimately necessary as cultural artifact. The simultaneous popularity and suspicion surrounding Urdu as a signifier of Indian Muslim identity results in attempts such as these to "recover" Urdu for the secular-Hindu Indian nation; a notion further supported by the fact that Modi's *Mirza Ghalib* was the first film of newly independent India to win the National Film Award in 1955.

We may also see further examples of the important role Modi's film played in cementing Ghalib's status as a literary giant of India. For instance, prior to the success of Modi's film, Ghalib lay in an unmarked grave in a family cemetery that was largely destroyed during the looting and rioting of Partiton. In 1969, however, Hakim Abdul Hamid renovated Ghalib's grave and established the Ghalib Academy for the promotion of Urdu literature within the same compound. His efforts were aided by Sohrab Modi, who reportedly used some of the profits from the film toward the small structure of white marble and the flowered courtyard that now marks the poet's grave. (Today, Ghalib's tomb draws dozens of visitors per day, and those that come to pay homage often solemnly pray at his grave, or lovingly place garlands of flowers at its head.)

One of the primary themes of this dissertation is the manner in which historical narratives--including fictionalized histories like Modi's film *Mirza Ghalib*--feed into the lived

⁶⁴ As mentioned earlier, this model of canonization fits an idealized model of art and the artist that was cemented in the modern imagination during the Romantic period; in other words, Ghalib is both romanticized and Romanticized.

historicity of Ghalib as a canonical author and the role his literature plays in the national Urdu imaginary in India--as in Modi's use of the proceeds from his film to help renovate Ghalib's grave and establish the Ghalib Academy. Moments such as these--in which literary figures inspire historical and literary narratives, which in turn further promote the prominence of these very literary figures--help demonstrate the importance of literature to our understanding of history, and especially the relevance of that history to the present moment. In the South Asian context, where the discourse of History is fraught with the development of that discipline in the context of colonialism and amidst broader concerns of civilizational progress, turning to literature--and even literary analysis of historical narratives--in order to grasp the relationship of past to present becomes all the more vital to understanding Indian society and politics today.

On the other hand, while Modi's film stands today as one of the most important moments in the history of Ghalib reception, Manto himself felt perpetually guilty about the Ghalib-related texts he wrote. In a letter to a friend, Manto describes a conversation he had with Ghalib during a hallucination induced by alcohol withdrawal: in the conversation, Ghalib complains that Manto "steals his verses" for his stories and writes a film story in which "all of [his] defects are shown."⁶⁵ This notion of an imagined dialogue between these two major figures of Urdu literature has recently been taken up Rabisankar Bal in his novel *Dozakhnama*: Bal not only constructs a posthumous dialogue between the two authors as they lie in their graves, but also intentionally focuses on both of their defects--their addictions, their pride, their neglect of family life, their repeated financial blunders, their tortured artistic lives--as integral to their dual canonization within the realm of Urdu literature, and South Asian literature more broadly.

⁶⁵ Désoulières, "Images of a Historical Character: Mirza Ghalib," 228.

The novel opens with the narrator finding an Urdu manuscript written by Manto about Ghalib; drawn in by his own passion for both Manto and Ghalib, the narrator attempts to learn to read Urdu in order to translate the text, but fails, and ultimately accesses the text by having it read aloud to him (and by extension, to us, the readers) by his Urdu teacher, Tabassum. Within the text of the manuscript, we find that Manto's obsessive need to narrativize, even in death, leads him to narrate both his own personal biography and, through dialogue, Ghalib's biography. In the introduction, Manto writes:

Mirza will talk to me now, we will converse continually. All those things that Mirza hasn't been able to tell anyone, that I haven't been able to tell anyone, all--we'll talk of them all as we live in our graves. Mirza is lying far away in Dilli, in Sultanji's graveyard near Nizamuddin Auliya, and I, in Lahore, in Mian Saheta's. It was the same country once, after all; no matter how many barbed wires there may be on the surface, in the depths of the earth, it's one country, one world. Has anyone ever been able to prevent the dead from talking to one another?⁶⁶

Death is essential to Manto's (and Bal's) narrative because it allows him to transcend the boundaries imposed on living speech--especially the boundaries of space as policed and politicized through the Partition of South Asia into India and Pakistan. In this vision of unbounded speech--of secrets revealed and borders traversed--Manto not only expresses the utopian cosmopolitanism of death, but also insists on the dialogic nature of past and present: "There's no Manto without Mirza," he says, "perhaps there's no Mirza without Manto either."⁶⁷

This dialogic and interdefining relationship between Manto and Ghalib carries over into the historical periods their names have come to represent; Manto says:

In 1947, I saw how the curtain of death wipes out everything. By the grace of God, you did not have to see this. You saw 1857. But if you had seen 1947, Mirza sahib, you would have killed yourself. [...] The world has never seen so much killing, so many rapes, such

⁶⁶ Bal, *Dozakhnama: Conversations in Hell*, 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

treachery, all of which began in 1947 on the pretext of there being two nations; today, you lie in a grave in one of those countries, and I, in a grave in the other.⁶⁸

In this passage, Bal not only draws a direct link between the violence of 1857 and 1947, but also notes how the result of this near-century of violence has been to bifurcate these two kindred spirits of the Urdu language, and, by extension, the Urdu and Indo-Muslim tradition as a whole. The creation of these national boundaries through violence must therefore be overcome through a recuperation of this tradition over and against the appearance of its death and/or irrelevance to modern life.

This transcendence of boundaries extends to the translation work that the narrator undertakes with his *Tabassum* throughout the frame story; faced with a script that he ultimately finds indecipherable, the narrator ultimately accesses the text through his tutor's oral performance of the written manuscript. The narrator's skirting of script holds special significance in the context of Urdu literature; heated battles over language scripts in India have existed since the nineteenth century and continue even today, especially as script is often used to differentiate Hindi (written in the Indic Devanagari script) and Urdu (written in Perso-Arabic script) as separate languages, although they are often mutually intelligible in their daily spoken forms. When the narrator ultimately finds the Urdu script impossible to read, this aspect of Bal's narrative confirms centuries of debates about the Urdu written language, and especially its script, as impractical at best and indecipherable at worst.

At the same time, the narrator's passion for the substance of Urdu literature and its two most canonical authors--Ghalib the poet, and Manto the short story writer--remains undiminished by his failure to read the script, and furthermore, is aided through the dialogue with and oral performance of his Urdu teacher. From the very beginning of the novel, then, *Tabassum's* role

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

has less to do with teaching Urdu language or script, and more to do with enabling the narrator's access to Urdu literature through the translation of writing to speech, of Urdu to English.

In short, both biography and translation happen through dialogue; dialogue makes the past relevant to the present--makes history into effective history--and privileges orality over script as a site of poetic idealization.⁶⁹ Indeed, as we will see over and over in the histories and fictionalized histories examined below, the very relationship of past to present is itself a question of translation: Ghalib gets "translated" as an important figure for contemporary Indian Islam; the 1857 Indian Rebellion gets "translated" into the 1947 Partition/Independence; and these historical events and figures are themselves "translated" through the discipline of History (coded as linguistically and culturally English) in order for to make these historical rebirths legible. Although Hindi is most often cited as Urdu's other, part of what I aim to show here is the way in which this seeming opposition is in fact brought about through a triangular relationship between Hindi, Urdu, and English. In the next and concluding section, I will show how this triangulation is often held up as a model that allows for the operation of an idealized Indian secularism understood as the peaceful coexistence of religious communities configured through the depoliticized universalism of shared literary traditions.

"Ram Speaks Urdu": Ghalib as Secularizing Islam

In his 1927 *History of Urdu Literature*, Ram Babu Saksena explicitly views his historical endeavor as a means of achieving peace between sparring religious communities in India; in his preface, he writes: "I shall feel amply repaid for my labours if it succeeds in arousing some interest in this noble literature, the best symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity, and in inspiring others to

⁶⁹ See Chapter Five and the Coda of this work on the role of orality in the ghazalization of Urdu, particularly through the operation of what I am calling a "mushaira imaginary."

build a noble structure of which this work is merely a slight ground-work."⁷⁰ Roughly 40 years later, after Urdu literature's failure to avert the violence of 1947, Muhammad Sadiq's post-Partition *History* (1965) cites Partition as directly responsible for a drought in the state of the Urdu literary field: "The blight that has fallen on literature since 1947 is, in some respects, the direct result of the Partition and its aftermath. The Partition has put an extraordinary premium on religiosity and intolerance, and middle-class utterances have since then acquired a stridency that recalls the Middle Ages."⁷¹ For Sadiq, and for many others, Partition--and the extremist religious communalism that that event represents--jeopardized the secular character of Urdu literature. Indeed, the Progressive Writers Movement--including such figures as Sajjad Zaheer and Saadat Hasan Manto, mentioned in the previous section--took an active role in shaping a secular canon for Urdu literature, redeeming the ghazal through Ghalib as a representative of secular Islam.

Wide enjoyment of the ghazal that stretches well beyond the confines of the Muslim community in India not only helps redeem Indian Islam on the basis of aesthetic and literary contributions to the Indian nation (and the world), as I have argued above, but furthermore, through the particularly secular character of the genre. While the Urdu language is seen in the national Urdu imaginary as irrevocably foreign and ultimately incompatible with modern Indian identity, Urdu ghazal stands in for a safe, "secular" Islam that can and should be nationally celebrated. Within this context, Ghalib appears as a decidedly secular figure whose work enables Indian Islam to flourish as a culture, rather than a religion. Indeed, we can see this logic at play in the quote from Abdul-Rahman Bijnori with which I opened this chapter: the two "divine" or

⁷⁰ Saksena, *A History of Urdu Literature*, ii.

⁷¹ Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 406.

"divinely inspired" (*ilhāmī*) books of India are the Vedas and the poetry of Ghalib--both meant to stand in for Indian religious traditions constructed on the basis of a central text.⁷²

Once again, the stories popularly associated with Ghalib's life support this vision of Ghalib as a representative of secular Islam; for instance, Ghalib was once asked by a British official whether he was Muslim, to which he famously replied, "I am half Muslim: I drink wine, but I refrain from pork."⁷³ This incident is widely circulated amongst Urdu lovers, and is also cited in Syed Akbar Hyder's article on Ghalib as a cosmopolitan figure; Hyder closes this work with a call to action: "In the world of 2006, where differences born of rigid categories break out with virulence while our geography shrinks, where civilizations are made to clash, and where images of solipsism and intolerance inundate our existence, we must reclaim Ghalib's poetic and cultural space of imagination and cosmopolitanism."⁷⁴ In the triangulation posed between Hindi, Urdu, and English as mapped onto Hindu, Muslim, and British/global communities, Ghalib's ability to embody Urdu and Indian Islam becomes a key means via which moments of historical violence between these communities can be papered over and recast as moments of tolerance and understanding.

On a popular level, one of the imaginative ways that Ghalib and Urdu are reclaimed for the secular-Hindu Indian nation comes in the form of popular folk dramas called Ramlilas, which are dramatic re-enactments of the life of Ram undertaken in communities across India during an autumn festival. For instance, one article from 2014 reporting on the use of Urdu in a Ramlila

⁷² This particular view of religion--as a set of core tenets laid out in a central religious text (like the Torah, the Bible, or the Qur'an)--conforms to a secular-Christian understanding of religion, itself produced under the same circumstances of Orientalism and colonialism that produced world literature.

⁷³ Altaf Husain Hali, *Yadgar-I Ghalib (Memories of Ghalib)* (New Delhi: Ghalib Institute, 1986), 77.

⁷⁴ Hyder, "Ghalib and His Interlocutors," 475.

production is headlined "Real secularism: Lord Ram speaks in Urdu at Panjab University Ramlila."⁷⁵ Here, the appearance of Urdu in a Hindu religious drama taking place in Panjab--the region that experienced the greatest violence during Partition--represents an idealized moment of syncretism for the Indian nation. The reference to "secularism" here ties into a uniquely Indian notion of the secular as a space unfettered by religious or communal attachment; in the shadow of the continuing legacy of the bloodiness of Partition, then, Ram "speaking Urdu" in the heart of Panjab represents an attempt to recover Urdu, not as itself a secular language, but as a "safe" language compatible with modern Indian secularism.

Or perhaps more strikingly with reference to Ghalib in particular, a headline in *The Times of India* from September 2014 announced that "In Faridabad, Ram spouts Urdu couplets."⁷⁶ Another news outlet, NDTV, reported that "The Great Indian Epic, Ramayana, Gets an Urdu Twist." While most of these folk productions are based on the poet Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas*, a 16th century poetic version of the *Ramayana* written in Avadhi (now considered a folk dialect of modern Hindi, though with a significantly higher percentage of Perso-Arabic words than Modern Standard Hindi), these headlines report the reinterpretation of this tradition by a group in Faridabad, called the Shri Shradda Ramlila Committee, who sprinkle Urdu couplets by Ghalib throughout their script. The articles not only comment on the strangeness of what they call a "Mirza Ghalib meets Tulsidas scenario," but also on the immense popularity of the group's endeavor: whereas many Ramlilas go mostly unattended, this group's production attracts large crowds. In interviews regarding this "unusual" mixing of traditions, the group notes that their "ancestors migrated from Pakistan to India" in 1976, bringing Urdu with them; at the same time,

⁷⁵ Vivek Gupta, "Real Secularism: Lord Ram Speaks in Urdu at Panjab University Ramlila," *Hindustan Times*, September 29 2014.

⁷⁶ Maria Akram, "In Faridabad, Ram Spouts Urdu Couplets," *Times of India*, September 26 2014.

the group admits to changing many of the Urdu words to Hindi to allow for wider comprehension amongst Indian audiences.⁷⁷

Ghalib's appearance in the Ramlila is predicated on a reversal of the migration patterns of Muslims during Partition, which is itself posed as a natural division retro-projected back into time (implied by the interviewee's use of the word "ancestors" for family members that were migrating as recently as 1976). The notion that Ghalib rhetorically arrived in India from Pakistan situates Urdu as India's dangerous other than can (and must) nevertheless be safely incorporated into Indian national culture. As the symbolism of Ghalib's canonicity reveals, Urdu today holds a fraught position in India as a symbol of Muslim culture construed as foreign, backward, and dangerous in comparison to the autochthony and modernity of Hinduism and Hindi. The simultaneous popularity and suspicion surrounding Urdu as a signifier of Indian Muslim identity results in repeated attempts to "recover" Urdu for the secular-Hindu Indian nation. Notably, English and Anglophone genres play a key role in this project of recovery, where English is portrayed as the neutral language of secularism, history, and literature. At the same time, English not only renders Urdu visible in the Indian national context, but, as I will show in the next chapter, it also simultaneously represses Urdu as its dangerous other.

⁷⁷ Akanksha Kumar, "The Great Indian Epic, Ramayana, Gets an Urdu Twist," *NDTV*, September 29 2014.

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CHAPTER IV

William Jones and the Invisibility of Urdu

Well before he had earned himself a major name as one of the foremost Orientalist scholars in history, a 25-year old William Jones--calling himself by his Persian name, Yūnus Āksfardī ("Jones of Oxford")--penned a work that remained one of the foremost language learning texts in colonial India for the following century-and-a-half: *A Grammar of the Persian Language*. First published in 1771, and going through nine editions by 1838, the *Grammar* capitalizes on the linguistic exigencies of the recently won Indian colony to produce a text meant for colonial civil servants that Jones hopes will, nevertheless, generate a genuine aesthetic appreciation for Persian language and literature on the part of his readers. That the goals of the scholar were somewhat at odds with those of the potential language student has resulted in a text of bizarrely mixed registers--a primer in elementary grammar taught through examples culled from high Persian poetry, and most especially from the ghazals of the literary giant Hafez Shirazi.

I myself discovered concrete evidence of this disjuncture between Jones's intellectual-aesthetic intentions and his readers' decidedly practical interests through the marginalia of a first edition of the *Persian Grammar* housed at the British Library in London. In the final section of grammatical exercises, Jones provides one of Hafez's most famous ghazals along with a translation that would become famous in its own right. In his literal translation, Jones refers to a "string of pearls," translating a metaphor in Hafez's

verse for composing a ghazal; the owner of this text of the *Grammar*, however, misunderstands Jones's translation, and has noted in the margins: "Nazm means - a string of pearls." In this misreading, Jones's student literalizes Hafez's metaphor--*nazm* in fact means "poetry." Furthermore, while Jones's *Grammar* insists that students first learn the Persian script before turning to the grammatical rules, the margins of this text were filled with its owner's transliterations of Persian words into Devanagari script. This student's preference for Devanagari not only confirms the relevance of the colonial context for the audience of Jones's *Grammar*, but also reflects Jones's own preference for Devanagari later in his career; by 1784, Jones opens the first ever published volume of papers from the Asiatic Society--of which he was head--with a treatise proposing a system of Romanization for North Indian languages that is based on what he sees as the perfection of the Sanskrit Devanagari as an ideally phonemic script.

These two traces together in a single manuscript--the grammar student's misreading of Jones's translation, and his insistence on transliteration--reflect trends in the reception of Jones's work that began in his own time and continue even today. On the one hand, a literalization of Jones's translation of Hafez has resulted in a fierce debate within academic studies of Persian and Urdu ghazal as to whether or not the individual couplets of a ghazal can be read as an organic whole. On the other hand, the mixing of Perso-Arabic, Devanagari, and Roman scripts in Jones's legacy reveals the extent to which the building of national literary traditions that could be projected onto the world stage occurred through the discourse of script.

In contrast to the triangulation between Hindi, Urdu, and English discussed in the previous two chapters, William Jones's oeuvre poses a linguistic triangulation between

Sanskrit, Persian, and English; later, colonial administrators and Orientalists like Trevelyan mapped this model onto Hindi, Persian, and English. But the linguistic lacuna in this discussion of script is the status of Urdu--and the position of the Indian Muslim--which both Jones and Trevelyan carefully avoid. Even in the nineteenth-century distillation of Jones's eighteenth-century triangulation, for instance, we see a willing admission of Hindi as Sanskrit's "modern" iteration in India, whereas Persian is retained as the "proper," classical or semi-classical Muslim language of empire, for which Urdu provides only a poor copy or shadow. This unequal modernization of Indian vernaculars demonstrates what Aamir Mufti calls "the logic of indigenization" at work in the repression of Urdu as "a set of linguistic, literary, and social practices at odds with the emerging practices of the nation."¹

Jones, for instance, makes no mention of Urdu in his treatise on Romanization; the only explicit reference comes in his Preface to the *Persian Grammar*, in which Urdu's existence serves as a further reason to learn Persian: "the jargon of Indostan," he writes, "very improperly called the language of Moors, contains so great a number of Persian words, that I was able, with very little difficulty, to read the fables of Pilpai which are translated into that idiom."² Even in this instance, though, Jones suggests Urdu's usefulness only insofar as one might access translations of Sanskrit texts--in this case, "the fables of Pilpai" (i.e. the Panchatantra). The double move here evocatively suggests and prefigures the ways in which Urdu has been and will continue to be read as a

¹ Aamir Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 117.

² William Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (London: W. and J. Richardson, 1771), xxii-xxiii.

"mongrel" language useful only in service of the "pure" languages from which it derives, whether Persian or Sanskrit--what I refer to in Chapter One as an idiom of translation.

In his "On the Poetry of Eastern Nations," appended to the 1772 *Poems*, Jones makes an even more elliptical reference to Urdu and Urdu literature as under the influence of Persian literature in India:

The descendants of Tamerlane carried into India the language, and poetry of the Persians; and the Indian poets to this day compose their verses in imitation of them. [...] The Indians are soft and voluptuous, but artful and insincere, at least to the Europeans...but they are fond of poetry, which they learned from the Persians, and *may, perhaps, before the close of the century, be as fond of a more formidable art, which they will learn from the English.*"³

As Padma Rangarajan states: "This cryptic 'formidable art,' with its aesthetic and martial implications, inserts the British into the aesthetic-linguistic evolution of Eastern poetry, making them inevitable cultural successors to the Mughal Empire by borrowing aesthetic ideas even as they conquer."⁴ Urdu constitutes the literary terrain upon which the Indian borrowing of Persian is delegitimized, while English is posited as rightfully filling the cultural gap in the lacuna created by this repression of Urdu.

Rangarajan's notion of "cultural regifting" also helps us understand the circular movement of ideas and influence traced out and enacted by Jones and his intellectual and colonial successors. "In the realm of colonial exchange, the essential power of a gift (and especially a regift) lies not in the object itself but in the interpretive force of its transmission."⁵ For instance, Jones insists in "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus" that India has "gifted" the themes of the Vedanta to Persian Islam, so that, for

³ Sir William Jones, *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translation from the Asiatick Languages. To Which Are Added Two Essays*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1772), 198.

⁴ Padma Rangarajan, *Imperial Babel Translation, Exoticism, and the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

instance, the tropological romance of Radha and Krishna in Jayadeva's poetry becomes Laila and Majnun in Hafez's poetry.⁶ And yet, as we have seen in the quote above, Jones also noted that these themes were "regifted" to Indians via the circulation of Persian poetry and its adaptation into Urdu.

Similarly, with the circulation of a burgeoning notion of lyric poetry, Jones insists that Europeans "borrow" poetry and poetic themes from the East--and especially Persian--to enrich their own lyric tradition. And yet, as the notion of lyricism grows into a totalizing definition of poetry, this very category is "regifted" to Indians in order to assert the backwardness of the Urdu ghazal vis-à-vis continually shifting and unstable ideals of lyric poetry in English. For instance, Jones's suggestion that English poets use Eastern themes to revitalize their own tradition uncannily resembles the poetics of *tāzah-gū'ī*--an aesthetic movement that also informed the rising popularity of Urdu ghazal in the eighteenth century (discussed in the first chapter). Yet the very processes of translation and imitation that Jones promotes in the case of English poetry are ultimately used as evidence of Urdu's degeneracy, foreignness, and backwardness (see Chapter Three).

Although these examples of gifting involve circular patterns of influence, translation, and transculturation, the intervention of (historical) narrative as a means to understand and/or control the unwieldiness of this travel has come to define the appearance of Urdu ghazal in the West. In Chapter One, we have already seen the gradual narrativization of the tazkirah tradition as it morphed into a properly historical genre. Even within translations of Persian poetry, we see an increasing emphasis on narrativity--as in FitzGerald's "reordering" of Khayyam's Rubaiyat in order to introduce a narrative

⁶ *The Works of Sir William Jones with the Life of the Author*, ed. John Shore Teignmouth, 13 vols., vol. 4 (London: Printed for John Stockdale and John Walker, 1807).

thread that links the stanzas that, like the tazkirah tradition, were traditionally published in alphabetical, rather than chronological or narrative, order.⁷

And yet, incidentally, FitzGerald's first edition of the *Rubaiyat* appears in 1859--the same year as Mill's second edition of his canonical essay "What is Poetry?". Where FitzGerald introduces narrativity into the *Rubaiyat*, Mill denounces narrative ("ballad") poetry as the most childlike and barbaric kind, citing Arabic poetry as a primary example.⁸ Similarly, the extent to which we may or may not read narrative into ghazal poetry--a debate centered largely around Jones's "Orient pearls" translation--has defined the scholarly conversation around ghazal in the Anglo-American academy for at least the last half century; the stakes for this debate are no less than defining the relative cultural value of ghazal poetry vis-à-vis Western, and especially English, lyric poetry. And, again, at precisely the same moment, debates in lyric theory have attempted to preserve the poetic "essence" of lyric over and against the perceived threat of close reading practices that reduce all poetry to dramatic monologue.⁹

⁷ Commenting on this re-ordering and the *Rubaiyat* as a kind of back-translation, Padma Rangarajan writes: "From the beginning, however, FitzGerald made fundamental changes to Khayyam's original beyond mere compression. Daniel Karlin notes the transformative effect of FitzGerald's arrangement of the original *rubai'i*, traditionally organized alphabetically, into a narrative sequence, leading him to conclude that 'the structure of the poem, in one sense, 'translates' nothing, because it has no counterpart in the original text.' [...FitzGerald's] radical narrativization pushes the poem in the direction of a pseudotranslation oriental tale." *Imperial Babel Translation, Exoticism, and the Long Nineteenth Century*, 122-23.

⁸ Mill uses the word "ballad" here to refer to narrative poetry: "But in this [rude] state of society there is little poetry except ballads, which are mostly narrative, that is, essentially stories, and derive their principal interest from the incidents." John Stuart Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties," in *Collected Works* (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1989), 1213. I will discuss the importance of ballad and ballad meter to Jones's translation of Hafez in a later section of this chapter.

⁹ Jonathan Culler, "Why Lyric?," *PMLA* 123, no. 1 (2008).

These unstable relations between poetry and narrative, and especially the shifting ways in which poetry and narrative are defined in relation to one another and then read as cultural and national artifacts, have left Urdu ghazal in the position of having to rely on narrative to justify its existence in India, or even to justify its own nonnarrativity, even while these narrative moves consist of complicated generic relationships to historical narrative as a totalizing discourse that is used to measure civilizational progress. The question of whether or not ghazal may be read narratively, lyrically, both, or neither, constitutes a fraught cultural battle that is fought primarily through varying interpretations of William Jones's translation of Hafez; this particular iteration of the tension between narrativization and ghazalization reveals the cultural work performed by the subordination of Urdu in favor of Persian, Hindi, and above all English as major national *and* global languages.

Indeed, this repression of Urdu obscures the dialogic relationship between "Persia" and "India" (explored in the first chapter), and also explains why scholars turn to Jones's English translation of Persian in order to figure out what Urdu ghazal is and how it does or should operate. Jones's English becomes an authoritative interpellation because it is positioned as such by the hegemonically enforced invisibility of Urdu as a questionably legitimate linguistic and literary tradition in India. Urdu's invisibility within this discourse is similarly enabled by Jones's increasing invisibility as a translator and transliterator. We see this not only in the "Orient pearls" debate, but even in the ways in which Western studies of lyric have largely ignored the influence of Jones's translation strategies, even while openly acknowledging the influence of his thought and his poetry on the development of Romanticism and the trajectory of lyric poetry ever since. Padma

Rangarajan's *Imperial Babel* is an important exception to this trend, but she also acknowledges the influence of his Persian translations only to turn to his translations of Sanskrit *Hymns*. Although Jones himself points to Urdu as an important mediator between Persian and Sanskrit (i.e. in his reference to the translation of the Panchatantra from Sanskrit into Urdu as one reason to learn Persian), Urdu's status as *merely* a mediator--as an idiom in and of translation--renders it suspect, its position within the nation and the canon of Indian literature constantly shifting and unstable.

If translation functions by "creating coherent and transparent texts through the repression of difference, and participating thereby in the process of colonial domination,"¹⁰ then Urdu functions to expose the work of translation--as a linguistic and literary tradition that undoes the repression of difference, and, therefore, poses a threat to the colonial order.¹¹ We further see this association in the ways in which Urdu and translation--when made visible--also operate within the same categories of otherness: both are criticized as derivative, imitative, unoriginal. The canonization of Urdu ghazal ironically reinforces the invisibility of its own language and the work of translation that this language represents, and thereby supports the hegemony of English language and script, and ultimately, the colonial enterprise as a whole.

At the simplest level, then, this chapter addresses the mystery of how and why William Jones--through his translation of Hafez's Persian ghazal and his transliteration of Hindi/Sanskrit--came to deeply influence the canonization of Urdu ghazal within the constellation of Indian literature as a whole, especially given that Urdu appears virtually

¹⁰ Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translating: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 43.

¹¹ We have already seen in Chapter One how Urdu, through its historical antecedent Rekhtah, may be understood as fundamentally a language of translation.

absent in Jones's work. Exploring this question of Jones's unusual role in the canonization of Urdu, however, reveals the powerful mediation of the discourse of world literature, and particularly the genre of lyric poetry as a "world" genre, as well as the colonial and Orientalist roots of that discourse. The case of Urdu's invisibility vis-à-vis Jones and his successors demonstrates the repression of the work of translation within this discourse, especially the overlooked significance of both transliteration and meter as colonial tools for translating the "sight and sound" of "foreign" languages into English as a globalized and globalizing system.

Ghazal as Lyric

M.H. Abrams cites Jones's "Essay on the Arts Called Imitative," published along with the above volume of *Poems*, as the first to offer "an explicit and orderly reformulation of the nature and criteria of poetry and of the poetic genres";¹² indeed, he credits Jones with being one of the first to collapse the specific genre of "lyric" into the idea of poetry as a whole: "Plainly Jones employs the lyric not only as the original poetic form, but as the prototype for poetry as a whole, and thereby expands what had occasionally been proposed as the differentia of one poetic species into the defining attribute of the genus."¹³ This account situates Jones at the beginning of the process of lyricization, a term coined by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins to refer to the modern ballooning of the genre of lyric into a super-genre that encompasses what were once

¹² M.H. Abrams, "The Lyric as Poetic Norm," in *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 87.

¹³ *Ibid.*

unique genres of poetry with their own unique reading practices and patterns of circulation.

But citing Jones as the early progenitor of lyricization also requires us to think more globally about the types of poetry effaced by the proposition of a single category called Lyric--for, as Aamir Mufti succinctly puts it: "At the center of Jones's rethinking of poetics at the threshold of the modern era is the genre of the ghazal."¹⁴ In other words, lyricization does not only describe the process via which various English genres of poetry--such as ode, ballad, elegy, etc.--come under the umbrella term Lyric, but also the process via which Lyric becomes a world genre that can just as easily encompass (and, I argue, flatten) genres of poetic writing in other languages. Indeed, Hafez's ghazals served as inspiration for Goethe's proposing the notion of *Weltliteratur*, which has transformed into the globalizing discourse of World Literature today.

Similarly, Jones's translation of Hafez's "Shirazi Turk" ghazal has subsequently influenced poetic and translation practices for the Romantics, Victorians, and beyond.¹⁵ Jones's translations become defining not only of "lyric," but of "lyric as poetic norm," to borrow Abrams' phrase; because of the subsequent influence that Jones's translations and

¹⁴ He continues: "When he speaks of Asiatic poetic forms, especially from the Persians onward in his scheme of historical transmission, he is essentially speaking of this one poetic genre in particular. Although he does not name the genre in the essays I have discussed here, almost every one of his poetic examples from Arabic, Persian, and Turkish lies within the space signified by it." Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 72.

¹⁵ Aamir Mufti writes: "...the prehistory of 'lyric reading' in the West leads back to [...] the Orientalist 'discovery' of the 'ancient' poetic traditions of the 'Eastern nations.' Jones's book of 1772 (the poems as well as the essays) [...] is thus an exemplary text of the pre-Romantic conjecture, in which entire bodies of 'Oriental' verse begin to be conceived of, on the one hand, as the unique and spontaneous expression of the spirit, mind, or psyche of a distinct people and, on the other, as marked by a spontaneity and authenticity of 'expression.' The question of the Oriental or Asiatic lyric is thus an unavoidable one for a consideration of the early practices and concepts of world literature." *ibid.*, 71-2.

essays had on the development of Romanticism, we may think of the historicity of Jones's work as one means via which we understand lyric as an ideal poetic genre today. When the Urdu ghazal circulates as a genre of lyric, this categorization is informed by Jones's definition of lyric--which is itself, in turn, informed by his translations of Hafez's Persian ghazals. This generic "regifting" is made possible by the practice of lyric reading that, as Prins and Jackson note, "has already arrived ahead of us to predetermine not only when and where we will read [world poetry], but how."¹⁶

In short, the methodology of historical comparative poetics reveals ghazalization at the core of the idealized and abstracted lyric genre, even while the global phenomenon of modern lyricization has impacted the culturally specific process of Urdu's ghazalization: the ways in which ghazal both does and does not fit within normative definitions of lyric poetry has had a decided influence on the trajectory of the genre's development. For instance, the ghazal has been described as both too lyrical (overly inward and personal, or excessively sensuous and mystical, instead of socially and didactically focused) and not lyrical enough (overly artificial, instead of natural and spontaneous);¹⁷ both of these claims were then used throughout the long nineteenth

¹⁶ Virginia Walker Jackson and Yopie Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 573.

¹⁷ Take, for example, two quotes in the history of scholarship of Hafez's ghazals. Walter Leaf (1898) writes: "The lyric poetry of Persia is indeed a reflection of the minds of those who sang it--sensual, mystic, recalling the voluptuous dreams of Hashish, the flashes of intuition wherein the Godhead reveals himself in moments of blinding visions to the ecstatic drunk with wine, be it of Heaven or of Earth." In contrast, E.G. Browne (1902) writes: "It will now be fully apparent how intensely conventional and artificial much Persian poetry is. [...The] sequence of subjects, the permissible comparisons, similes and metaphors, the varieties of rhetorical embellishment, and the like, are fixed by a convention dating from the eleventh or twelfth century of the era." Both cited in A. J. Arberry, "Orient Pearls at Random Strung," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11 (1943): 704.

century as evidence of the decadence and backwardness of Indian Muslims, ultimately justifying (both in anticipation and in hindsight) the defeat of the Mughals and the beginning of the British Raj in 1857. Aamir Mufti notes that this regifting of Lyric depends on a historical erasure: "'Lyric' sensibility emerged in Europe at the threshold of modernity in the encounter with 'Oriental' verse and, having taken over the universe of poetic expression in the West, became a benchmark and a test for 'Oriental' writing traditions themselves, erasing in the process all memory of its intercultural origins" (74).

For instance, John Stuart Mill's essay "What is Poetry?" (and its infamous misreading) has had extensive repercussions not only for modern Western poetics and the burgeoning of lyric poetry into the super-genre "Lyric"--but also for the ghazal, which, once identified as lyric, comes to frame the end of the Mughal Empire, the justification for the British colonial project in India, and the development of Indian literature throughout the twentieth century in the nationalist and postcolonial periods.¹⁸ This rhetoric is prefigured by Mill's own conflation of individual poetic production with national character: "The persons who have most feeling of their own [...] have the highest faculty of poetry. [...] The *persons and nations* who commonly excel in poetry are those whose character and tastes render them least dependent upon the applause or sympathy or concurrence of the world in general." This quick shift in scale from person to nation both enables and reflects the rhetorical moves that allow Urdu ghazal to stand in for the Mughal Empire and Indian Muslim identity as a whole.

Within Urdu criticism of the ghazal, critiques of the form "consisted of both romantic and utilitarian elements, articulating ideas about authenticity of expression with those concerning social usefulness." Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 74.

¹⁸ See Chapters Two and Three for an explication of this argument.

Indeed, Mill's essay defines poetry through comparison on a world scale, with "Oriental" societies serving as foils for the advanced state of English literature and culture:

In what stage of the progress of society, again, is storytelling most valued, and the storyteller in greatest request and honor? In a rude state; like that of the Tartars and Arabs at this day, and of almost all nations in the earliest ages. But in this state of society there is little poetry except ballads, which are mostly narrative, that is, essentially stories, and derive their principal interest from the incidents.¹⁹

The prevalence of the colonial-imperial context for a definition of lyric poetry allows us to draw a line from Mill back to Jones as his precursor; Jones's Orientalism and Mill's Anglicism are merely opposite sides of the same coin, both stemming from the same impulse of knowledge production under the auspices of English modes of thinking and writing about the world.²⁰

And although most scholars uncritically refer to ghazal as a type of lyric, even those who have remained skeptical of this classification have expressed this skepticism by simply measuring ghazal against the hegemonic definition of lyric that has developed in the 20th century, and which ghazal helped define. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, one of the most eminent scholars of Urdu literature, has questioned the idea that ghazal is a type of lyric poetry, citing the importance of oral performance to ghazal's circulation as a poetic genre as an example of one of the ways in which ghazal does *not* operate as a lyric

¹⁹ Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties," 1213.

²⁰ For more on this argument, see Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*. On Orientalism and Anglicism, see also: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest : Literary Study and British Rule in India*, Oxford India Paperbacks (Delhi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

genre.²¹ Faruqi's emphasis on the oral performance of ghazal in contrast to the hegemonic definition of "personal" lyric that he posits is symptomatic of the very misreading of John Stuart Mill that Virginia Jackson deftly explicates in *Dickinson's Misery*; as Jackson states, Mill does not insist that lyric poetry has no audience, but that it must be "acted" *as though* it has no audience: "Lyric is a public performance that only pretends to be self-

²¹ His comments on this topic are demonstrative: "The *ghazal* is often described by West-oriented Urdu critics as a 'lyric,' and the main quality of the *ghazal* as 'lyricism.' [...However,] 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*. [...] Urdu poetics split the poet-poem-as-one notion, in which a main line 'lyric' poem would seem to be anchored. As for the audience, since the *ghazal* was intended to be recited at *mushā'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.

"The idea that the *ghazal* is a poem in which oral performance plays a great part has other important consequences. One consequence is that a *ghazal* may perhaps be expressive of 'emotions,' in the ordinary sense of the term. But these are not necessarily the poet's 'personal' emotions 'recollected in tranquility' (Wordsworth), or 'the spontaneous expression of the powerful feelings of the heart' (Wordsworth), or the 'lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake' (Byron). It was the 'verbal contraption' in the poem, to use Auden's phrase, which became the chief object of the poetic exercise. Poems needed to make sense of the experience, or the idea, of love, and in terms that made sense to the audience as a whole, and not a specific individual, beloved, or friend."

Faruqi is not a scholar of lyric theory, but his working definitions of "lyric" are telling: the idea that "lyric is generally understood to be a poem in which the poet expresses 'personal' emotions and 'experiences,'" and "does not assume an external audience" are glosses of both Wordsworth (whom he quotes shortly thereafter) and John Stuart Mill. And while he notes that "there is no one, hegemonic, seamless image of the lyric in Western poetics," he nevertheless summarizes precisely the "hegemonic" notion of Lyric-with-a-capital-L that dominates modern understandings of poetry. As Yopie Prins and Virginia Jackson argue, this very notion of lyric as a personal utterance does indeed operate hegemonically, and stems from a modern misreading of John Stuart Mill and the refraction of Romantic and Victorian poetics through the modern lens of Anglo-American close reading practices.

addressed."²² Mill's spectrum of imagery and metaphor for poetry--a prisoner's song, an actor reciting on the stage, and printed on the page--similarly reflect a spectrum of "overhearing" that ranges from the literal to the figurative; the actor in "full dress upon the stage" performs the same function as the book of poetry on "hot-pressed paper" in a "bookseller's shop." Mill's essay in fact proposes the mediation of print as an important metaphor for understanding the function of poetry; similarly, the history of ghazal's circulation as lyric is also fundamentally intertwined with the question of the proper relationship between sound and sight, orality and writing.²³

Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, the debate on ghazal's lyricism has taken place primarily in the Anglo-American academy, with various scholars of both Persian and Urdu ghazal weighing in on the extent to which the individual couplets of a ghazal may be read together such that the ghazal forms an organic whole. In 1946, Orientalist scholar A.J. Arberry published an article on this topic in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, titled "Orient Pearls at Random Strung."²⁴ Arberry's title references Jones's famous translation of Hafez, in which Jones's phrase "Orient pearls at random strung" has since come to be understood as referring to the ghazal form itself, initiating the debate that continues to consume the current scholarship on both Persian and Urdu ghazal: can the individual couplets of a ghazal be considered together so that the ghazal reads as an organic whole? In short, are the "Orient pearls" of the individual couplets truly strung "at random" on the thread of the ghazal, or is there a larger design to their composition?

²² Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 131.

²³ *Ibid.*, 129-32. I will explore this argument further in the following section.

²⁴ Arberry, "Orient Pearls at Random Strung."

As Frances Pritchett notes in her 1993 article weighing in on the subject, Arberry takes issue with Jones's phrase "at random" because according to accepted standards of Western aesthetics, organic unity is a prized aspect of poetic composition, so that if Jones does not find this unity in Hafez, he must be referring to the "randomness" of the ghazal's couplets as a mark of its literary backwardness.²⁵ Against this perceived charge, Arberry insists that Hafez's ghazal does contain organic unity, and that its couplets are not at all randomly arranged--therefore, the ghazal is not, in fact, a "backward" literary form. Pritchett, on the other hand, concludes that while the ghazal *cannot* be read as an organic whole, this should not produce any anxiety on the part of the Western scholar who wishes to defend ghazal's literariness; on the contrary, she insists, "we Westerners" are unduly imposing our Western aesthetics on "Eastern" poetry by focusing on organic unity as a factor in the overall aesthetic quality of the ghazal form. Indeed, the very title of Pritchett's article, "Orient Pearls Unstrung," suggests the radical dissolution of any possible unity.

As Pritchett rightly states, the debate over the ghazal's poetic unity has largely to do with "Western" notions of what poetry--and especially *lyric* poetry--is or should be. Modern understandings of lyric--as natural and spontaneous, closely linked with music, and organically whole--inform our readings of ghazal because we largely uncritically accept ghazal as a sub-genre of lyric poetry. This debate about the ghazal's poetic unity ultimately becomes a question of how effectively ghazal operates as a lyric genre;

²⁵ Frances W. Pritchett, "Orient Pearls Unstrung: The Quest for Unity in the Ghazal," *Edebiyat* 4 (1993). This article includes a survey of all of the arguments for and against poetic unity in the ghazal, from 1946 to 1993. In this time period, there were more than 22 scholars weighing in on this debate, some undertaking book-length studies of Hafez in order to argue for against poetic unity in the ghazal. Since 1993, there have been roughly 20 more studies in the same vein.

however, the larger stakes of this question involve the extent to which "Eastern civilizations" like Persia and India can effectively produce cultural products valued by Western critics and markets as markers of advanced civilization. Furthermore, because arguments on either side of the debate unselfconsciously rely on a reified notion of lyric against which ghazal must be measured, this very discourse masks the extent to which the unstable, dialogic relationship between ghazal and lyric reinforces monolithic understandings of each of these forms.

For instance, Arberry's insistence on the poem as a unified object of study in his 1946 article reflects the currency of New Critical thought in the development of English literature as a discipline with a unique and newly codified scholarly methodology at that particular historical juncture.²⁶ And yet, decades later, Michael Hillmann uses this same argument to assert the backwardness of Area Studies as a discipline: "For forty or fifty years the focus of attention in poetry criticism has been the whole poem and the poem *qua* poem. This focus of literary criticism has yet to influence markedly the study and appreciation of medieval Islamic poetry."²⁷ Here, Hillmann takes New Critical reading practices of English literature, and specifically English poetry, as a benchmark for the

²⁶ In fact, Arberry probably knew I.A. Richards personally, or at least knew of him, since the latter was at Cambridge while Arberry was a student, and later a faculty member, there. Incidentally, while Richards is perhaps best known as one of the early proponents of a model of reading that would eventually become known as New Criticism, he also dedicated the latter part of his career, along with his colleague Charles K. Ogden, to a concept called "Basic English," in which he developed a pared-down version of English vocabulary and grammatical rules to be spread throughout the world, and especially Asia. One of the volumes he wrote toward this effect was the *Times of India Guide to Basic English*, and he personally traveled throughout Asia (and China in particular) to spread this idea (and this text). Even in the example of Richards's career, then, the development of reading practices for English literature overlaps with the will to globalize the English language, especially in the Asian context.

²⁷ MC Hillmann, "Sound and Sense in a Ghazal of Hafiz," *The Muslim World* 61, no. 2 (1971): 111.

study of "medieval Islamic poetry," without regard to the historical contingency of either of these genres or reading practices.

Similarly, when Frances Pritchett suggests in 1993 that an insistence on poetic unity is an undue imposition of Western aesthetics on Eastern aesthetic objects, she implies that scholars of the "East" have yet to understand and incorporate the arguments of postcolonial scholars, and especially the notion of Orientalism, that had become current in other disciplines--notably English and Comparative Literature--since the 1980's. In short, while ghazal comes to represent the backwardness of Indian Muslim culture in contrast to the idealizations of lyric put forth in the nineteenth century, by the twentieth century, it comes to symbolize the backwardness of scholarly inquiry in Area Studies.

Historically, then, ghazal has been posited via Jones as a lyric ideal, then criticized on the basis of an abstracted and idealized lyric underscored by English language, aesthetics, and reading practices as they have evolved since the eighteenth century. From Jones's own legacy in defining lyric for the Romantics; to Mill's influential definition of lyric in the Victorian period; to New Critical retroprojections that reified these historically contingent readings of lyric; to anti-Orientalist and/or postcolonial readings of these scholarly turns--examining ghazal's role in defining lyric at each of these moments affords us a new critical lens with which to view the contingency of the lyric genre.

In fact, the forgotten--or at least repressed--mediation of English makes it possible for us to uncritically equate a Persian ghazal of the 13th century with all of Urdu ghazal from the 18th century to today. The supposed fixedness of the term "ghazal" that

underlies these arguments emerges from an assumption of the radical commensurability of Persian and Urdu--which are themselves (mis)understood as fixed entities--that can only exist under the auspices of the world literary system as it developed within the very contexts of Orientalism and colonialism that Jones helped to shape. This type of commensurability between "Oriental" languages comes to exist through the silent mediation of English as the literary standard.²⁸ For example, in the very title of a 2009 translation of Ghalib's Urdu ghazals called *Love Sonnets of Ghalib*, the "translation" of ghazal into sonnet is enabled by the invisible mediation of English lyric as a normative world genre; at the same time, this rhetorical move was prefigured by Jones himself when he translates a ghazal by Hafez, and then immediately follows it with a sonnet by Shakespeare, in order to demonstrate the inherent similarities in themes and images between the two.²⁹

Furthermore, this radical commensurability between languages and literary forms reveals not just forgotten mediation of English, but, in the case of ghazal, the forgotten mediation of Jones as an Orientalist, colonial scholar and translator. For while the metaphor of "Orient pearls at random strung" that has sparked the outrage behind this debate comes from William Jones translating Hafez, scholars who have taken up the ensuing debate about the ghazal form have typically returned to either Hafez's Persian ghazal, or to the Persian and Urdu ghazal in general. None of these scholars has focused

²⁸ As Mufti puts it: "Hidden inside world literature is the dominance of globalized English." Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 12. See also Arvind Mandair's illuminating comments on English as the "law of translation" in Arvind-Pal Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

²⁹ Jones, *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translation from the Asiatick Languages. To Which Are Added Two Essays.*, 190-92.

on the problem of Jones as a translator or mediator of ideas about the ghazal, except to criticize his translation on the basis of its inaccuracy (i.e., to assert that Jones's translation is not "faithful" enough to Hafez's Persian original), and so to assume that his translation reflects his views on the inferiority of "the East."³⁰

These readings of Jones's translation reflect a distinctly modern notion of translation predicated on the ideal of the "translator's invisibility"--the idea that translation should or does provide unproblematic, undistorted access to the original--against which Jones's translation's lack of fidelity to Hafez measures poorly.³¹ And yet Jones's excessive visibility as a translator--whether because of his improbable and now well-known translational choices, or because of his celebrity as an Orientalist--effaces the work of translation itself. Indeed, despite Jones's straightforward comments regarding his adaptive translational practices, scholars have generally ignored this paratext explaining Jones's interpretive interventions in his translation of Hafez. This misreading of Jones has done for ghazal studies what Virginia Jackson points out that a misreading of John Stuart Mill has done for lyric studies³²--and largely because the contemporary prevalence of the notion of the "invisible translator" has prevented scholars from examining Jones himself as a mediator in the historicity of Hafez's ghazal, and indeed, the development of the lyric genre in the West and in the world.

³⁰ Ironically, although scholars have repeatedly turned to Hafez's ghazal to look for poetic unity, not one has noticed that decontextualizing Jones's phrase "Orient pearls at random strung" from his broader translation of Hafez itself seems to indicate that one need not view the ghazal--or at the least the translation of a ghazal--as a poetic whole.

³¹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, ed. Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere, Translation Studies (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). Of course, the prevalence of this view of translation also has colonial roots, as Tejaswini Niranjana points out.

³² Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery*, 9.

Sight and Sound in Jones's "Orient Pearls" Translation

In order to approach the problem of Jones as a visible translator, we must first examine the very metaphor of sight implicated in the discourse of (in)visibility surrounding translation. The well-known metaphor of translation as (an ideally clear) window itself proposes a theory of languages as objects of sight, rather than sound, even while the prevailing discourse around lyric poetry has relied on the idealization of language as voiced. Within these notions of language as either voiced or seen lies a discourse of unmediated naturalness versus undistorted access, in which poetry should be overheard, and translation overlooked.

Metrical translations of poetry embody the tension between these discourses: by relying on the fiction of voice, meter is often made to symbolize the flowing naturalness of voice as realized through poetry as it approaches song; and yet, as Meredith Martin, Yopie Prins, and others have shown, this fiction relies upon the representation of language in writing, in a maze of graphs and symbols of meticulous counting and measurement that artificially dissects language into syllables and stresses even while purporting to represent a self-evident and natural property of voiced speech. This tension between sight and sound in the representation of poetic voice becomes even more fraught when it occurs between languages with different phonologies and scripts; in fact, as we will see below, rather than transparently and straightforwardly representing linguistic sounds, the character in which language appears on the page dictates and fixes the sounds it purports to unproblematically represent. In the case of Jones's translations of Hafez, meter helps Jones approximate the musicality of Persian for the English reader/listener,

while this translation of sound becomes visible through transliteration of Perso-Arabic characters into Roman letters.

When Jones first publishes his imitative translation of Hafez in his 1771 *Persian Grammar*, he emphasizes that he has particularly attempted to capture the musical quality of the verse:

I have endeavoured, as far as I was able, to give my translation the easy turn of the original; and I have, as nearly as possible, imitated the cadence and accent of the Persian measure; from which every reader, who understands musick, will perceive that the Asiatick numbers are capable of as regular a melody as any air in Metastasio.³³

When Jones explains his intentions in providing the "poetic" translation of Hafez, we see an emphasis on sound and musicality as aspects of the original that Jones feels he can imitate: he captures the "easy turn" of the original, "the cadence and accent of the Persian measure," and the melodic regularity that he compares to the compositions of Metastasio, the famous Italian librettist of the time. Jones's emphasis on translating sound is a far cry from our modern assumptions about translation, where the sense of the text outweighs the sound in what we assume translation can and should bring across. In translating "ghazal" as "song," Jones makes a generic interpellation that, while perhaps suggesting an Orientalist belief in a "universal lyric impulse in primal song,"³⁴ also reflects his understanding of sound as the basis of translatability and commensurability between languages.

In fact, Jones's choice of words in introducing his translation of Hafez suggests a bifurcation of sound and sight--what Northrop Frye calls "babble" and "doodle"--where,

³³ Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 137.

³⁴ Jackson and Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*.

for Jones, the "seen" aspects of poetry may only be accessed through the original, and not through translation. In the *Grammar*, which includes both a literal and an imitative translation of Hafez, he writes:

I may confidently affirm that few odes of the Greeks or Romans upon similar subjects are more finely polished than the songs of these Persian poets: they want only a reader that can see them in their original dress, and feel their beauties without the disadvantage of a translation. [...] When the learner is able to understand the images and allusions in the Persian poems, he will see a reason in every line why they cannot be translated literally into any European language.³⁵

Note here Jones's repeated emphasis on sight: the reader must "see" the poems in their "original dress," and he must learn Persian in order to understand the "images" of Persian poems, after which he will "see" in each line the myriad ways in which Persian poetry is untranslatable for European audiences.

Within this same logic, Jones insists early on in his *Persian Grammar* that the student of Persian must immediately learn to read the Persian script--the text begins with an explication of the Persian alphabet, the pronunciation of each letter, and the rules of writing--and that reading Persian in the Roman script does little justice to the true value of the language. In fact, the reader of the *Persian Grammar* first encounters Hafez's ghazal as an example of Persian typography within the first twenty pages of the book; Jones presents this "ode by the poet Hafez" with his own transliteration into Roman letters without providing a translation into English--he comments that "a translation shall be inserted in its proper place,"³⁶ which turns out to be at the very close of the text. In short, the reader is meant to practice reading the Persian script by reading Hafez's "Shirazi Turk" ghazal, and he will not gain further exposure to this text until he has

³⁵ Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 133.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

completed the *Grammar* in its entirety. Yet this initial exposure to the very sight of the ghazal is meant to edify the reader, and, especially when coupled with knowledge of proper pronunciation, should in itself prove the beauty of the Persian language, even without reference to the meaning of the poem.³⁷

In "On the Poetry of Eastern Nations"--the first essay appended to his *Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages* (1772), and which appeared appended to every one of Jones's published works thereafter--Jones again displays this bifurcation between sight and sound in the assimilability of the Persian language to European languages. Defending Persian language and literature as the "softest" and "richest" in the world, he writes:

"[I]t is not possible to convince the reader of this truth, by quoting a passage from a Persian poet in European characters; *since the sweetness of sound cannot be determined by the sight, and many words, which are soft and musical in the mouth of a Persian, may appear very harsh to our eyes, with a number of consonants and gutturals.*"³⁸

Again, in order to truly appreciate Persian, Jones insists, Europeans must learn to read the Persian script, lest the harsh sight of Persian words transliterated into English on the page turn the reader away. Although the "number of consonants and gutturals" makes reference to the supposed sound of the language, Jones suggests that these aspects of the (transliterated) language "appear very harsh to our eyes."

³⁷ In the next section, I will show how this divorce of reading and understanding is reflected in Jones's Victorian legacy.

³⁸ Jones, *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translation from the Asiatick Languages. To Which Are Added Two Essays.*, 180-1. Emphasis mine.

Jones here presents a theory of silent reading as sound imagined through sight; although his repeated emphasis on the importance of pronunciation³⁹ suggests his belief that the sight of a word must be connected to its "proper" sound in the reader's mind, the divide that he posits between sight and sound suggests that this pronunciation is never actually realized as physical sound. Within this theory, the student of Persian must learn to read the script, along with its proper pronunciation, and then learn the language to the extent that he should be able to understand Hafez's ghazal--and then, having completed this exercise, he will understand by reading (silently?) why the sight and sense of the ghazal are both inextricable and untranslatable.

In short, Jones's translation of Hafez's ghazal as "Persian Song" perhaps stems from his belief that, while he cannot translate the "sense" of Hafez--which for him is connected to sight--he can translate the sound and musicality of the text. Furthermore, Jones's imitation of "cadence and accent" amounts to his translation of meter. Although Persian poetry is based on quantitative meter (as measured by syllable length), Jones translates the sound of Hafez's verse by turning to qualitative meter in English.⁴⁰ For instance, each line of Hafez's ghazal contains roughly sixteen qualitative syllables that remarkably approach the sound of English iamb: *ghazal gofī wa dorr softī biyā wa*

³⁹ "Though the perfect pronunciation of these letters can be learned only from the mouth of a Persian or an Indian, yet it will be proper to add a few observations upon the most remarkable of them." Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 4. Jones also gives the following remarks in the Preface on how to use the book to learn Persian: "When the student can read the characters with fluency, and has learned the true pronunciation of every letter from the mouth of a native, let him peruse the grammar with attention" (xvii). Also note the above quote from *Poems*, in which Jones asserts that the Persian language contains "many words, which are soft and musical *in the mouth of a Persian*."

⁴⁰ It was not a given in Jones's time that English meter was always qualitative; see: Meredith Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter Poetry and English National Culture, 1860-1930*, Poetry and English National Culture, 1860-1930 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

khush bakhwān Hafez.⁴¹ Jones's translation of each couplet, then, consists of six lines of iambic tetrameter with the rhyme scheme ABCABC. He remarks on this choice by saying "the reader will excuse the singularity of the measure which I have used, if he considers the difficulty of bringing so many Eastern proper names into our stanzas."⁴²

When Jones's imitative translation appears in his 1772 *Poems*, a Romanized transliteration of the Persian verse appears alongside each English stanza; while this Romanization mostly matches that of the 1771 *Grammar*, Jones separates the couplet into four lines with 8 syllables--4 iambic feet--in each line. The violence of this manipulation on the Persian it purports to represent becomes particularly obvious in the following verse:

Nasīhet góshi kun jána ke az ján dostiter darend
Juvánani saádetmendi pendi péeri danára. (1771, p. 14)

Nasihet goshi kun jana,
Ke az jan dostiter darend
Juvanani saadetmend
I pendi peeri danara. (1772, p. 74)⁴³

⁴¹ The bolded portions are the stressed syllables. Again, although stress is not a relevant notion for determining Persian meter, I am scanning the stress here in the manner that reflects Jones's own translation choices.

⁴² Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 133.

⁴³ In the 6th edition of the *Grammar*, appearing in 1804, the editors revise Jones's text to reflect the transliteration scheme that he had formalized in his 1784 *Researches*. For instance, this verse appears as follows in the 6th edition:

Nasīhat gōshi kun jānā keh az jān dōstitar dārand
Jawānān-i sa ʿādatmand-i pand-i pīr-i dānārā. (1804, p.15)

Also compare the following transliterations of the final "Orient pearls" verse:

Gazel gufti vedurr sufti, beá vakhosh bukhán Hafiz
Ke ber nāzmi to afshāned felek ikdi suriára. (1771, p. 14)

Ghaẓal guftī wa durr suftī biyā wa khūsh bakh'ān hāfiz
Keh bar nāzm-i tō afshānad falak ʿikdi suriyārā (1804, p. 14)

In the last line of the 1772 transliteration, Jones separates the possessive *izāfā* suffix (-i) from its accompanying noun--a grammatical impossibility in Persian--in order to maintain eight syllables in each line, emphasizing the iamb (the initial "I" would appear unstressed to the English reader).

Furthermore, we see this emphasis on metricality and rhythm in Jones's translation of this verse, in which he emphasizes the double pleasures of the aural and the visual:

But ah! sweet maid, my counsel hear:
(Youth should attend when those advise
Whom long experience renders sage)
While musick charms the ravish'd ear,
While sparkling cups delight our eyes,
Be gay; and scorn the frowns of age.

Jones's literal translation of this verse found in the *Persian Grammar* includes reference to neither sight nor sound, and focuses solely on the importance of heeding the advice of elders: "Attend, O my soul! to prudent counsels; for youths of a good disposition love the

The 1804 text carefully maintains a consistency in correlating the Roman vowels with the Persian, and even assigns different diacritical marks to the various letters (allomorphs) that produce the /z/ sound. In fact, the more exact transliteration is listed by the editors in an opening advertisement as one of the key features of the new and improved 6th edition: "[The] same mode of spelling the Persian words in Roman characters has herein been adopted, as is pursuing in the revision of that Dictionary; and which being upon a plan at once both regular and simple, cannot, we think, but be of great use to beginners in particular, as an invariable guide to the pronunciation. [...] At the time the learned author of this truly elegant and useful Grammar composed it, he does not seem to have formed that system of orthography of Asiatic words in Roman letters which he afterwards so ably explains in the opening of the first Volume of the Asiatic Researches, else but little occasion would have been found for the alterations it has been judged expedient to make" (xxii-xxiii). For more on Jones's system of transliteration, including the bizarre insertion of the Perso-Arabic letter 'ain in the examples given above, see the following section of this chapter.

advice of the aged better than their own souls."⁴⁴ In the imitative translation--published first in the *Grammar* alongside the literal translation, and then on its own in the *Poems*--Jones's rhyming of "hear" and "ear" self-referentially calls attention to the impact of sound; in a parallel pattern, Jones reminds us of the Latinate etymology of "advise" by rhyming it with "eyes," suggesting, furthermore, that the eye is connected to wisdom, while the ear, to folly. For Jones, the "sweet maid" should listen ("attend") while the "sage" advises, and his call to train the ear toward wisdom ("my counsel hear") reads as an antidote to the transporting quality of sound, and particularly music, on the "ravish'd ear." Indeed, while the ear is "ravish'd," the eye is merely "delighted" by "sparkling cups"--perhaps an imagistic reference to the visual impact of the Perso-Arabic alphabet, in which the main letter shape consists of cupped strokes adorned with varying arrangements of dots.

In this verse, the music of (translated?) poetry transports the reader away from his senses, while the sight of Persian poetry is connected to the good sense of aged wisdom--once again a gesture toward Jones's theory of translation in which the "sense" (in every "sense" of the word) of the text lies in its visual appearance on the page, and not in its sound. And yet, ultimately the advice offered is a rejection of the sobriety of old age, in which the apostrophized maiden is encouraged to allow herself to enjoy the double pleasures of visual and aural; thus, the ideal consumer of poetry should be carried away by its musical sound while also being grounded in the sobering and sensible "delight" of seeing the words on the page. In short, Jones encourages his reader to enjoy his

⁴⁴ Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 136.

translation of the sound of Hafez, while also encouraging him to return to the Persian for more fully edifying enjoyment.

In the now famous final verse, Jones again highlights the musicality of his translation by referring to his composition as a "lay," and by further emphasizing its sung notes:

Go boldly forth, my simple lay,
Whose accents flow with artless ease,
Like orient pearls at random strung;
Thy notes are sweet, the damsels say,
But oh, far sweeter, if they please
The nymph for whom these notes are sung!

Several phrases within the translation of this final, self-referential verse highlight the "easy turn" and "regular melody" of the verse: Jones's lay is "simple," with "accents flow[ing] with artless ease," which is the aspect of Hafez's verse that he most carefully attempts to capture. When we come to the now much-debated phrase "Like orient pearls at random strung," it seems that the ease of the "accents" is what Jones compares to "orient pearls at random strung"; in other words, he compares the seeming artlessness of the song to the seeming randomness of a string of Orient pearls as a compliment to the elegance and naturalness of the sound of the verse, and not, as most scholars have assumed, as a jab at the composition of Hafez's Persian ghazal.

In fact, Jones's choice of a ballad meter, combined with his designating the poem a "lay" suggest his investment in nationalizing Hafez for the English through a translation that emphasizes collective singing.⁴⁵ If the verses of his translation are "orient pearls,"

⁴⁵ Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter Poetry and English National Culture, 1860-1930*. As Martin demonstrates at length, English meter has been used to define of national character, though her focus is on the period from 1860 to 1930. Martin's compelling

this designation is meant to exemplify the aesthetic principle that he puts forth in the essays appended to his *Poems*, in which he suggests that Western (particularly English) poets mine Eastern poetry for its images, themes, and allusions in order to refresh the existing canon. When Jones hears Hafez's ghazal as particularly effortless in the sound of its composition, we may read this judgment in hindsight as an early moment of lyricization. The qualities that comes to define Lyric poetry in the twentieth century canonization of the Romantics--naturalness, spontaneity, musicality--are very much prefigured by Jones's translation of Hafez's ghazal and, as we have seen, likely helped shape those very notions for the Romantics. And yet, roughly one century later, Mill defines ballad poetry through its *narrativity*--not through its sound, performance, or social function--and then criticizes it on this basis.

At the same time, the aesthetic interests that Jones puts forth in the *Poems* are balanced with the practical purposes of the *Grammar*. In a first edition of the *Persian Grammar* now housed by the British Library, for instance, a reader has underlined the Persian word *nazm* (poem, poetry) in the second line of the Persian verse and then written a corresponding footnote that remarks "nazm means, a string of pearls." This literalization of metaphor in the didactic text ironically prefigures the 20th century scholarly debate around the phrase "Orient pearls" as an overly literal reading of Jones's translation. It also demonstrates the dual aspects of Jones's legacy for Orientalism--first, as a purely intellectual and aesthetic endeavor, and second, as an impulse toward knowledge production that would serve practical and concrete purposes in the daily

study at the very least forces us to see that meter, like lyric, is a historically contingent idea that has been put to a variety of cultural uses.

business of colonial administration; it is to this legacy of these "two Joneses" that I now turn.

Jones's Legacy: The Sound of Meter and the Sight of Script

When Jones composed his *Persian Grammar*, he clearly understood that his text would be used in the context and service of the British imperial project in India. Although Jones opens his Preface by insisting on the merits of Persian in its own right--its civilized past, its impressive body of literature, its melodious sound--he immediately notes his awareness that the interests of empire are ultimately what will compel English readers to learn this, or any other Asiatic, language. He writes:

By one of those revolutions, which no human prudence could have foreseen, the Persian language found its way into India; that rich and celebrated empire, which, by the flourishing state of our commerce, has been the source of incredible wealth to the merchants of Europe. [...] The languages of Asia will now, perhaps, be studied with uncommon ardour; they are known to be useful, and will soon be found instructive and entertaining; the valuable manuscripts that enrich our public libraries will be in a few years elegantly printed; the manners and sentiments of the Eastern nations will be perfectly known; and the limits of our knowledge will be no less extended than the bounds of our empire.⁴⁶

For Jones however, the use value of these languages will ultimately and necessarily give way to the fact that they are also "instructive and entertaining"; he then immediately imagines a print culture for Persian texts circulating in England; and finally a universalist impulse for knowledge and knowledge production that very much characterizes the optimism of Jones's Orientalism.

For Jones, though, we see a development in his scholarly positions as his career advances. The optimism and intellectualism that we see in the 1771 *Persian Grammar*

⁴⁶ Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, xi-xii.

and the 1772 *Poems* are characteristic of the young, precocious armchair scholar writing from Oxford as Yūnus Āksfardī. However, roughly a decade later, when Jones is appointed as a Supreme Court Judge in India and begins the Royal Asiatic Society, publishing its major papers in a journal called *Asiatick Researches*, we see a shift in the character of his comments on language and the interests of colonialism. Where he insists repeatedly in the *Persian Grammar* that the student of Persian *must* learn the script, the first essay he publishes in the first volume *Asiatick Researches* in 1784 puts forth his system for transliteration of Persian, Arabic, and Indic languages, which he claims to be the first organized system of its kind: "Every man, who has occasion to compose tracts on *Asiatick* literature, or to translate from the *Asiatick* languages, must [find] it convenient, and sometimes necessary, to express *Arabick* and *Persian* words, or sentences, in the characters generally [used by] *Europeans*."⁴⁷ The "interest" that he imagines as propelling the motives of the Persian student reading his *Grammar* gives way to the practicalities of "convenience" and "necessity" for those entrenched in the business of colonial administration.

Similarly, where Jones's early emphasis on the importance of learning Persian script had to do with aesthetics--he insists in a passage from the 1772 *Poems*, quoted above, that "the sweetness of the sound cannot be determined by the sight" of Romanized Persian--his latter focus on systematizing Romanization stems from a move away from purely aesthetic interest and toward the very real circumstances of Oriental research and colonial administration that occasioned writing about and translation of Persian texts.

⁴⁷ *Asiatick Researches, or, Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature of Asia*. 5 vols., vol. 1 (Calcutta: 1784), 1.

We can see these "two Joneses" in the multiple legacies of Jones's career that surface during the Victorian period. On the one hand, the wide circulation of his translation of Hafez, plus his appended essays to the 1772 *Poems*, marked a watershed moment for poetics, and helped define lyric poetry in the nascent moments of Romanticism. Jones's influence extended not only to Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other early Romantics, but also continued for later poets like Tennyson. His emphasis on mining Eastern works for new sources of inspiration as well as his approach to metrical translation also influenced important translations in the Victorian period, such as Edward FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (discussed below). At the same time, the "colonial" Jones had a decided influence on the trajectory of colonial administration and Orientalist research in India as well; Jones's famous "monogenesis" theory, as well as his system of Romanization, had a decided influence on the rhetoric used in the Victorian period to solidify disparate Indian linguistic traditions under the unified banner of "Indian literature," which simultaneously helped legitimize English in India.

In her fascinating new study on the importance of translation to Victorian culture and aesthetics, Annmarie Drury specifically focuses on meter as an important part of Victorian debates on translation and what can and should be brought across from one language into another. At this time, she says, the translator is a "mediator and fixer, [...] a negotiator of inter-metrical and hence international relations."⁴⁸ Drury draws on Meredith Martin's work on the relationship between meter and the solidifying of English national identity in the Victorian period; the Victorian obsession with nation building necessitated

⁴⁸ Annmarie Drury, *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture ;99 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 39.

that British citizens and subjects use the same pronunciation and be subject to the same linguistic rhythms, and meter was an important part of imparting these values. Drury notes that this impulse is carried over into the imperial context; for instance, she discusses the difficulties involved in various translators' attempts to bring "God Save the Queen" into Sanskrit: British subjects must sing the national anthem together, in unison--but how might that togetherness take shape given the vast differences in poetics between English and Sanskrit? The answer comes in re-asserting the importance of translating prosodic elements like meter, "musical rhythm," and rhyme, over and above conveying a line-by-line sense of the song.

Drury focuses on the repeated and seemingly rote invocation of Dryden--particularly his tripartite view of translation as metaphrase, paraphrase, or imitation--in Victorian prefaces to and treatises on translation; she notes particularly that Dryden emphasized the importance of translating a text's sense over its meter, and especially shows how Victorians seemed to reverse or ignore this particular dictum of Dryden's. However, if we view Jones as an important precursor to Victorian practices of translation, we see the extent of his influence in this very reversal. Padma Rangarajan notes that FitzGerald learned Persian from Jones's *Persian Grammar*, which was still very much in circulation, and that he called his *Rubaiyat* "'a poor W. Jones' sort of parody.'"⁴⁹ Referring to his translation practice, FitzGerald "himself referred to his 'transmogrification'" of the *Rubaiyat*, using Omar Khayyam "as [his] poetic muse rather than the original author of a translated work," and furthermore, one early reviewer referred to FitzGerald's work as

⁴⁹ Rangarajan, *Imperial Babel Translation, Exoticism, and the Long Nineteenth Century*, 122.

"not a translation, but as the 'redelivery of poetic inspiration.'"⁵⁰ By reading Drury and Rangarajan together, we can see Jones's influence on translators of this period in the continued currency of his *Grammar*, the wide acceptance of his dictum from the *Poems* that Eastern literature be translated and used to enrich European literature, and the prevalence of his imitative translation style in undertaking this endeavor of enrichment.

At the same time, if Victorians were anxious to standardize the English language through an emphasis on metrics that could translate into national unity, then these concerns were all the more pressing in the context of an increasingly unwieldy empire. In South Asia, these very same attempts--standardizing language, pronunciation, and, importantly, script--took place not only through negotiations of translation theory and practice, but also debates about the "dress" in which these texts should appear: in short, translation and transliteration were dual and interrelated concerns in the Indian context. In India, colonial administrators, Orientalists, and translators were necessarily concerned with the relationship between sight and sound, and reading as a process of translating between these two senses.

This process of translating between sight and sound gains further salience when we consider the emphasis on orality in South Asian poetic culture, where singing and/or recitation of poems in public settings was a very real possibility, rather than an imagined ideal. At the same time, written texts were framed by three competing scripts: Devanagari (increasingly identified with Hindi), Perso-Arabic (increasingly identified with Urdu), and Roman. While the spoken dialect of Hindi-Urdu--commonly referred to, beginning at this time, as Hindustani--could bridge differing linguistic community through access to a

⁵⁰ Ibid., 123.

common aural/orality, within the Victorian and imperial context of nation-building, differences in script were a threat to the unity of the Indian empire: "At the moment, Trevelyan says, each province in India has a 'separate character, and two, and sometimes more characters are current in every district.' Should the Roman script be adopted in all provinces, then anything printed in any of the provinces will automatically add to 'the common stock.'"⁵¹ This interest in cultivating a "common stock"--of printed texts, literature, and people--was a key part of building a national canon,⁵² even when that canon of texts would not necessarily be "common" in terms of intelligibility. In other words, although the perennial question that haunts the study of Hindi-Urdu--and motivates much of this dissertation--involves the degree to which these two linguistic traditions might be imagined as mutually intelligible (or not), Trevelyan's comments imply that the differing scripts constitute the only barrier in intelligibility between these various traditions.

In fact, as Majeed notes, Trevelyan was not concerned with intelligibility at all:

Trevelyan shows that he is concerned with the comparative reading speeds in the Roman script and Indian scripts, irrespective of whether or not the reader can understand the language that he is reading. He asserts that the 'native' who knows the Roman script will be able to read it fluently and quickly 'whether he understands it or not,' whereas this is not the case with the same person reading an Indian script. Speed of reading is here divorced from understanding the content of what is being read.⁵³

⁵¹ Javed Majeed, "Modernity's Script and a Tom Thumb Performance: English Linguistic Modernity and Persian/Urdu Lexicography in Nineteenth Century India," in *Trans-Colonial Modernities in South Asia*, ed. Michael S. Dodson and Brian Hatcher (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 113.

⁵² On the building of a national canon of English literature in India, see: Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest : Literary Study and British Rule in India*.

⁵³ Majeed, "Modernity's Script and a Tom Thumb Performance: English Linguistic Modernity and Persian/Urdu Lexicography in Nineteenth Century India," 97-8.

At the same time, Majeed continues, "Trevelyan asserted that if all Indian languages were cast into the Roman script, then the student could turn from one Indian language to another 'at once.'"⁵⁴ Trevelyan's comments here seem to refer not just to Hindi and Urdu, but to other Indian languages with multiple scripts, such as Panjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, and Tamil; his suggestion that these otherwise mutually unintelligible languages could become instantly accessible via conversion into Roman script elides the difference between translation and transliteration. In this sense, the "common stock" of literature referred to above could include texts from languages as disparate as Nepali and Telegu, but could still be considered part of the same canon on the basis of script, which could then be mapped onto a broad conception of "Indian literature" unified on this basis. This logic would also allow for the inclusion of English into the canon of Indian literature, naturalizing it as a properly Indian language.

Ironically, although Jones's treatise on Romanization was very much based on the necessities of colonial administration in India, he specifically mentions the necessity of writing *Arabic* and *Persian* in Roman letters, rather than focusing on "autochthonous" Indian languages; when he does mention Devanagari later on in this work, he describes it as a "perfect system," and ultimately explains how his own system is based on Devanagari's one-to-one correlation between symbol and sound. Jones's language here suggests that the inefficiency and/or difficulty inherent to the Perso-Arabic alphabet points to the need for Romanization, whereas the deficiencies of the English colonial administrators might necessitate a Romanizing system for Devanagari. The Perso-Arabic alphabet and the current Romanization system are therefore considered lacking and

⁵⁴ *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's the History of British India and Orientalism* (London: Clarendon Press, 1992), 98.

imperfect beside the perfection of Devanagari as a writing system that can fully capture the sounds of Indian languages without redundancy or deficiency. We can see this idealization of Devanagari in the ways that Jones's *Persian Grammar* seems to have been used: in a first-edition manuscript of the *Grammar* in the British Library, I found marginal notes that transliterated Jones's lists of Persian verbs into Devanagari. This reader's turn to Devanagari not only suggests the "imperfections" or "deficiencies" in both the Perso-Arabic and Roman alphabets when capturing Persian sounds, but further demonstrates Devanagari's authority as a whole and complete system of script. Indeed, the affinities of Jones's 1784 system of Romanization to the principles of Devanagari are one of the main reasons that Trevelyan takes it up fifty years later:

Another advantage of Sir William Jones's plan is, that besides being complete in itself, owing to the perfect analogy which exists between the different letters, it bears a strict correspondence throughout to the great Indian or Deva Nagari alphabet. All the alphabets derived from the latter are very systematic, and a scheme which is otherwise cannot properly represent them.⁵⁵

However, while Jones's work takes Devanagari's completeness as a model for Romanization that can assist the Englishman in "conveniently" representing Indic languages, and especially languages written in the Perso-Arabic script, Trevelyan's support for a Roman script that adheres closely to Devanagari stems from his wish that the "natives" themselves adopt this script. He writes:

The natives of India are [...] already quite familiar with the idea of distinguishing the modification of sound by a corresponding modification of sign; and when they see the same plan adopted in the Anglified version of the alphabet, they immediately recognise the propriety of it, and enter into the spirit of the scheme. As the new orthography is mainly intended for the people of India, the

⁵⁵ Charles Trevelyan, "Defence of Sir William Jones' System of Oriental Orthography," in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, ed. James Prinsep (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1834), 414.

circumstance of its being entirely coincident with their preconceived feelings and ideas must be allowed to be an advantage of no small importance.⁵⁶

Whereas Jones puts forth a system of Romanization as necessary to the convenience of the English, Trevelyan advocates for Jones's system on the basis of its necessity for the edification of the Indian--a reversal characteristic of the shift from Orientalism to Anglicism. This shift also represents the quintessentially Victorian method of neutralizing the perceived threat of the foreign through assimilating it with the familiar.⁵⁷

For instance, in his Preface to the "Original Papers illustrating the History of the Application of the Roman Alphabet to the Languages of India", Monier Williams paraphrases many of Trevelyan's arguments discussed above, and adds that Hindus are ultimately guided by personal interest and practicalities rather than cultural or religious compunctions: "Hindus are more utilitarian in their views, and greater worshipers of expediency, than we are apt to imagine. After all, a Brahmin and an Englishman are offshoots from the same Indo-European stock, as their languages can testify."⁵⁸ The argument in favor of Roman script focuses on natural affinities between Englishmen and Hindus--affinities that are themselves cultural extrapolations from Jones's linguistic theories, and especially the proposition of a Proto-Indo-European language. While Englishmen and Hindus could find common linkages in this shared history, the now well-known understanding of the Semitic language family as separate from the Indo-European linguistic branch justified the broad scale exclusion of Muslim culture and cultural

⁵⁶ Ibid., 415.

⁵⁷ See: Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁵⁸ Monier Williams, ed. *Original Papers Illustrating the History of the Application of the Roman Alphabet to the Languages of India* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1859), xiv.

markers from Indian society. This systematic exclusion occurred not least through the demonization of the Perso-Arabic script as fundamentally "foreign" to India.⁵⁹

At the same time, the fact that Perso-Arabic script had been adopted to represent Indian languages in writing demonstrated the fundamental practicality of Hindus, who, in this discourse, are signifiers of "original," "native," and properly autochthonous Indians. Trevelyan and Williams argue, for instance, that if the Hindu had been willing to learn and apply the Perso-Arabic script to "his" language, then he will by the same logic be willing to learn the Roman script as long as such learning would be rewarded through the possibility of personal gain. Williams summarizes this view as follows:

The Persian alphabet, therefore, as used in writing the Hindoostanee language, is as great a mongrel as ever the Roman letters can be when they are applied to the same purpose, being made up, partly of Persian characters, partly of letters introduced from the Arabic, and partly of certain modified forms of Persian letters which have been invented by the Fort William philologists to represent those sounds of the Sanskrit letters which are not to be found in Persian. This adaptation was not completed until of late years, when the subject was taken up by the learned Orientalists of the College of Fort William. They might just as well have modified the Roman as the Persian characters to express the language of this country. They are both equally foreign, and equally applicable to it with some slight alterations.⁶⁰

As we can see, the administrators and Orientalists in favor of Roman script justified their arguments on the bases of *both* cultural affinity and cultural difference. In navigating this triangulation of script (which was then mapped onto language, religion, and culture⁶¹), the British exploited the rhetoric of Muslim foreign-ness as a foil for their own foreign-

⁵⁹ Majeed, "Modernity's Script and a Tom Thumb Performance: English Linguistic Modernity and Persian/Urdu Lexicography in Nineteenth Century India," 102.

⁶⁰ Williams, *Original Papers Illustrating the History of the Application of the Roman Alphabet to the Languages of India*, 10.

⁶¹ Arvind Mandair refers to this conflation of script, language, religion, and culture as "monotheolingualism"--though he analyzes Hindi, Urdu, and Panjabi, rather than Hindi, Urdu, and English. See Chapter 1 of Mandair, *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation*.

ness;⁶² while both Perso-Arabic and Roman script are "equally foreign and equally applicable" to Indian languages, English at least has the advantage of ancient linguistic and cultural affinities to India.

Similarly, Majeed notes, we find systems of Romanization repeatedly refusing to transliterate the Arabic letter 'ain, ultimately claiming it as inassimilable to the Roman system. For instance, in the sixth edition of the *Persian Grammar*, published in 1804, Jones opens by providing a brief overview of each Persian letter, its transliteration, and its pronunciation. When he gets to 'ain, however, he does not transliterate it, and simply reproduces the letter in its Perso-Arabic form, writing "as no letters can convey an idea of its force, [...] we have used the Arabic form in combination with the Roman and Italic characters."⁶³

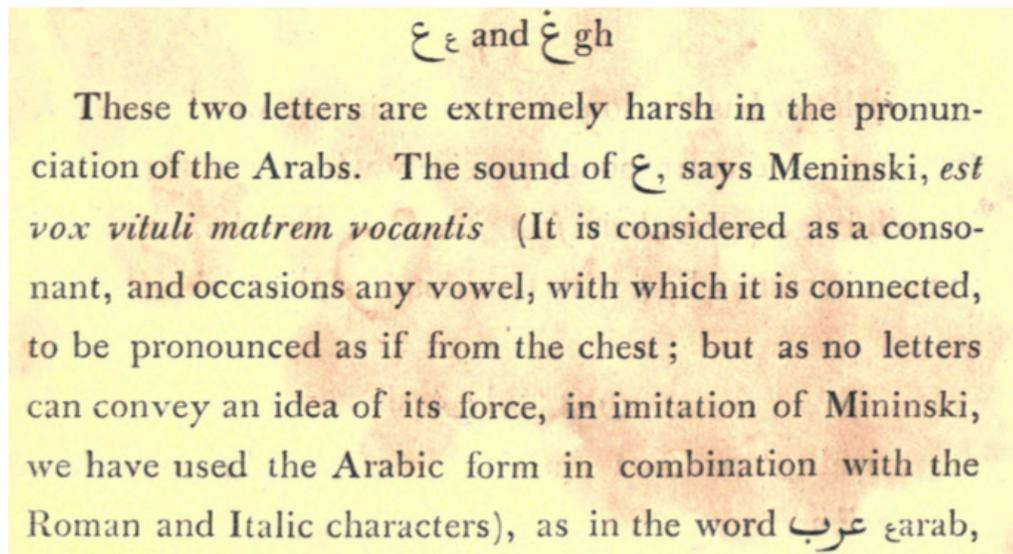


Figure 4: An excerpt from Jones's *Persian Grammar*, which shows the retention of the Perso-Arabic letter 'ain, and a repudiation of the possibility of representing this letter or sound in Roman script.

⁶² In Chapter Three, I provide a more detailed analysis of the ways in which concerns about the foreign-ness and questionable legitimacy of English get rhetorically displaced onto Urdu.

⁶³ William Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language*, 6th ed. (London: Lackington, Allen, and Co., 1804), 8.

In describing the persistence of this convention in the Victorian era, Majeed observes:

"Here, then, on the linguistic terrain of modernity's system of transliteration, we have the figure of the inassimilable Muslim, a version of the 'backward' Muslim, who cannot be integrated into this script because to do so would threaten the existence of that script, even while that script sought to overwrite the entire globe."⁶⁴ The symbolism of the untransliterated 'ain becomes that of the inassimilable Muslim, for whose script, language, and culture there is increasingly little space in a "modernizing" India.

At the same time, these discussions of script retained traces of orality: There is also some uncertainty in Trevelyan's papers about the term 'reading.' As noted above, he asserts that a 'native' who knows the Roman script will be able to read it fluently and quickly 'whether he understands it or not,' whereas this is not the case with the same person reading in an Indian script. Presumably the only way Trevelyan can substantiate this is if the person concerned were to read aloud, since only then would Trevelyan be able to gauge the speed and efficiency of the transliterating system in question. Silent reading, so much a part of print culture, cannot be checked for this. If this is the case, then the print capitalism of colonial linguistic modernity also had to partly call upon the performative strategies of an oral residue within Indian culture in order to secure and prove its own existence in the subcontinent. Like some aspects of South Asian literate cultures, colonial print modernity became partially linked to the oral residue within Indian society, and colonial linguistic modernity is entangled within the area of a vernacular linguistic modernity, if only to prove aspects of itself.⁶⁵

We saw a similar process in the *Grammar*, in which Jones simultaneously emphasizes the visual and the aural qualities of the Persian language, suggesting that the student first read and pronounce Hafez, then learn Persian, and then read Hafez again with the goal of comprehension. Trevelyan takes up this model, but for the "native" Indian student reading Indic languages in Roman script.

⁶⁴ Majeed, "Modernity's Script and a Tom Thumb Performance: English Linguistic Modernity and Persian/Urdu Lexicography in Nineteenth Century India," 102-3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

The "unassimilable" letter 'ain provides yet another example of uneven cultural regifting: where Jones merely incorporates the letter wholesale into his system of Romanization, finding no appropriate counterpart, this "borrowing" ultimately enriches and completes the Roman script. Yet, when examining the adaptation of Perso-Arabic script to Indic languages, including and especially Urdu, the existence of the 'ain becomes further proof of the redundancy and backwardness of this script in its Indian iteration.

By examining the historicity of William Jones's essays and his translation of Hafez, we can see how ghazalization and lyricization have dovetailed since the 18th century, so that lyric is always already ghazalized, and ghazal always already lyricized. Although this process has occurred through various Western encounters with Persian ghazal, and Hafez in particular, Urdu ghazal becomes interpellated through this discourse under the universalizing tendencies of world literature. Yet far from world literature's pretensions to neutrality and cultural harmony, the particular patterns of cultural exchange exemplified by lyricization and ghazalization ultimately do violence to the Urdu ghazal in the process of its canonization as a questionably autochthonous tradition in India; Urdu and the violence inflicted upon it are then made invisible by the cultural logic of indigeneity that promotes Persian, Hindi/Sanskrit, and English as the languages proper to both national and world literary production. For instance, despite the worldwide popularity of the Urdu ghazals of Faiz Ahmed Faiz or Mirza Ghalib, the complexity of the Indian linguistic and cultural context is cited as one reason for the total exclusion of Urdu from a collection of essays entitled *Ghazal as World Literature* (2005).

As Aamir Mufti deftly argues in his recent monograph, *Forget English!*, the very idea of India was first posited and disseminated through the notion of a consolidated and

canonized body of literature "discovered" by Western Orientalists, especially Jones; in fact, he cites the *Asiatic Researches* as the means via which "non-Western textual traditions made their first wholesale entry *as literature*, sacred and secular, into the international literary space that had emerged in early modern times in Europe."⁶⁶ The emergence of Indian texts as literature is also intertwined with the emergence of the lyric genre as it becomes defined through Jones's translations of Persian and Indian texts. At the same time, the mediation of the nation as an important frame via which literary texts appear on the world stage also necessitated the consolidation of a specifically *Indian* body of literature that could then become "world" literature. Jones's legacy in translating and transliterating Persian and Indic languages has shaped the way in which Urdu literature has come to be canonized as Indian--or not.

⁶⁶ Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 58, 109.

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CHAPTER V

Ghazalizing Faiz: Oral Performance, Lyric Subjectivity, and the Mushaira Imaginary

Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984) is perhaps the most well-known modern Urdu poet, both within South Asia and transnationally. Although Faiz was a political activist deeply committed to the Marxist cause, his poetry has resonated with audiences both for its political engagement and for its apparent lyricism. For instance, Faiz posthumously received the Nishan-i Imtiaz--the highest civilian award, given for Faiz's contribution to Pakistani national culture--even though during his lifetime he spent five years in prison for revolutionary and anti-government activity in Pakistan. Faiz retains remarkable prominence in India as well: at the entrance to the Delhi offices of Doordarshan, a national television channel in India, a larger-than-life portrait of Faiz stands next to those of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. In addition, throughout the otherwise quite bare hallways of the Doordarshan building, I found huge posters or cut-out of Faiz, along with a blown-up version of one of his poems transliterated into the Devanagari, or Hindi, script. And, throughout the South Asian diaspora, I have encountered statues or portraits of Faiz in as diverse venues as the Asian Studies Department at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, and a Pakistani ice cream shop in Houston, Texas.



Figure 5: Faiz pictured at the Doordarshan Delhi offices, along with his ghazal, *gulon mein rang bhare*.

How do we reconcile this contradiction in Faiz's reception as political activist and revolutionary versus national poet for both Pakistan and India? What can we make of a Pakistani Marxist and poet of Urdu juxtaposed next to such major Indian national figures as Gandhi and Tagore? How can we read the symbolism of Faiz's ghazal transliterated into Devanagari and displayed next to his pictures throughout India's major national television studio? And what sort of politics or forms of belonging is Faiz's portrait meant to signify in both university and popular settings in North America?

In this final chapter, I turn to the poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz--who is one of the most prominent post-1857 Urdu poets, and by far the most well-known post-Partition poet--to explore the nexus of ghazalization, lyricization, world literature, and translation in a specifically twentieth and twenty-first century context. Even while the so-called "death" of the ghazal had already been proclaimed, Faiz's role in visibly reviving and repopularizing the form, both in South Asia and worldwide, both relies on and reinforces a process of ghazalization already well-established by this time; his legacy of providing a specifically *lyric* voice for the shocking violence of Partition, for instance, has helped to fill the cultural vacuum created by this horrific historical moment at the birth of the nations of India and Pakistan. If, as we saw in Chapter 2, Ghalib has been narrativized as the Urdu poet via which we can see both the 1857 Mutiny and the 1947 Partition as moments of Independence, rather than nationalist and communalist violence, then Faiz has been received as the Urdu poet whose work has been co-opted to explicitly address that violence on a national level, healing the wounds of religious communalism while still preserving the nation's political legitimacy.

Faiz's prominence as a world poet--largely through the popularity and wide circulation of both oral performances and translations of his work (themselves intertwined, as we will see below)--has provided for South Asians around the world a point of cultural pride that has manifested in linguistic and national terms, across the political spectrum: if Jones's work helped to create and spread the Indian national idea, Faiz's work has often helped to reinforce and legitimize it. Although Faiz's poetry appears in as diverse contexts as the Doordarshan national offices and the North American academy, these circumstances are united by an investment in a revolutionary aesthetic that can be safely deployed and contained, often within a national frame. The nationalist appropriation of Faiz's work arises through the ghazalization of his poetic oeuvre, which itself occurs through the diverse and interrelated means of oral performance, translation, and critical reading practices that emphasize a lyric subjectivity in Faiz's work that is then imbued with social and political meaning.

In the ghazalization of Faiz, Urdu can function as a national language--in India, transliterated into Devanagari for good measure; Faiz's work allows for the broadening of the norms and parameters of the performance context of the Urdu mushaira (poetry gathering), thereby conferring political relevance to the messages of his poetry while relegating those messages to a poetic domain configured as purely affective rather than explicitly political. Faiz's open commitment to Marxism and Leftist political movements gives a political tinge to the mushaira imaginary that his work inaugurates, even when participation in that imaginary is more capitulatory than revolutionary; in other words, lyricized and/or ghazalized readings of Faiz's work often allow the revolutionary affect that he calls "political lyricism" to substitute for political action.

Although Faiz's most explicitly political poems are in the form of *nazms*, or free verse poems, I argue here that these poems have also been ghazalized to allow for a public and collective participation in the system of affect created by political lyricism that can then be put to use in a nationalist project of supposed healing--what I am calling the mushaira imaginary. The romanticization of voice as the means via which understanding between human beings can be reached across the bounds of space, time, and language also contributes to the compelling nature of the mushaira imaginary in creating a space conceived of as a type of political communing beyond national borders.

Importantly, the political contexts in which Faiz's work is deployed do not always rely on a lyricized and/or ghazalized mushaira imaginary; for instance, Faiz's nazm "Ham Dekhenge" was used to fuel the cause of Maoist rebels in Chattisgarh, in east-central India.¹ Leftist political movements both within South Asia and beyond have turned to

¹ Mufti describes this scene, which we know of through Arundhati Roy's journalistic recording of this event, as follows: "Roy tells us in her published account of her time with the rebels of listening together with them to a recording of the protest poem 'Ham Dekhenge' (We shall see) by Faiz, the voice of the singer Iqbal Bano and the defiant chant of her live audience in General Zia ul-Haq's Pakistan in the 1980s reverberating uncannily across the forest. The scene is replete with a variety of political tensions: Roy is a globally celebrated *Anglophone* writer from Delhi, a general gadfly whose *international* celebrity is relevant to the encounter because it grants her a certain protection from state repression of the sort visited regularly on her companions, who are a group of young *tribal peasants* deep in a forest in central India at war with their local social oppressors as well as the postcolonial state over the theft of their resource-rich land, and they are listening to a 'high' literary *Urdu* text (by Faiz) being sung by Iqbal Bano, one of his most important interpreters in *Pakistan*. It is a scene of cultural transmission and solidarity--across the mesh of class, language, and nation-state borders, at the very least--that is neither legible as 'world literature' in any of its dominant metropolitan formulations nor assimilable to the frames of literature as *national* institution that are promoted by the state and reinforced [...] by discourses and practices whose frame supposedly is supranational. Neither set of reading practices is adequate to the multiple resonances of this extremely simple yet extraordinary event." Aamir Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 189.

Faiz to spur political action *through* political affect, and the argument presented here should not diminish the existence or importance of this facet of Faiz's circulation; it is not a given that political affect necessarily substitutes for political action. Nevertheless, attending to ghazalization, lyricization, and the intersection of the two in Faiz's work helps demonstrate the broader effects of these processes in today's globalized political contexts. While the example of young revolutionaries in Chattisgarh listening to Faiz powerfully defies the current frames of either world or national literature, the counterexamples of Faiz's circulation with which I began this chapter quite easily fit into these frames. Consider, for instance, Faiz's portrait in a Houston ice cream shop--hung next to a giant poster featuring the Urdu lyrics of the Pakistan national anthem-- which, for that shop owner, very straightforwardly and unabashedly signifies his belonging to the Pakistani diasporic community.

My focus on politics in Faiz's work and its reception and circulation points to a central tension within the Urdu canon that I have explored in various ways throughout this dissertation: on the one hand, Urdu poetry in the popular imagination today consists of the purely aesthetic--a generally and ideally apolitical body of work that, on the other hand, is in reality put to a wide variety of political uses. As we have seen throughout the preceding chapters, Urdu ghazal has always maintained some relation to the political: from the king Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah "founding" the Urdu ghazal in the Deccan courts of Golconda in the 16th century; to the political and cultural competition engendered by Vali writing Urdu ghazals from the Deccan in the early 18th century; to the battles over court patronage between Ghalib and Zauq in the late Mughal era under Bahadur Shah Zafar--Urdu ghazal had always featured prominently in state politics.

Even after 1857 and the "death" of this genre, British colonial officials, recognizing the social capital of the ghazal, continued to sponsor mushairas in which poets were challenged to compose "didactic" ghazals on topics like good citizenship or education; here, too, despite the British intelligentsia's claims that ghazal's lyricism made it too inward or backward to serve a political role, we find ample evidence of these same officials putting the ghazal toward explicitly political and social use. In the era leading up to Independence, ghazal's enduring popularity made it an ideal mode via which poets and political commentators could spread political messages to a wide popular audience;² indeed, while many poets used ghazal to make political commentary urging for Indian independence from the British,³ ghazals after Independence have been read as laments for the shocking violence of Partition that accompanied that independence.

In fact, the context of Partition and its aftermath cannot be overstated for its effects on literature's relationship to society in South Asia--and all the more so in the case

² As Aamir Mufti notes, the ghazal became emblematic of the class distance between the Muslim elite and the "popular" masses, especially inasmuch as the genre represented the Urdu language as a whole, and hence figured into nationalist language debates of Urdu versus Hindi. *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 217. See Chapter 2 of this dissertation for a more thorough discussion of ghazal as a metonymy for Urdu as a whole, as well as how this figured into Urdu/Hindi language debates.

³ In her article "Urdu Political Poetry during the Khilafat Movement", Gail Minault contrasts two main approaches to pre-Independence political poetry. The first is that of the poet Zafar Ali, who was the editor of a political magazine in Lahore; he published ghazals in this magazine that used traditional tropes and imagery, but titled them to reflect the political topic at hand - "Swaraj" or "The Central Khilafat Committee", for instance. Nevertheless, read outside of this context, the couplets themselves are ambiguously political, at best. In contrast, Minault presents the example of Hasrat Mohani; Hasrat wrote "traditional" ghazals for which he is well known, but he also wrote explicitly political ghazals that were unambiguously exhortatory, such as the following couplet (given here with Minault's translation): *daulat-i Hindustān qabzah-i aghyār mein / be-'adū o be-hisāb dekhiye kab tak rahe* ("The riches of India in foreign hands are clasped / These numberless riches, how long will they last?"). Gail Minault, "Urdu Political Poetry During the Khilafat Movement," *Modern Asian Studies* 8, no. 4 (1974).

of Faiz's poetry. The rise of the Progressive Writers' Association (PWA), which was the driving force for literature on both sides of the Indo-Pak border, demonstrates the widely felt need for socially committed, secular literature that could address the failures of nationalism that culminated in the horrific violence of Partition. The explicitly Marxist commitments of the PWA also suggested a renewed interest in addressing the concerns of the subaltern classes in South Asia, and much of the literature of the time turned to vernacular dialects, unadorned diction meant to mirror daily speech, and socially marginalized or taboo characters--prostitutes, homosexuals, lower castes, and madmen, for instance--as an open eschewal of literary elitism. At the same time, the rigid secularism of the PWA was meant to act as a refuge from and palliative for the religious communalism that spurred the violence of Partition. However, the aesthetics of social realism advocated by the Progressives allowed for a continuation of the principles of literary didacticism put forth by the colonial officials and taken up by the native elites beginning in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. While the class of native elites steeped in these Victorian aesthetics became some of the most visible leaders and thinkers in the period just before and after Independence, the PWA developed as a counter-cultural movement that nevertheless operated upon the same underlying ideas and assumptions about lyric and ghazal (as overly inward and irrelevant to society) that drove the literary movements of the political mainstream.

The decades leading up to and just after Partition were a key historical context for the solidification of modern ideas about Urdu ghazal as symbolic of Muslim identity. As Aamir Mufti points out, "The orthodox solution [to the problem of Faiz's lyricism and its seeming contrast to his politics]--shared by critics of many different political persuasions-

-has been to argue that Faiz merely turns a 'traditional' poetic vocabulary to radical political ends, that we should read the figure of the distant beloved, for instance, as a figuring of the anticipated revolution."⁴ Yet this turn is not just a critical one, as Mufti paints it, but an inevitable consequence of the effect of Partition on the valences of the Urdu language.

The word *hijr* for instance, came to mean "Partition," so that although the word may have traditionally stood for the distance between the lover and beloved, any use of this word within the ghazal universe necessarily came to involve political and social valences of violence in the wake of the events of Partition. Indeed, because *hijr* originally referred to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his fledgling community of Muslims from Mecca to Medina, this word as it appears in the post-Partition ghazal contains renewed Islamic valences, along with the genre as a whole. In other words, if the ghazal at its most basic level expresses the condition of *hijr*, and if that condition had assumed a secular tone during the height of ghazal's popularity, then that condition after Partition must necessarily be a Muslim one. Or, to put it another way, it is not just that Faiz turned popular ghazal tropes to political ends, but that those tropes were always already understood as political after the shift within the Urdu language itself after Partition.

While Faiz maintained ties with the PWA, and his nazms (again, "free verse" poems that follow no set formal rules) were universally celebrated, he came under intense criticism for his ghazals: on the one hand, elites charged him with writing unimpressive ghazals with recycled themes, while members of the PWA charged him with elitism for

⁴ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 211.

writing ghazals that were escapist, classist, and betrayed the aesthetic principles of social realism. Similarly, the ghazal's association with Muslim-ness made it unpalatable given the Progressives' staunch secularism, and the form's continued association with the Mughals suggested its political and social backwardness, especially given the PWA's fetishization of narratives of progress.⁵ These reactions of the PWA, as well as the sentiments of Faiz himself, already suggest the extent to which ghazal represents a key field for determining social and political meanings, including the extent to which Muslims and Muslim culture may be considered "progressive," or at least progressive enough for the demands of modern nationhood.

When confronted with these charges against the ghazal in a 1971 interview on Radio Pakistan, Faiz suggests that his ghazals may seem repetitive and perhaps not as dynamic as his nazms because the genre's "in-built limitations" are such that one cannot move beyond a certain limit of meaning or metaphor.⁶ In the same interview, one interviewer asks how Faiz has been able to handle both love-related themes--i.e. the typical themes one might find in a traditional ghazal--and overtly political ideas at the same time in his work. In response, Faiz suggests that he has solved the problem of the seeming incongruence of these two themes by engaging in what he calls "political lyricism."⁷ Of course, Faiz's choice of this phrase suggests not only that lyric is inherently apolitical and in need of politicization, but also that lyric itself can be turned into an

⁵ In Urdu, the PWA is referred to as the *Taraqqī Pasand Tahrīk*, or "Progress-loving Movement."

⁶ In a different interview, however, he suggests that the ghazal may be capable of more than it seems, but that he is not an able enough poet to push the genre beyond certain bounds.

⁷ Note that Faiz breaks from speaking in Urdu in order to deploy the phrase "political lyricism."

ideology of sorts, or an "-ism." This comment suggests that Faiz's view of poetry is already lyricized, in that he sees lyric as an apolitical and inwardly-turned super-genre.⁸

As we will see below, the ghazalization of Faiz's nazms has produced a type of "political lyricism" that appears as a mystical or otherworldly collectivity that produces a political affect divorced from more tangible political action. Faiz's poetry ironizes or resists lyric subjectivity--often by emptying out or avoiding the use of a lyric "I"--such that attempts to find political lyricism in Faiz's work faultily rely on reading a lyric subjectivity into his poems that is often not there at all. This lyric subjectivity is deployed through the idealization of voice, both in actual sung performances of Faiz and in translations and critical readings of his poetry that focus on the trope of voice as the key to a supposedly lyrical self.

Ghazalizing the Nazm

In this section, I turn to one of Faiz's most famous poems, "Mujh Se Pahli Si Muhabbat Merī Mahūb Nah Māng," written in 1943, and published in his first volume of poetry, *Naqsh-i Faryādī*. This poem acts as a key example of ghazalization even at the most superficial level because many lay readers understand this poem to be a ghazal, even though it is, in fact, a nazm--significantly, it is a nazm that discusses the reasons why the classical ghazal is no longer relevant for society. Although the poem was written

⁸ Faiz completed a Masters in English literature in which his Masters thesis focused on Robert Browning's poetry; we can assume, then, that aside from any popular circulation of the linking of ghazal, nazm, and lyric, Faiz had specific knowledge of the Romantic lyric tradition in English, including Shelley and Keats besides Browning. He admits in a 1972 interview that the Romantics have been influential to his work and views of Urdu poetry. I would argue that we see this at play in his particular understanding of "lyricism." Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Allen Jones, "Interviews with Faiz Ahmed Faiz," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 10, no. 1 (1974).

a few years before Partition, Partition as a historical moment has become an important lens through which we read this poem today. In my reading of this poem, I suggest that Faiz knowingly plays with ghazal conventions--including rhyme scheme and tropes--in order to ironize the ghazal form. Despite the fact that Faiz's nazm explicitly rejects the classical ghazal as a viable genre for the socio-political needs of modernity, his work has nonetheless been ghazalized because of the broader historical forces associated with post-Partition nationalism, and the socio-political role of the ghazal as a redeeming feature of Muslim identity in South Asia.

مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت میری محبوب نہ مانگ

مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت میری محبوب نہ مانگ
میں نے سمجھا تھا کہ تو ہے تو درخشاں ہے حیات
تیرا غم ہے تو غم دہر کا جھگڑا کیا ہے
تیری صورت سے ہے عالم میں بہاروں کو ثبات
تیری آنکھوں کے سوا دنیا میں رکھا کیا ہے؟
تو جو مل جائے تو تقدیر نگوں ہو جائے
یوں نہ تھا میں نے فقط چاہا تھا یوں ہو جائے
اور بھی دکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا
راحتیں اور بھی ہیں وصل کی راحت کے سوا
انگنت صدیوں کے تاریک بہیمانہ طلسم
ریشم و اطلس و کمخاب میں بنوئے ہوئے
جا بجا بکتے ہوئے کوچہ و بازار میں جسم
خاک میں لٹھڑے ہوئے خون میں نہلائے ہوئے
جسم نکلے ہوئے امراض کے تنوروں سے
پیپ بہتی ہوئی گلتے ہوئے ناصوروں سے
لوٹ جاتی ہے ادھر کو بھی نظر کیا کیجئے
اب بھی دلکش ہے تیرا حسن مگر کیا کیجئے
اور بھی دکھ ہیں زمانے میں محبت کے سوا
راحتیں اور بھی ہیں وصل کی راحت کے سوا
مجھ سے پہلی سی محبت میری محبوب نہ مانگ

Mujh se pahlī sī muhabbat merī mahbūb nā māng

- 1 Mujh se pahlī sī muhabbat merī mahbūb nā māng
Main ne samjhā thā ke tū hai toh darakhshān hai hayāt
Terā gham hai toh gham-i dahr ka jhagRā kyā hai
Terī sūrat se hai 'ālam mein bahāron ko sabāt
- 5 Terī ānkhon ke sivā duniyā mein rakkha kyā hai
Tū jo mil jā'e toh taqdīr nigūn ho jā'e*
Yūn nā thā main ne faqat chāhā thā yūn ho jā'e*
Aur bhī dukh hain zamāne mein muhabbat ke sivā*

10 Rāhatein aur bhī hain vasl kī rāhat ke sivā*
 Anginat sadīyon ke tārīk bahemānah tilism
 Resham-o atlās-o kamkhāb mein bunvāye hū'e
 Ja-ba-ja bikte hū'e kūchah-o bāzār mein jism
 Khāk mein lithRe hū'e khūn mein nahlaye hū'e
 Jism nikle hū'e amrāz ke tannūron se*
 15 Pīp bahtī hū'i galte hū'e nāsūron se*
 LauT jātī hai udhar ko bhī nazar kyā kījiye
 Ab bhī dilkash hai terā husn magar kyā kījiye
 Aur bhī dukh hain zamāne mein muhabbat ke sivā
 Rāhatein aur bhī hain vasl kī rāhat ke sivā
 20 Mujh se pahlī sī muhabbat merī mahbūb nā māng

[Do Not Ask From Me, My Beloved, Love Like That Former One
 1 Do not ask from me, my beloved, love like that former one
 I had believed that you are, therefore life is shining
 There is anguish over you, so what of the sorrow of the age?
 From your aspect springtimes on earth have permanence;
 5 What does the world hold except your eyes?
 If you were to become mine, fate would be humbled.
 --It was no so, I had only wished that it should be so.
 There are other sufferings of the time (world) besides love,
 There are other pleasures besides the pleasures of union.
 10 The dark beastly spell of countless centuries,
 Woven into silk and satin and brocade,--
 Bodies sold everywhere in alley and market,
 Smearred with dust, washed in blood,
 Bodies that have emerged from the ovens of diseases,
 15 Pus flowing from rotten ulcers--
 My glance comes back that way too; what is to be done?
 Your beauty is still alluring, but what is to be done?
 There are other sufferings of the time (world) besides love,
 There are other pleasures besides the pleasures of union;
 20 Do not ask from me, my beloved, love like that former one.]⁹

The title, "*Mujh Se Pahlī Sī Muhabbat Merī Mahbūb Nah Māng*," translates to

"Do not ask me from me, my Beloved, love like that former one"--a phrase that already

⁹ This translation is taken from Victor Kiernan's literal translation, with a few slight modifications of my own. Faiz Ahmad Faiz and V. G. Kiernan, *Poems by Faiz*, Unesco Collection of Representative Works: Pakistan Series (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 64-67.

suggests a significant break with previous tradition by invoking a former love that no longer exists. To achieve this break, Faiz uses traditional ghazal tropes in this nazm, only to subvert them in order to insist on their irrelevance to social issues.

The structure of this nazm acts as a key to its meaning--the rhyme scheme guides us to divide the poem into particular units. The eponymous first and last lines act as the thematic frame for the poem, and they are the only lines that are unrhymed; after this first line, we get a *qitā*¹⁰ with alternating rhyme, followed by two rhymed couplets, and then a repetition of this structure. Finally, the second rhymed couplet of the poem is repeated before we get the opening refrain to close the poem. This rhyme scheme mimics that of a ghazal, although the rhyme and refrain are not sustained throughout; nonetheless, the repeated refrain in the second lines of the rhymed quatrains looks like a ghazal, while the following couplets mimic the opening couplet (*matlā*) of a ghazal. By arranging the poem in this way, Faiz allows for couplets to be taken out of context for popular recitation, just as ghazal couplets are frequently recited as individual units in conversation or poetic assemblies without reference to the ghazal as a whole.

This rhyme scheme also guides our understanding of the poem as separated into semantic units. The first *qitā* (lines 2-5) plays on generic conventions of the ghazal to produce romantic sentiments that are both generic and conventional; each line puts forth a statement about love in the abstract while avoiding any concrete imagery, and while we find familiar tropes--such as love as springtime or the captivating quality of the beloved's

¹⁰ In a *qitā*, which may appear within a larger ghazal, or may stand on its own, we get four lines with the rhyme and refrain appearing in the second and fourth lines--just as we would see in any two couplets of a ghazal besides the first. However, in a *qitā*, the four lines are meant to be read together, as a continuous unit, rather than as two discrete couplets. The quatrains in *Mujh Se Pahlī Sī Muhabbat* recall this tradition, even though it is unusual to rhyme the first and third lines.

eyes--the language surrounding these tropes falls flat. By the end of the *qitā*, the representation of romantic love devolves into a parody of poetry that expresses that love with the unconvincing enthrallment of "What's left in the world besides your eyes?" (line 5). These sentiments are also explicitly marked as misguided from the opening words "*main ne samjhā thā*," where the past perfect verb conjugation implies that this misunderstanding has given way to reality, and that the lines of the *qitā* that follow represent a portrait of that "old love" (*pahlī sī muhabbat*) that can no longer be recovered.

In the couplet that follows, line 6 appears to continue the line of thought begun with the opening *qitā*, followed by an abrupt shift in line 7 with the realization that "It was never like this; I only wanted it to be this way." The lineation of this couplet also mirrors this disruption; while the first *qitā* is indented, line 6 shifts back to the right margin, while line 7 is indented again. This disruption is all the more marked in Urdu, where traditionally, the two hemistiches of a couplet are scrupulously aligned at both margins so that the rhyme and refrain are stacked upon each other at the left end of the line.¹¹ While the semantic unity of the couplet is disrupted with this lineation, the reversal in line 7 is visually and semantically aligned with the couplet and quatrain that follows. Indeed, the second couplet (lines 8-9) consists of probably the most famous lines in the poem besides the title line, and serves as a summary of the poem's overall theme--"There are other sorrows in this era besides the sorrow of love / There are other pleasures in the world besides the pleasure of union." We will find these lines repeated again at the close of the poem, followed by the reprisal of the title line.

¹¹ Indeed, the Urdu word for the refrain is *radīf*, which means "a row," and very much describes the visuality of the ghazal's repeated phrase aligned on the page.

In the second *qitā*, we find another marked shift in tone, though its continued alignment with the previous three lines suggest a continuation in theme. Yet the first line of the *qitā* makes an immediate move to the realm of History writ large--"The dark, beastly spell of countless centuries"--that is then immediately materialized, "woven into silk and satin and brocade" (lines 10-11). The second half of the *qitā* suggests the commodification of the body that mirrors the materiality of the dark history just invoked, where bodies are bought and sold like cloth in the market. In the references to bodies at the end of this quatrain, as well as in the following couplet, we find the most concrete and visual images in the poem, where the grotesque imagery in Couplet 3 (lines 14-15) also brings the poem to its climax: "Bodies emerging from the ovens of disease / Pus flowing from rotten ulcers." These lines deny us the satisfaction of grammatical completion, and instead we get a series of noun phrases without any predicates.

The fourth couplet of the poem (lines 16-17) relieves this grammatical tension, while also returning us to the poem's central theme: "The glance comes back that way too, what is to be done? / Your beauty is still alluring, but what is to be done?" Finally, we see the second couplet repeated, its meaning all the more piquant in the context of the imagery of the second half of the poem, and then the title line repeated to close the frame: "Do not ask from me, beloved, love like that former one."

I mentioned above that the structure of the poem allows for oral recitation of particular couplets. In fact--from my experience talking to Urdu enthusiasts throughout India, the US, and Canada--the two most frequently quoted couplets are Couplet 2 (lines 8-9; 18-19) and Couplet 4 (lines 16-17). The repetition of Couplet 2 within the poem already suggests that it is written to be repeated, and in a way, sums up the poem's

"argument". Furthermore, the internal repetition within the couplet especially lends well to both memorization and recitation, and explains the couplet's popularity.¹² Couplet 4, on the other hand, does not semantically make sense on its own because of the deixis in the first hemistich: *lauT jāṭī hai udhar ko bhī* only makes sense in the context of the preceding description of rotting, diseased bodies, so that when this couplet is quoted out of context, it is only the fame of the poem as a whole that makes the couplet cohere semantically.

There are various reasons why the other couplets in the poem do not lend themselves to oral recitation out of context: the couplets in the opening *qitā* are not particularly skillful or beautiful; then there is the semantic disruption of Couplet 1, which would not hold together outside of the larger poem; and the grandiosity of the theme in the second *qitā* does not provoke recitation. This leaves only Couplet 3--*jism nikle hū'e amrāz ke tannūron se / pīp bahtī hū'i galte hū'e nāsūron se*--which, with its perfect rhyme, vivid and concrete imagery, and flowing assonance, is arguably the most "recitable" couplet in the poem. And yet, at the same time, its content is off-putting at best, which, I argue, is precisely the point. Faiz subverts the generic and social conventions associated with the ghazal by producing a couplet that provokes recitation even while its content disgusts audiences with its unshrinking adherence to a Marxist/Progressive aesthetic of literary activism via social realism. This is why, in many

¹² On the other hand, the couplet is used in diverse contexts that take on Marxist valences: my father recounts a rickshaw driver in Pakistan reciting this verse to him in reference to his own poverty. In this sense, it is not just that broad sociopolitical problems have taken on an urgency over and above the traditional concerns of love, but that love itself is conceived as a bourgeois affect.

ways, these two lines represent the heart of the poem; while the more often recited couplets "tell" us the poem's main theme, these lines "show" us this theme.

Despite this off-putting imagery, however, this poem is often popularly mistaken for a ghazal, although it does not sustain the same rhyme and refrain throughout.¹³ One of the primary reasons for this confusion may be the cultural force of Noor Jehan's sung performance of the poem, which is likely the most common means through which audiences access this text. While Noor Jehan originally sang this poem for a 1971 Pakistani movie called *Qaidi*, the song had an exceptionally wide popular circulation far outside of this context, circulating on cassette tapes throughout South Asia and the diaspora. The assumption that the poem must be a ghazal, then, is based on the idea that ghazal is sung, and furthermore, that any poem that engages in what is now thought of as "lyricism" must be a ghazal. In short, even amongst speakers and listeners of Urdu, ghazal is increasingly understood at the popular level, not as a specific genre marked by particular formal rules, but as any poem that engages in a sort of lyricism, broadly defined, and is sung. Just as Prins and Jackson argue that Lyric has become a super-genre into which all other specific forms of poetry have been assimilated, we see a similar process occurring with the difference between ghazal and nazm--another instance of the broad cultural work of ghazalization.

Noor Jehan uses the "light classical" style of singing which is often also applied to sung performances of ghazals, in which she establishes the chord structure (*rāg*) with a prolonged harmonizing (*ālāp*) in the beginning, and then repeats the first line several times--Noor Jehan herself, for instance, also uses this style to sing poems of Faiz's that

¹³ As a trivial but nonetheless illustrative example, a cursory Google search for "faiz ahmed faiz ghazal" brings this poem up as one of the first hits.

are ghazals. However, this style of singing provokes a ghazalized interpretation by audiences because, without knowledge of the formal rules of a ghazal, the average South Asian understands "ghazal" to be any poem written in Urdu and performed in song. (And, as a friend once remarked, the popular idea of Urdu in India seems to be "any text that includes fancy-sounding words that I don't understand"--itself a comment on the ghazalization of Urdu as a whole.) In this sense, then, if many, if not most, people access "Mujh Se Pahli Si Muhabbat" through Noor Jehan's performance, then it is not only Faiz's couplet structure that provokes the misunderstanding that this text is a ghazal, but also the general ghazalization of Urdu poetry as a performed genre in South Asia. Noor Jehan both engages in a process of ghazalization that already exists, especially post-Partition, but also produces and reifies this process in her choice of singing style.

But secondly, there is another significant performative choice that influences the ghazalization of Faiz's work: the two lines that, as I showed in my close reading, most provoke oral recitation and also most openly engage in the jarring social realism that the poem itself posits as ideal--are the very lines that, in Noor Jehan's performance, are completely missing. It is not at all unusual for performers to pick and choose which couplets of a ghazal they will sing, and they often change the order of the couplets as compared to the written text of a ghazal as well. Noor Jehan invokes this standard practice of the performer--but because the nazm *does* depend on the linear progression of the poem to make its meaning, unlike the Urdu ghazal, whose couplets are for the most part considered interchangeable, Noor Jehan's interpretative performance of the nazm results in a drastic change in meaning. For while Faiz's text ironically invokes the ghazal and its tropes as a former ideal that no longer serves the needs of modern society, Noor

Jehan's text reinforces an idealized notion of ghazal that tragically no longer exists. In short, the disappearance of these two lines in the song performance serves to reinforce and de-ironize the text's troping of the ghazal form, instead turning the work into a ghazalized meditation on the loss of ghazal. Because of the popularity of Noor Jehan's performance, her interpretation of the text in terms of both style of singing and in terms of which lines to sing have had significant impact on the canonization of this text within the Urdu literary sphere.

In a similar interpretive--or interpellative--move, translator and poet Agha Shahid Ali--also omits these two lines in his translation of "Mujh Se Pahli Si Muhabbat." Shahid is perhaps the most famous of Faiz's translators, not least because of his prominence as an English poet within the American academy; he is also credited with popularizing the borrowing of the ghazal form into English. In the introduction to his translations of Faiz, titled *The Rebel's Silhouette*, Shahid notes his dual and equal allegiances to both English and Urdu which, he claims, make him an ideal translator of Faiz because he feels just as attached to Faiz's Urdu work as to the English poetry that his own translations produce. Shahid defends his omission of the same two lines that are omitted in Noor Jehan's famous performance of this nazm by suggesting that they are "excessive, if not outright gratuitous."¹⁴ And yet, as I showed in my own reading of this poem, this is precisely the point: if the images of rotten corpses and flowing pus do not neatly fit into our ideas of the "poetic," it is because, for Faiz, our notions of poetry's political and social obligations to society are overly circumscribed and in need of expansion.

¹⁴ Agha Shahid Ali, ed. *The Rebel's Silhouette: Selected Poems*, 2 ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991; reprint, 1995), xxi.

Shahid's explanation of the liberties he takes with the Urdu in his translations into English--which, as he says, are ultimately moments of fidelity--mirrors the performer's right to alter and shift the written ghazal text in her oral or sung performance. This is true not only because Shahid chooses to excise the same two lines that similarly disappear in Noor Jehan's sung text of "Mujh Se Pahli Si Muhabbat"--but also because in his translations of ghazals, Shahid picks and chooses from the couplets in Faiz's text--again, as any singer or performer would do. In this way, Shahid's work reminds us of the intimate connection between translation and performance, and the extent to which every performer is a translator, and every translator, a performer. Shahid opens his introduction to his translations of Faiz's work, *Rebel's Silhouette*, with this very idea, emphasizing that he first heard Faiz's poetry through the performances of another famous ghazal singer, Begum Akhtar:

My first sensuously vivid encounter with Faiz Ahmed Faiz: the voice of Begum Akhtar singing his ghazals [who was one] of the greatest exponents of light classical singing and within that tradition the greatest of ghazal singing [...]. What other singer can give, the way she did, a raga to a ghazal and then make the raga, that melodic archetype, feel grateful for being a gift?

Passion, attachment, something that has 'the effect of coloring the hearts of men'--that is what the Sanskrit term raga literally means. (One interpretation of ghazal is 'whispering words of love.') What Begum Akhtar did was to place the ghazal gently on the raga until the raga opened itself to that whispered love, gave itself willingly, guiding the syllables to the prescribed resting places, until note by syllable, syllable by note, the two merged compellingly into yet another aesthetic ethos for the Urdu lovers of the South Asian subcontinent. She, in effect, allowed the ghazal to be caressed into music, translated, as it were [...]

In these opening lines, Shahid points to the intersection of music, ghazal, and translation via his own virtuoso performance of prose, in which he himself beats out a rhythm with his sentences, quotes his own poetry, and translates "raga" and "ghazal" in order to fabricate a kinship between musical performance and poetry based on etymological

affinities. By performing the very lyricism it describes, Shahid's prose, too, participates in the ghazalization of Faiz's Urdu.

Referring to "Mujh Se Pahli Si Muhabbat" once again, Shahid also notes in his introduction that: "I was delighted to discover that in subsequent editions Faiz himself had deleted those very two lines."¹⁵ Shahid imagines this happenstance as an intuitive communing of poetic minds: "Did he also, like me, find [these lines] excessive, if not outright gratuitous? There is this kinship among poets, I will insist, this ability at times to see through craft, ironically because of the craft, to the essence."¹⁶ Of course, the kinship that Shahid perceives as part of a universal poetic craft belies the many political and historical circumstances that allow for these concurrences, not least the development of a standardized and Anglophone-centric notion of "world literature."

For in reality, Faiz himself became increasingly wooed by a lyricized understanding of ghazal, and poetry in general, especially as he became an increasingly popular figure of world literature in the Western literary world, and his aesthetic ties to the social realism of Marxist Russia faded. This brings me to my third point, which is the manner in which Faiz's canonization as a world literary figure had a significant impact on his poetics. Faiz achieved fame not only within relatively circumscribed Urdu-speaking circles, but throughout South Asia, and indeed, even visited China, Cuba, and especially Russia, sharing his poetry as a means of cultural exchange amongst Marxist movements. But especially after he left Pakistan in 1979, seeking refuge from the political upheaval caused by Zia ul-Haq's military coup, Faiz seems to have been increasingly influenced by the aesthetics of the English-speaking West. Tellingly, he was rumored to have been

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

nominated for a Nobel Prize in 1984--the year of his death. The aesthetic, cultural, and political shift indicated in the symbolism of the Nobel Prize, as opposed to the Lenin Peace Prize that he won in 1962, demonstrates the extent to which Faiz's own alignment seems to have shifted as he gained celebrity in the West, and especially in America.¹⁷

Again, despite Shahid's idealized conception of an intuitive understanding between poets, Faiz's own deletion of lines 14 and 15 in "Mujh Se Pahli Si Muhabbat" is emblematic of his shifting relations to the literary and political world. It also demonstrates the extent to which the very institution of world literature is not at all an even playing field to which all writers in all languages have equal access, but rather, a battlefield in which authors who successfully understand and cater to the world market and its particular politics, especially through translation, may gain disproportionate acclaim. Notably, Shahid's own translation practices and Faiz's later aesthetic choices reflect a distinctly Anglophone understanding of poetic "craft" based on their own privileged access to the aesthetics of the English-dominated world market.¹⁸

In short, then, the ghazalization and canonization of Faiz's work have taken place through three primary modes--oral performance, translation, and the institution of world literature--which are themselves interrelated. With the confluence of these processes, Faiz's poetry is less and less read through its Marxist aesthetics of social realism, and

¹⁷ Aamir Mufti writes: "The Lenin Peace Prize, also utterly forgotten today in countries where it was once considered a notable and prestigious recognition, always included international writers among its multiple awardees each year and was conceived explicitly as an alternative to (and amalgam of) the Nobel Prizes for peace and for literature." Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*, 93.

¹⁸ I am thinking here both of Pascale Casanova's now canonical work on world literature, as well as Aamir Mufti's critique and extension of that work. See: Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, *Convergences: Inventories of the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*.

more and more through the lens of an idealized and abstracted aesthetic plane that is seemingly removed from the realities of everyday politics. Nevertheless, this rhetorical disavowal of the political role of Urdu poetry, and especially ghazal, is itself a political move that belies the deeply political ways in which Urdu poetry is read today. For even a "depoliticized" reading of Faiz's work, including the poem I have discussed here, "Mujh Se Pahli Si Muhabbat", performs political work in that it provokes a nostalgic community--a mushaira imaginary--based on the figure of voice, whether figurative or literal, in the circulation of this text.

Ghazalizing the Lyric "I"

In his highly regarded *Enlightenment in the Colony*, Aamir Mufti dedicates an entire chapter to Faiz's work, writing: "The immense popularity of Faiz's poetry in the Urdu-Hindi regions, its almost iconic status as a pan-South Asian oeuvre, is a vague but nevertheless conclusive measure of its success in making available an experience of self that is Indian in the encompassing sense, across the boundaries of the 'communal' and nation-state divides."¹⁹ Mufti uses Adorno's "On Lyric Poetry and Society" to see in Faiz's poetry a re-imagining of (northern) India unbound from post-Independence national borders through a collective healing after the wounds of Partition. Just as Adorno asks whether it is possible to write poetry after Auschwitz,²⁰ Mufti can begin to ask similar questions about the status of the Indian subject after Partition: "Faiz problematizes the very notion of nation or people, raising fundamental questions about identity and subjectivity and their historical determinations. To put it more precisely, in

¹⁹ *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 248.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 273.

Faiz's poetry, both the degradation of human life in colonial and postcolonial modernity—exploitation—and the withholding of a collective selfhood at peace with itself—what I am calling partition—find common expression in the suffering of the lyric subject."²¹

And yet, by Mufti's own admission, "the appropriateness of using the term *lyric poetry* in anything more than a loose and descriptive sense with respect to Urdu writing in general and Faiz in particular is not self-evident and requires some justification."²²

However, in order to address this point he argues:

In treating Faiz as a modern lyric poet, [...] I am not suggesting that we engage in a search for qualities in modern Urdu verse that are characteristic of the lyric in modern Western poetry. On the contrary, the purpose of my analysis of a number of Faiz's poems is precisely to make it possible to explore the specificities of modern lyric in a colonial and postcolonial society. Above all, what the concept of lyric makes possible is the *translation*, the passage, of Faiz's poetry from a literary history that is specifically Urdu into a critical space for the discussion of *Indian* literary modernity as a whole. To the extent that Faiz's poetry itself pushes in the direction of ending the inwardness of the Urdu poetic tradition, as I shall later argue, such a critical move is implied and required by his work itself.²³

At the most basic level, then, Mufti uses the term "lyric" to facilitate a translation of ideas between Western and Eastern traditions, or more specifically, in order to "make it possible to explore the specificities of modern lyric in colonial and postcolonial society."

But to assert that there *are* specificities of modern lyric to be found in colonial and postcolonial society is to take "lyric" as an already present category reified as "inward."²⁴

²¹ Ibid., 249.

²² Ibid., 253.

²³ Ibid., 255.

²⁴ Similarly, if Mufti uses lyric to find a definition of "Indian literary modernity," we must also consider that, as I explored in Chapter 3, just a century before Faiz and Adorno (they were contemporaries), Romanticists found a definition of lyric through Indian literary primitiveness. Again: Mufti wants to find Indian literary modernity in lyric, while lyric has historically been found in and defined by Indian literary primitiveness--another

Ultimately, however, Mufti uses the notion of lyric to facilitate a broad-scale and collective recovery from the horror and violence of Partition through the recovery of lyric as a relevant genre and affective mode in the Indian context. He asserts that "what [Faiz's] poems make visible is the social life of the lyric subject—the subject as it appears in classical Urdu lyric—its isolation now appearing as a mode of being in the (Indian) world."²⁵ Or again: "What is the nature of the modern (Indian) self? – that is the question that underlies the reorientation of the Urdu lyric subject in Faiz's poetry."²⁶ And yet, as I will show in my reading below, the self or subject that Mufti characterizes as lyric in Faiz's poetry may perhaps more properly be thought of as one in translation.

In one of his interviews, Faiz says: "I feel extremely reluctant to talk about myself because talking about oneself is the loving occupation of all *bored* people. [...] I dislike any conversation about myself. In fact, even in my poems I try as much as possible to avoid using the first person singular and have always written 'we' instead of 'I'."²⁷ Although Mufti suggests, using Adorno, that Faiz activates the political via the inherent social-ity of the lyric "I", we see Faiz consciously resisting the lyric "I" and any other overt assertion of the self in his ghazals. In this sense, while we certainly may read a social and/or political element in Faiz's ghazals, we need not turn to Adorno and lyric to do so--Faiz's preference for "we" instead of "I" seems to be license enough.

instance of lyric (and ghazal understood as a lyric genre) being put toward contradictory, circular, and/or tautological social and political ends.

²⁵ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 268.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

²⁷ Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Carlo Coppola, and Munibur Rahman, "Faiz on Faiz: A Rare Occasion on Which Pakistan's Foremost Poet Speaks About Himself," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 10, no. 1 (1974): 131.

By using Adorno, however, in order to move "toward a lyric history of India," Mufti performs instead a *lyricized* history—one that participates in a postcolonial, transnational lyric humanism similar to that proposed by Jahan Ramazani in his book *A Transnational Poetics*. Mufti, through Adorno, would like to maintain that although lyric is "condensed into an individual expression" which is "saturated with substance and with the experience of its own solitude," at the same time "this very lyric speech becomes the voice of human beings between whom the barriers have fallen."²⁸ Or, in Ramazani's words, Mufti's argument participates in the idea that "lyric highlights the ways in which lines of thought, analogy, and cross-cultural reading—whether strong ligaments or tenuous filaments—connect disparate human experiences."²⁹ But whereas Ramazani champions lyric as a means to transnationally and transhistorically posit individuated subjectivities, Mufti, like Adorno, is interested in how lyric subjectivity participates in a social collectivity through a dialectic view of history.

And yet, oddly, Mufti chooses the nazm over ghazal as the lyric genre through which he reads Adorno, despite his own admission that ghazal is the most prominent South Asian lyric genre: "Perhaps like no other poetic form in northern India, the history of this lyric genre is inextricably tied up with the emergence and development of national culture, and in no other form, not even the Hindi *git*, or 'song' that is sometimes said to be the national-popular poetic genre par excellence, are the contradictions of the social so deeply inscribed."³⁰ However, he goes on to say that:

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 58.

³⁰ Theodor Adorno, "Lyric Poetry and Society," in *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedmann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957/1972), 54.

Even in his practice of the diffuse *nazm* form—whose only possible definition is apparently that it is a nonnarrative and 'continuous' poem that is not a *ghazal*—Faiz bridges the divide between these varieties of poetic writing and imbues the lyric world of the former with the non-national forms of affectivity characteristic of the latter. In this chapter I look most closely at a number of poems that are not strictly *ghazals* but apply the concept of lyric to Faiz's oeuvre as a whole, irrespective of genre in the narrow sense.³¹

In explaining his choice of poems to close read, Mufti swiftly shifts between lyric, ghazal, and nazm as genres, only to ultimately dismiss the distinction between the latter terms in favor of an indiscriminate lyricization *and* ghazalization of Faiz's entire poetic oeuvre.

The oddity of this rhetorical move exists on multiple levels. First, to "apply the concept of lyric to Faiz's oeuvre as a whole" makes little sense given many of his poems' investment in social realism and didacticism as an aesthetic, following the "Marxists of the AIPWA who were Faiz's contemporaries and comrades," and who were part of "literary movements committed to the social purposiveness of poetry."³² I am thinking especially here of his famous nazm "Bol," which became a Marxist slogan for a time in Pakistan,³³ or even, in fact, of the example of the Maoists in Chattisgarh mentioned above, and which Mufti cites in his later work. Even as Faiz retained an investment in classical forms like the ghazal against the trends of movements like the PWA, to hegemonically label Faiz's entire collected works as "lyric" is to ignore the part of his work that explicitly resists lyricization, at least insofar as lyric is defined as the genre of

³¹ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 254.

³² *Ibid.*, 218.

³³ I will reproduce Kiernan's literal translation of the first verse here: "Speak, for your lips are free; / Speak, your tongue is still yours, / Your upright body is yours— / Speak, your life is still yours."³³ Although, to Mufti's point (and Prins's), this poem may certainly be read lyrically, it has not historically been an object of lyric reading

subjectivity and inwardness. As we have already seen with "Mujh Se Pahlī Sī Muhabbat Merī Mahbūb Nah Māng," Faiz explicitly put the nazm in conversation with the ghazal, only to ultimately insist on the generic and affective differences between the two genres, where the former more properly allows for the discourse of political lyricism; in this sense, Faiz's poetry itself is deeply concerned with questions of "genre in the narrow sense."

Secondly, if the history of ghazal is "inextricably tied up with the emergence and development of national culture," and in this genre more than any other are "the contradictions of the social [most] deeply inscribed," why does Mufti favor nazm for his analysis of Faiz? Mufti also acknowledges, as I have noted throughout this dissertation, that "the *ghazal* came to be singled out as the genre par excellence of Muslim decline and decadence, as too decorative, subjective, and impervious to nature, incapable of sober intellectual effort and didactic purpose called for in the 'new' world."³⁴ Yet if Mufti takes it for granted that ghazal is *the* lyric genre in India insofar as it participates in an aesthetic of extreme subjectivity and cultural decadence, then ghazal should be the most obvious choice for bringing Faiz's work into conversation with Adorno's argument that "lyric reveals itself to be most deeply grounded in society when it does not chime in with society, when it communicates nothing, when, instead, the subject whose expression is successful reaches an accord with language itself, with the inherent tendency of language."³⁵ So if Mufti argues that "it is precisely in those poems that are closest to

³⁴ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 217.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 254.

being 'pure' lyric, that is, ones in which the inward turn is most complete, rather than in such explicitly 'partition' poems," then why not look at ghazal rather than nazm?

When Mufti defines nazm as a "nonnarrative poem that is not a *ghazal*," it appears that the nazm's "nonnarrativity" is enough to mark it as lyric, although many nazms exist, especially from the period in question, that have not historically been read lyrically (as in the above example of the poem "Bol"). Furthermore, just as "lyric speech becomes the voice of human beings between whom the barriers have fallen,"³⁶ in Mufti's argument, lyric also allows the barriers between the genres of ghazal and nazm to fall. To justify his choice of nazm as the texts through which he will read Adorno into Faiz, Mufti must first ghazalize the nazm, and then lyricize the ghazal. As we saw in the previous section with "Mujh se Pahlī Sī Muhabbat", Mufti's ghazalization of nazm reflects an already common practice amongst Urdu speakers since the twentieth century; but the lyricization of Faiz's work ironically undercuts Mufti's argument for a "lyric history" since, in Virginia Jackson's words, "once we decide that most poems are lyrics (or once that decision is made for us), we (by definition) lose sight of the historical processes of lyric reading."³⁷

Mufti's lyricizing all of Faiz's poems becomes most obvious when Mufti finally does go to ghazal at the conclusion of his argument. Prior to his reading of a couplet from one of Faiz's ghazals, Mufti writes:

The self-absorption of the lyric subject in classical Urdu poetry, so widely and repeatedly condemned since the nineteenth century, becomes for Faiz a social fact. And if that lyric subject—and its locus classicus is the *ghazal*—appeared to be [...] addicted to fantasy and impervious to reality and nature, that judgment

³⁶ Adorno, "Lyric Poetry and Society," 43.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

could itself be explained in terms of the emergence of the horizon of 'nature' and 'reality' that we call the nation.³⁸

In other words, Mufti argues that the very lyricization of the ghazal as the genre of subjectivity and inwardness in which he himself participates is in fact socially mediated through the nationalist politics that he attempts to resist through the same project of lyricization put toward alternate ends.

In his reading of the couplet he presents ("I went having settled every matter of business with my heart, / but when speaking before them, matters kept changing"³⁹), he argues: "The narrative element in the above couplet—the self setting out with confessional intent to encounter an other but finding its own words becoming alien, producing meanings other than those intended—must be read in a collective and historical register as an interpretation of the history of conflict over the meaning of nation and communal identity."⁴⁰ When Mufti finally comes to analyze the ghazal as the "lyric genre par excellence" in the Indian tradition, he only comments on "the *narrative* element" of history inscribed therein, although elsewhere he has pointed out the cultural violence that historical narrative has played in the canonization of Urdu literature.⁴¹

Similarly, Mufti insists on the importance of lyric subjectivity to the ways in which Faiz's work resists nationalism and its accompanying violence. For instance, of the five couplets that make up the *ghazal* mentioned above, Mufti takes only the fourth as an object of lyric reading—interestingly, the only one that includes explicit mention of a

³⁸ Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 11.

³⁹ This and all of the translations that follow are my own, unless otherwise stated.

⁴⁰ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 270-71.

⁴¹ I am thinking particularly of his work in *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures*.

first-person pronoun. Of course, given that Mufti's argument rests on the idea that "Faiz's exploration of the affects of separation and union with the beloved makes possible an examination of the subject, the 'I,' of Urdu writing"⁴²—specifically, the "I" as it represents collective rather than individual experience—this choice makes sense. However, the rest of the text of the ghazal in question does not even stage the presence of an "I," which, I argue, destabilizes the supposed subjectivity of the ghazal as a genre, precisely because the very lack of an identifiable "I" or imagined speaker problematizes a straightforward understanding of this ghazal as lyric. I argue that Faiz's ghazals as a whole problematize the very idea of lyric subjectivity, whether individuated or collective, and in so doing, they resist both "lyric" and "Indian" as fixed, reified categories.

Let us turn to the ghazal, *shām-i firāq*, whose fourth couplet Mufti reads lyrically. The first couplet of this ghazal subverts the tradition of a long-suffering lover speaking to his cruel beloved through the marked absence of any pronouns whatsoever:

شامِ فراق اب نہ پوچھ آئی اور آ کے تل گئی
دل تھا کہ پھر بہل گیا جاں تھی کہ پھر سنبھل گئی

shām-i firāq, ab nā pūch, ā'ī aur ā ke tal ga'ī
dil thā ke phir bahal gayā, jān thī ke phir sambhal ga'ī

[Do not ask anymore about the night of separation: it came, and having come, it passed
There was a heart, which was then entertained; there was a life, which then recovered itself]

The passivity in the verbs; the "heart" and the "life" that exist as ontologically separate from any fixed subject; and the resulting flatness in describing emotional experience resists lyricization (or ghazalization) through the indeterminacy of the supposed speaker,

⁴² *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 272.

lover, or voice. Even the "you" implied by the imperative "do not ask" (*ab nā pūch*) is more logically directed at the reader than at the beloved (who, in the *ghazal* world, would never ask after the lover)—and the conative function of the phrase is deprived of the full force of the second-person vector by its almost parenthetical placement in the middle of the line, where, rather than expressing true addressivity, it takes on the character of a figure of speech or phatic phrase.

The next couplet stages a disembodied imagination that dims and renders uncertain (historical) reality:

بزم خیال میں تری حسن کی شمع جل گئی
درد کا چاند بجھ گیا ہجر کی رات دھل گئی

bazm-i khayāl meṅ tire husn ki shamā ‘ jal ga’ī
dard kā chānd bujh gayā, hijr kī rāt dhal ga’ī

[In the assembly of the imagination, the candle of your beauty was lit
The moon of suffering was extinguished, the night of separation faded]

Self-referentially invoking an imaginary that contemplates an idealized aesthetic through the mode of lyricism, this couplet represents for us the pleasures of historical forgetting: the fading memory of the violence of *hijr*—a separation that implies migration, and hence becomes another term for Partition—that underwrites the emergence of the Indian nation is enabled by the lyric imaginary; the lyricism of the "community of imagination" is the mirror image of the "imagined community" of the nation.⁴³

Conversely, the next couplet points to the uncertain function of historical remembering in the tracing of national selfhood:

⁴³ I will return to this idea in the next section.

جب تجھے یاد کر لیا صبح مہک مہک اٹھی
جب ترا غم جگا لیا رات مچل مچل گئی

jab tujhe yād kar liyā, subh mahak mahak uṭhī
jab tirā ḡam jagā līyā, rāt machal machal ga'ī

[When you were remembered, the morning emitted sweet fragrance
When your sorrow was awakened, the night became disobedient]

The past tense verbal phrases are framed such that the subject of the action is uncertain or absent—a grammatical construction most closely approximated in English by passive voice (though the construction is active in the Urdu). Similarly, "*tirā ḡham*" could mean either "your sorrow" or, more likely, "the sorrow you cause." With these grammatical uncertainties, the possibility of a subject—an "I" or a "you"—goes wayward with the night. The sweet fragrance of remembrance becomes slowly unmanageable in light of the sorrows it recalls; the necessity of writing the history of how both "lyric" and "India" come into objecthood also entails the possibility that this project of remembering may not in turn produce a clear portrait of Indian selfhood in modernity, especially one that would heal the pain of Partition. The difficulty of translating this couplet into English without the injection of a speaker--for instance, the phrase *jab tujhe yād kar liyā* should properly be translated as "When [blank] remembered you," where the blank represents an unspecified grammatical subject--calls attention to the extent to which modes of thinking about subjectivity shift through the act of translation.

The fourth couplet, which Mufti cites, stages a subject oddly defined by the materiality of trade or business:

دل سے تو ہر معاملہ کر کے چلے تھے صاف ہم
کہنے میں ان کے سامنے بات بدل بدل گئی

*dil se toh har mu 'āmlah kar ke chale the sāf ham
kahne meṅ un ke sāmne bāt badal badal ga'ī*

[We went having clearly negotiated every matter of business with the heart,
but when finally speaking before them, matters kept changing]

True to form, Faiz uses the first-person plural pronoun, *ham*, which can be read as either "we" or "I"--an ambiguity in the Urdu language that itself suggests the inherent sociality of first-personhood, *pace* Adorno, and which again demonstrates the shifts in subjectivity enacted by translational choices. The plural pronouns--both *ham* and *un* ("them") help support Mufti's assertion that the couplet "must be read in a collective and historical register as an interpretation of the history of conflict over the meaning of nation and communal identity."⁴⁴ But in a further destabilization of the fiction of the lyric speaker, this couplet thematizes speaking as a necessarily uncertain act. In this sense, the speaking lyric subject--whether plural or singular--does not necessarily embody the possibilities of human healing. If, in Mufti's terms, the couplet represents "an interpretation of the history of conflict over the meaning of nation," it also represents a call to consider translation, not as a direct transaction between languages, but as an ever-changing cultural negotiation.

Finally, Faiz's last couplet returns to a grammatical and thematic mode emptied of the subject:

آخر شب کے ہمسفر فیض نہ جانے کیا ہوئے
رہ گئی کس جگہ صبا صبح کدھر نکل گئی

*ākhir shab ke hamsafar Faiz nā jāne kyā hu'e
rah ga'ī kis jagah sabā, subah kidhr nikal ga'ī*

⁴⁴ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 247.

[Ultimately, Faiz, who knows what happened to the night's companions
The breeze got left behind somewhere, and who knows where the morning arose]

The *hamsafar* or travel companions who would bring an end to the endless separation (of whom or what?) have somehow gone missing—along with the subjects populating the night scene. Without the historical narrative motivating the motion of the blowing breeze or the night becoming day, the lyric and the nation remain unproductively static, and their fixedness as categories, rather than representing a collective Indian subjectivity, precludes it.

This ghazal as a whole, then, provokes but also resists lyricization, rendering ironic even the process of close reading. Mufti, I think, correctly identifies the aspects of Faiz's work that tempt readers into reading lyrically—that is, "its intensely personal contemplation of love and of the sensuous."⁴⁵ Rather than reinterpreting the ghazal's tropes through a political lens, as other scholars have done, Mufti uses the idea of lyric subjectivity to read into Faiz's work a definition of collective Indian selfhood. However, I take this critical framework one step further by questioning what it means to inject subjectivity of any kind into a ghazal that uses familiar tropes while also withholding the supposed subjectivity expressed therein. By thematizing translation while also resisting lyric subjectivity, Faiz's ghazal challenges nationalist constructions of Indian selfhood in the modern, postcolonial context by dislocating the subject from the very site of its supposed definition.

"Political Lyricism" and the Mushaira Imaginary

While this dissertation began with the concept of narrativization, explored

⁴⁵ Ibid., 272.

through the trope of the imaginary mushairas staged in literary histories and historical literature of Urdu (particularly Azad's *Āb-i Hayāt* and Beg's *Dillī Kī Ākhrī Shama'*), this final section emphasizes the role of ghazalization in creating what I am calling a "mushaira imaginary"--the feeling of community enabled by shared affective participation in a present, lyricized moment encapsulated both literally and figuratively in the mushaira, and evoked through the ghazalization of Urdu.

In his *Pursuit of Urdu Literature*, Ralph Russell points out that historically, "the ghazal poet was, amongst other things, the licensed critic of the establishment, and was protected by two generally accepted conventions. The first of these was the nature of the ghazal itself, which permitted many of its verses to be interpreted simultaneously on several planes of meaning, some more "dangerous" than others. The second was the convention that in his poetry he had a right to be as unambiguously rebellious as he pleased—but at the price of having his words regarded as "only poetry," and not to be taken seriously outside the poetic symposium—the mushaira—where they were uttered."⁴⁶ Faiz's comments in his 1971 interview about the "in-built limitations" of ghazal, however, seem to suggest that he himself may have taken to heart the idea that ghazal is "only poetry", and reserves for his nazms the possibilities for engaged political thought and/or action.⁴⁷ At the same time, as I have noted above, the common reading of

⁴⁶ Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 240.

⁴⁷ I can think of one couplet of Faiz's ghazal *āye kuch abr* that engages in what we might think of as "political lyricism" - *nah ga'ī tere gham kī sardarī / dil meiṅ yuṅ roz inqilāb ā'e* - "Your reign of sorrow was never toppled / Even though every day a new revolution arose in my heart." Though this couplet expresses a sort of pessimism toward the success of any form of revolution, it nevertheless uses overtly political language to make a point that may be read on multiple levels of meaning - whether as a more "classic" comment on

Faiz as using traditional tropes to produce explicitly political meanings applies to both his ghazals and his nazms; the fluidity of contexts in which Faiz is invoked determines the various manners in which one might read his ghazals, at least part of which includes what audiences know of Faiz's own political attachments.

In his status as a highly visible public, as well as poetic, persona, he is able to activate the power that ghazal has historically wielded in making political statements, whether overt or covert--despite what he may have to say about the forms "in-built limitations." Indeed, Ralph Russell argues "Whether by conscious design or not, he (i.e. Faiz) in some degree succeeded in extending the range of operation of this convention beyond the bounds of the mushaira into society at large, and brought into being a situation in which his role as a poet enhanced his role as a politician, and his role as a politician enhanced his role as a poet."⁴⁸ Mufti points out that one of the possible glosses for "lyric poetry" in Urdu would be the word *bazmiyya*, which would suggest poetry recited in the *bazm*, or assembly;⁴⁹ this translation of "lyric" allows for a markedly different understanding of ghazal than the solitude of a lyric self evoked in hegemonic definitions of the Western lyric tradition. And yet, rather than representing a break with lyricization, the reference to oral performance in this aspect of ghazal's circulation suggests a fetishization of voice and orality that paints Urdu literary culture as both idealized (based on the pureness and supposedly unmediated quality of lyric voice) and primitive (based on the hierarchization of print culture over oral culture in today's global

the Beloved's tyranny over the pining lover, or whether as a statement directed toward the political establishment.

⁴⁸ Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature: A Select History*, 241.

⁴⁹ Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, 216. The other word Mufti suggests is *ghinaaiyya*, or voiced/sung; I will discuss the resonances of this translation in the coda that follows this chapter.

literary contexts).

In Faiz's ghazals, the trope of a mushaira or assembly engages the political by resisting the lyric "I" while also staging a poetically imagined community. Consider, for instance, a couplet from Faiz's ghazal *ham sab qatl ho ke*:

شمعِ نظر خیال کے انجمِ جگر کے داغ
جتنے چراغ ہیں تیری مہفل سے آئے ہیں

shama'-i nazar, khayāl ke anjum, jigar ke dāgh
jitne churāgh hain, teri mahfil se ā'e hain

[The flame of the glance, the stars of the mind, the scars of the heart:
whatever lamps there are, they come from your assembly.]

The style of this couplet conforms to what Frances Pritchett terms a "mushaira verse"--a verse that particularly lends itself to oral recitation--in this case, because the first hemistich consists only of seemingly unrelated noun phrases that create suspense for listeners as to how the second line will resolve the incongruence of the images by cleverly bringing them together. In this sense, whether orally recited or not, the structure of the couplet itself recalls a mushaira context.

In this verse, Faiz asserts the self-contained quality of the world of the ghazal - sight, thought, and feeling are all circumscribed within the realm of the poetic assembly, or *mahfil*. Even the word used for "stars" here, *anjum*, sonically recalls another word for assembly, *anjuman*, again emphasizing the public nature of poetic discourse. This assertion flies in the face of critiques of the ghazal discussed above which continue even today--i.e. the idea of ghazal as overly inward and unconcerned with the "natural" world--assertions which, as mentioned earlier, came about largely as a result of the association of ghazal with lyric. Here, Faiz suggests that the existence of these "lamps" comes about

through the dialectical relations made possible in the poetic assembly, where poetry is a social and political enterprise.

At the same time, however, the possibility of establishing a dialectic relationship through the meeting of the poetic assembly is itself uncertain, given that the "you" (i.e. "your" assembly) has no counterbalancing self or "I" with which to establish relations. In fact, the concrete idea of the flame-lit lamp (*churāgh*) becomes more and more figurative as it encompasses the three progressive noun phrases named in the first line - from a candle flame (*shama'*), to stars (*anjum*), to scars (*dāgh*). And yet, we might see this uncertain figuration as productive; rather than reading this couplet as an example of ghazal's inwardness, we might see it as, not a circumscription of ghazal to the poetic assembly, but rather the poetic assembly's importance to the world beyond its bounds--a broadening of the poetic assembly to encompass the world; these "lamps" that Faiz recalls--human sight, the human mind, the human heart--are lit up in the poetic assembly so that they might function in the world.

I already gestured toward this broadening of the oral performance context in my analysis of the ghazal *shām-i firāq* above; let me return to the second couplet in order to revisit the way in which the mushaira imaginary works in Faiz's ghazals: "In the assembly of the imagination, the candle of your beauty was lit / The moon of suffering was extinguished, the night of separation faded" [*bazm-i khayāl meṇ tire husn ki shamā' jal ga'ī / dard kā chānd bujh gayā, hijr kī rāt ḍhal ga'ī*]. Above, I analyzed this couplet as an instance in which an idealized lyricism enables a collective healing of the wounds of Partition, such that the community inaugurated by "imagination" mirrors the "imagined community" of the nation. If print culture served to define the "imagined community" of

the nation (a la Benedict Anderson), we may think of the oral culture invoked in the mushaira imaginary as the basis of an imagined community that is fundamentally transnational.

In an essay on lyricism and violence in Faiz's poetry and its translations, Christi Merrill refers to "the mushaira of Urdu-into-English poetry translation,"⁵⁰ writing that she imagines Shahid's translation of Faiz as an "ever-moving mushaira."⁵¹ This move astutely situates translation as a crucial component of the mushaira imaginary that I identify in the circulation of Faiz's work, and which Merrill herself explicitly orients toward the transnational and translingual. However, Merrill, like Mufti, takes recourse in a lyric humanism that posits poetry as not only transnational and translingual, but also, crucially, transcendental--so that the mushaira imaginary, and the redemption therein, inaugurated by Faiz's poetry relies on "the promise poetry makes, whatever the translation, that it will transport us to that distant horizon so that we can find our place in the world."⁵²

In another significant move, Merrill situates the importance of Faiz and Shahid's lyric humanism by emphasizing the figure of voice: "The vividness of this voice helps fuse the otherworldly community we feel part of through poetry with the decidedly worldly community we have commerce with on earth."⁵³ This "fusion" of "worldly" and "otherworldly" closely and perceptively mirrors Faiz's own term for the ideology his poetry promotes: political lyricism. Yet consider, for instance, that both Adorno's

⁵⁰ Christi Merrill, "The Lyricism of Violence: Translating Faith in Revolution," *boundary 2* 38, no. 3 (2011): 137.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁵² *Ibid.* Or, in another instance of lyric humanism in this same article, Merrill writes: "these lines offer possibilities for 'mutual understanding' in terms most critical precisely because lyrical" (124).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 138.

positing of a lyric "I" always already mediated through the social, and Faiz's positing of a political lyricism that injects the lyric with political meaning and affect, both occurred first in *radio* addresses--their voices wafting out to audiences in technologically mediated yet compellingly present waves that embody a type of subjectivity often posited as lyric.

The mushaira imaginary relies on a historical forgetting engendered by the seduction of lyric voice: the "lyricism of violence" in Merrill's title belies the historical violence of lyricism, which I have been tracing throughout this dissertation, and in which ghazalization and its structural twin, narrativization, have occurred in and through the auspices of the colonial-imperial context in South Asia, itself inherently underwritten by violence, both literal and cultural. The escapism of the mushaira imaginary allows its participants to share in an affective space that *feels* political--especially given Faiz's highly visible politics--while in fact allowing the cultural dominance of the Anglophone West to continue unchecked. In the following coda section, I turn to the deployment of the mushaira imaginary in the literal mushaira context in contemporary India.

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CODA

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's gritty voice sounds loudly over my car stereo, punctuated by the hand claps, harmonium, and tabla of his accompanists; my own voice joins in with Nusrat's in a feeble attempt to match his unparalleled skill: *barson ke intezār kā anjām likh diyāAAAaAAAa*, we sing. My daughter claps along from her car seat in the back, enjoying her favorite singer as we drive to her daycare; *barson ke intezār kā anjām likh diyāAAAaAAAa*. Stopped at a seemingly interminable red light, I allow myself to become completely absorbed by the lyrics as much as the lulling quality of Nusrat's performance; *barson ke intezār kā anjām likh diyāAAAaAAAa*, he sings again. Although I have heard this song hundreds of times, by the eighth time Nusrat sings the first line of the ghazal, I am anxious to once again hear the answer to the riddle it poses: what did he write down as the end result of years of waiting? Finally, Nusrat resolves the tension that he's so skillfully built, and I can't help the smile forming on my face at the brilliance of the image: *kāghaz pe shām kāT ke phir shām likh diyā*. The result of years of waiting could be summed up like this: take a piece of paper, cross out the word "evening," and then write it again.

The notion of evening after evening of fruitless waiting for a beloved who never comes represents the central "scene" within ghazal tropology, so that this opening verse immediately snatches the listener from the context of her listening and submerges her instead into the ghazal universe. Indeed, this encounter with ghazal--the tension offered up by the first line, followed by the pleasurable release of the clever second line--is as much predicated upon the literary

conventions of the genre as on the performance and listening context: the virtuoso sung performance delivered by Nusrat (a classically trained musician who also performed internationally and whose work circulates transnationally); the modes of technology used in my accessing this recording, including the music streaming service Google Play, and bluetooth technology to broadcast the sound from my car stereo; the quotidian listening context, especially as it intersects with the broader sociocultural history and politics of the South Asian diaspora. All of these literary, historical, technological, and sociopolitical aspects converge into the single moment of listening that is perhaps best summed up in the single exclamation, *wāh!*--the North Indian interjection for being impressed with something particularly brilliant, and commonly used at mushairas to vocally express appreciation for a poet or singer's performance. And yet, the *wāh* moment in this ghazal also conjures the imagined community of simultaneous listening that I have called the mushaira imaginary--the exact moment in which multiple sociocultural contexts converge is also the exact moment in which the mediation of context disappears into a performance space idealized as unmediated, apolitical, and transnational.

Although this particular ghazal exists almost entirely in an aural universe--it is not written by a canonical poet, but has become famous on the basis of Nusrat's performance--the imagery of the paper and the written word *shām* in this first couplet conjures a scene based on the materiality (and futility) of writing. Indeed, because this ghazal's *radīf* (refrain) is *likh diyā* ("wrote"), the ghazal as a whole engages with writing, and repeatedly calls up imagery of the written word; for instance, the second couplet compels the reader to imagine the lover shaping the beloved's name out of fallen flower petals.¹ This ghazal in many ways embodies one of the

¹ The verse is as follows: *bikrī paRī thī TūT ke kalīyān zamīn par / tartīb de ke main ne terā nām likh diyā* (Flower petals were scattered all over the ground / I gave them shape by writing your name).

underlying themes of this dissertation by revealing the extent to which orality and writing are intertwined--not only in the ghazals themselves, but in the canonization of ghazal as the defining genre of Urdu literature.

Although very little scholarly attention has thus far been devoted to the oral performance of ghazal, it is through sung and recited performances that the vast majority of audiences have historically accessed the ghazal.² Indeed, popular enjoyment of and demand for sung ghazal continues to flourish. In an October 2012 online article entitled "Bring back the Ghazal", well-known ghazal singer Pankaj Udhas notes in an interview that he has to give increasing number of concerts as the demand for ghazal performance rises. Similarly, a February 2014 article similarly titled "Bringing the Ghazal Back" highlights a concert of ghazals to be performed by famed tabla artist Ustad Zakir Hussain and singer Hariharan.³ But even as these articles insist on the ghazal's continuing, and even increasing, popularity, the unsubtle trace of nostalgia in the idea of "bringing ghazal back" condemns ghazal to an imaginary obscurity from which it never can be fully recovered; ghazal is remembered at the same time that it is lived. As I showed in Chapter 2 through the figure of Mirza Ghalib, the elegiac nostalgia that ghazal as a decaying genre evokes in the imaginations of today's popular audiences is part of what allows for ghazal's commercial viability--the idea that ghazal has largely disappeared, and will only continue in its decline, is in fact the very notion that facilitates its continued life.

² Scott Kugle notes this in one article and tries to offer a corrective by examining a sung performance of a ghazal by Siraj. Scott Kugle, "Qawwali between Written Poem and Sung Lyric, or How Ghazal Lives," *The Muslim World* 97, no. 4 (2007).

³ Hariharan is a Hindu, ethnically Tamil singer from Kerala in South India. Although North and South Indian languages are not generally understood to share a common linguistic ancestor, and often represent vastly different listening publics, Hariharan's fame as a ghazal singer demonstrates the wide reach of Urdu ghazal's popularity even amongst different linguistic and religious communities within India.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, it is partly because of ghazal's association with lyric that popular audiences conceive of ghazal in this way. The ghazalization-lyricization of Urdu allows for the prevalence of the mushaira imaginary as a means via which ghazal is conceived of as transnational, transhistorical, and translingual. As Yopie Prins points out in *Victorian Sappho*, the presumption of the "death of a living voice" (23) (and the displacement of that voice by writing) are key features of lyricization, and which are apparent in both academic and popular discourses around Urdu ghazal. At the academic level, scholars rely on an idealized projection of voice into written ghazal texts as reified objects of analysis--a now commonplace part of the practice of close reading, which has itself shaped the ballooning of the lyric genre--over and against the reality of voiced ghazal performance. At the popular level, a lyricized notion of ghazal and Urdu operates in the general assumption of ghazal's imminent death, which itself fuels the genre's continued life in song. Ghazal's mutually defining relationship with the very idea of Urdu as a distinctly bounded linguistic entity (as opposed to Hindi or Persian)--an idea I explored in Chapter 4--also supports the notion of ghazal as slowly heading for extinction, along with the language of its composition, which can never quite function as a properly national language.

In India, however, oral performance of Urdu ghazal is often appropriated in service of nationalism as a rhetorical attempt to discipline the perceived danger posed by both the genre and the language. In Chapter 2, I showed how Ghalib is recuperated as a national figure, along with Bahadur Shah Zafar, in order to legitimate and nationalize Indian Islam. In Chapter 5, I demonstrated how Faiz's prominence in India, including his photos throughout the Doordarshan studios in Delhi, represents another example of the ghazalization of Urdu in service of nationalism. Notably, both of these examples rely on oral performance to a certain extent: the

films and plays about Ghalib's life project his legacy onto the national stage, while the sung performances of his work that populate these texts are the most prominent means via which audiences access Ghalib's ghazals; similarly, Faiz's work most often circulates via the sung performances of Begum Akhtar and Noor Jehan, and his symbolic presence at the Doordarshan television studios suggests the extent to which the Indian state depends upon the dissemination of a ghazalized Faiz. Similarly, as I noted in my Introduction, nationalist mushairas feature prominently in state politics.

Yet in contrast to the unabashedly nationalist context of mushairas like the *Jashan-i Jamhooriyat*, discussed in the Introduction, the annual *Jashn-e Bahar* ("Celebration of Spring") mushaira, sponsored by the Jashn-e Bahar Trust, is advertised as "the only non-official and non-political mushaira of the capital city of India."⁴ When I attended in April 2013, the event was held at the Delhi Public School--just a stone's throw away from Humayan's Tomb and the tomb of Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi's posh Nizamuddin neighborhood. In contrast to the *Jashan-i Jamhooriyat*, the *Jashn-e Bahar* mushaira was a catered event filled with well-dressed middle- and upper-class men and women. Several of the poets performing at this mushaira were of international acclaim, including Javed Akhtar, who is best known as a lyricist for many Bollywood films, as well as feminist poets Kishwar Naheed and Fahmida Riyaz, who were brought in from Pakistan specifically for this event. Indeed, one of the organization's primary goals is "promoting amity and friendship among the people of the subcontinent through poetry."⁵

But of course, despite any pretensions to the contrary, this goal is itself highly politically charged--as we discovered when the mushaira in 2013 opened with Hindutva protesters storming the stage and shouting anti-Pakistan slogans ("*Pakistan murdabaad*" - "Death to Pakistan!") until

⁴ "Jashn-E Bahar," <http://www.jashnebahar.org/about.html>.

⁵ Ibid.

they were carried off by policemen monitoring the event. Shortly thereafter, one of the invited speakers, Kapil Sibal, opened the event by emphasizing the need for advanced science courses in Urdu and Urdu-friendly technology (for instance, making Urdu script available on mobile phones and more easily accessible on computer keyboards); this call was quickly followed up by later speakers lamenting the lack of access to basic education in Urdu, and making urgent calls for shifts in school curriculum that would allow greater access to Urdu medium primary education. In short, the idea of a "non-political" mushaira is a bit fraught when Urdu ghazal is always already associated with a highly politicized religious nationalism, whether in terms of the tensions between the Indian and Pakistani states, or in terms of the unspoken threat of the Muslim other within the Indian state.⁶

The manner in which Urdu ghazal operates in performed public space is necessarily political because of the contested ways in which Urdu circulates in South Asia. This is true both when the politics of performing Urdu ghazal are disavowed, as in the *Jashn-e Bahar* mushaira, as well as when the politics are quite unabashed, as in the *Jashn-e Jamhooriyat* mushaira. Furthermore, we should consider the political stage itself as an alternate setting for oral performance of Urdu-ghazal--as in the case of the recent elections in India, in which two rival

⁶ Interestingly, the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu--the group of people who attempted to secularize and then nationalize the Urdu language beginning in the 1920s, described by Kavita Datla in *The Language of Secular Islam*--aimed at producing scientific textbooks and advanced curriculum in Urdu, as well as Urdu-friendly technology--precisely those areas identified by the speakers at the 2013 Jashn-e Bahar mushaira as important for the future of Urdu. Unfortunately, the notion of Urdu (and ghazal) as the provenance of Muslims alone stem from the relative failure of these movements, and although Datla's work provides an important qualification to the notion of Urdu as having "always" been associated with Muslims and Islam, the religious nationalism and accompanying language debates leading up to Partition--and their legacy which continues today--has provided the primary discourse against which other movements, such as the Anjuman in the 1920's and the Jashn-e Bahar Trust today, must define themselves. See Kavita Saraswathi Datla, *The Language of Secular Islam: Urdu Nationalism and Colonial India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

candidates in Panjab took to trading barbs by reciting insinuatingly insulting verses by Ghalib and Iqbal.⁷

However, the mushaira imaginary operates to disavow the political in favor of an idealized space that is imagined as disconnected from the quotidian sociopolitical concerns of reality. Not only does the gradual depoliticization of Urdu ghazal in the mushaira imaginary fail to reflect the ways in which this genre actually circulates, it also hides the history of violence entailed in the association of ghazal with lyric, especially when ghazal-as-lyric is invoked as enabling an idealized humanism that allows for mutual peace and understanding across borders and languages. This imaginary operates both within the physical bounds of literal mushairas, such as those described above, as well as in the moment of listening to recorded ghazal performances, such as that by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan described at the beginning of this coda, that evokes feelings of nostalgia and/or reverie that are then interpellated through the imagination of a worldwide community of listeners simultaneously participating in the same system of affect. This transnational mushaira imaginary as predicated on the culture of oral performance is the mirror image of the imagined community inaugurated by national print culture. In the context of Hindi and Urdu, orality stands as an idealized linguistic mode that allows for the circumvention of the thorny questions of script posed by the Hindi/Urdu dichotomy.

Indeed, orality combined with digital media and Roman script are seen as the "future" of Urdu's so-called revival; Frances Pritchett summed up this sentiment in an email communication as follows: "And now--with increasing orality, with voice and video recording and transmission, with Google Translate, with roman script coming along--we do seem to be heading toward an era in which the script part of the H/U [sic] dichotomy is collapsing in India. Maybe we'll see a

⁷ Neel Kamal, "Couplet War in Poll Battle," *Times of India*, April 6 2014.

return to the historical norm of free association and free choice! [...] Hindustani, here we come!"⁸ The idea that orality (via the mushaira imaginary) and Roman script are seen as ultimately neutral in negotiating the politics of Hindi and Urdu not only echoes the post-Jones Victorian sentiments outlined in Chapter 4, but further suggests the importance of English and Anglophone technologies in mediating access to Urdu (including, for instance, not just Google Translate, but also Google Play and other music streaming services). Despite Pritchett's optimism about the "freedom" associated with the widely accessible dialect of Hindi-Urdu known as Hindustani, in reality, the idea of "Urdu" acts as an important interpretive and affective frame for consumers of ghazal, regardless of whether audiences access these texts aurally, or in Perso-Arabic, Devanagari, or Roman script.

While I have not had the space in this dissertation to fully consider the importance of oral performance and the mushaira imaginary in the circulation of a ghazalized Urdu, a future project will consider the mutual imbrication of oral and print culture in the canonization of Urdu literature.

⁸ I am thinking particularly of the following article that appeared in the Hindustan times: Manoj Sharma, "Young Professionals Take Lead in Reviving Delhi's Romance with Urdu," *Hindustan Times*, June 7, 2015. Pritchett's comments were responding to the sentiments put forth in the article about the future of Urdu. Frances Pritchett, email, June 8, 2015.

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