EROTIC VISIONS:
POETRY, LITERATURE, AND BOOK ARTS FROM AVADH
(1754–1857)

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Erotic Visions: Poetry, Literature, and Book Arts critically examines the binaries of sacred/profane and Hindu/Muslim that have shaped the art historical scholarship on South Asian and Islamic art. I argue that representations of copulation, female nudes, and amorous couples produced in and around the Shi'a Muslim court of northern India (Avadh) from 1754 to 1857 created a universe of affect and relationality. This world owes much to the philosophical, literary, and sensorial values of the native rulers and is at variance with the narratives advanced by encroaching British colonialism. The ethical and aesthetic depth of Avadhi art and architecture has, as a result of colonial classifications, been understudied and viewed simply as decadent and unoriginal. Moreover, paintings from Avadh have faded into art historical obscurity since they challenge what constitutes a canonical image and archive for various disciplines. By studying the visual history of the Avadhi court with reference to literature and ethics, I urge the disciplines of art history and social and cultural analysis to broadly rethink the ways in which a transference of political authority occurs in the interstices of empire.

My source materials include miniature paintings, illuminated manuscripts, Urdu and Persian poetry, short stories, royal autobiographies, and musical treatises. By studying the images and texts as imbricated rather than as discrete and hermetic genres and practices, I map Indo-Persianate sensibilities of religion, ethics, and politics across media. This approach to the study of Avadhi art also attends to its subsequent reception and circulation in India and in Western institutional frameworks such as museums and auction houses.

My work addresses broader questions of orientalism, colonialism, and the power of representation. How, for example, does erotica enforce the oriental despot paradigm of decline and decay? And how can this very material be used to unravel it? Genres, I argue, provide important insights since Avadhi miniatures, whose compositions represent in some form or another sexual arousal, were in the eighteenth century part of literary, poetic, and visual book genres.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Natalia Angela Di Pietrantonio was born and raised in Southern California. She received her bachelor's degree in art history from the University of California, Davis in 2008. After graduating, she completed a master's in South Asian studies at Columbia University in 2011. From Cornell University, she earned her second master's degree in art history and visual studies in 2014, and her doctorate in 2018.

To Ryan

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BM	British Museum, London, UK
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
BL	British Library, St Pancras, London, UK
BLOU	Bodleian Library, Oxford University, UK
CRO	Central Records Office in Allahabad
CBL	Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
EIC	East India Company
IOL	India Office Library, London, UK
JRL	John Rylands Library, Manchester
LACMA	Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, USA
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NLA	National Library of Australia
NLW	National Library of Wales, UK
RCIN	Royal Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
RAS	Royal Asiatic Society, London
SA	Shropshire Archives in in Shrewsbury, England
SDMA	San Diego Museum of Art
TBM	Brooklyn Museum, USA
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum, UK
V&AA	Victoria and Albert Museum Archive at Blythe House, UK

LIST OF RULERS (Nawāb-Wazīrs) OF AVADH

Burhān al-Mulk Sa'ādat ʻAlī Khān	(r. 1722–1739)
Safdar Jang	(r. 1739–1754)
Shujā' al-Daula	(r. 1754–1775)
Āṣaf al-Daula	(r. 1775–1797)
Wazīr ʻAlī Khān	(r. 1797–1798)
Sa'ādat ʻAlī Khān II	(r. 1798–1814)
Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar	(r. 1814–1827)
Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar	(r. 1827–1837)
Farīdūn Bakht	(r. 1837)
Muḥammad ʻAlī Shāh	(r. 1837–1842)
Āmjad ʻAlī Shāh	(r. 1842–1847)
Wājid ʻAlī Shāh	(r. 1847–1856)

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Most of my transliterations for Persian, Arabic, and Urdu words reflect the system adopted by Francis J. Steingass in his Persian-English dictionary and by John T. Platts in his Urdu-English dictionary.

I have diverged from their system in a number of ways. Certain letters such as 'ط' and 'ظ' could not be represented with the double dots underneath the letters 't' or 'z' because of formatting issues. As far as possible without straying too far from proper pronunciation, I have simplified a few others diacritics so that they were readable in Times New Roman, Microsoft Word, or on my Mac. For the Persian letter و, I followed the standard usage of 'w' except in the name of Avadh, which I prefer with the letter *v*. As another personal preference, for the Arabic article *al* I have retained it as *al* instead of the standard *ul*. The name of the Nawab Āṣaf al-Daula appears as such instead of as Āṣaf ul-Daula.

INTRODUCTION

RETHINKING AVADHI MINIATURE PAINTING AND EROTICA

"If the word 'chest' is obscene, why not 'knee' or 'elbow'?" Ismat Chughtai asked Manto.
"Nonsense!" Manto growled.
–'Ismat Cughtā'ī [1]

This dissertation interrogates how the North Indian painting style of Avadh has become a scapegoat for licentiousness in the Islamic and South Asian art historical discourse. Wedged temporally between the Mughal and British Empires, the nawabs who were a Shī'a ruling elite rose to power in the eighteenth century and governed the territory of Avadh. At their territorial peak in 1774, the nawabs ruled 90,000 square miles in the upper Gangetic plain of North India. During this early modern period, the nawabs of Avadh, their courtiers, and European colonial officers were all invested in and patronized the production of Islamic art. This included countless erotic miniature paintings. Over time, however, thanks in part to the history of British colonialism, only the nawabs were disparaged for doing so. This dissertation provides a genealogy of this decadency discourse within the study of Avadhi painting, giving an account of European words and phrases that devalued these paintings, while also attending to these paintings' original vernacular meaning in early modern Avadh.

Understanding what qualifies as erotica, decadency, obscenity, and "good" and "bad" art is central to my investigation. The eminent writer 'Ismat Cughtā'ī posed a provocative question during her obscenity trial in Lahore in 1946: Why isn't the word *knee* impermissible? Why only *chest*? Intrigued by 'Ismat Cughtā'ī's statement, I ask a similar line of questions: How would one define erotica? How has Avadhi art been relegated to the periphery of the discipline of Islamic and South Asian art? To be more precise, Avadhi art has become synonymous with erotics and has become stigmatized as degenerate art form. I ask: why is this so, when erotica was a popular

[1] 'Ismat Cughtā'ī and M. Asaduddin, *Lifting the Veil: Selected Writings of Ismat Chughtai* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2001), 253.

mode of expression across Islamicate courts in South Asia?

My visual corpus draws from erotica that varies in degree and intensities and includes representations of copulation, female nudes, amorous couples, and the beautification of young boys. I trace the origins of how British colonial and later Indian national officials, as well as contemporary museum administrators, deemed Avadhi material culture and the nawabs non-normative. By reassessing Avadhi erotic miniatures, I depart from this accepted narrative. I argue that the nawabs and their courtiers actively advocated for a visual, erotic discourse in the face of colonial encroachment as a means to fabricating new relations with Europeans and with other neighboring Indic courts. These works allegorically commented on political changes wrought by colonialism, which were transforming social relationships within and outside their court. As such, the art of erotica and amatory literature is integrated into the history of empire and colonialism.

The rest of this introduction is divided into thematic sections to flesh out the broad statements laid out in my opening paragraphs. The first section A is a case study of an erotic Avadhi miniature, *Intoxicated Mystics*, that typifies the corollary presumption of seeing erotica and assuming Avadh and the nawabs. Next, the disciplinary categories of South Asian and Islamic art are examined in sections B and C for the ways in which they disavow or embrace Avadhi paintings. Because of the processual aspects of both disciplinary discourses, the leitmotif of decadency and eroticism still continues to tacitly operate in art historical studies of Avadhi miniature paintings. Finally, an overview of my chapters is provided D along with my methodological approaches E. To perforate disciplinary and historiographical boundaries, various chapters within this dissertation are divided by different Indo-Persianate literary genres to emphasize the ways in which the figuration of eroticism slips between and is constrained by

literary and visual taxonomies.[2] A wide range of vernacular source material is utilized, ranging from Avadhi miniature paintings, Urdu and Persian poetry, records of local patronage networks (present in Indo-Persianate newspapers—*akhbarats*), musical treatises, and museological records to the nawabi rulers' own writings.[3]

A. Case Study of an Avadhi Miniature: Intoxicated Mystics

Before offering a recapitulation of the vernacular meaning of erotics in eighteenth century Avadh, first I will walk through the story of how Avadhi painting has become bound to erotica. Instead of merely providing discourse analysis, the visual history of the miniature *Intoxicated Mystics* serves as an illustrative example (fig. 1). The miniature painting currently resides in the Brooklyn Museum and has infrequently been on public view because of its licentious subject matter. After all, in the center of the miniature is a man performing fellatio on another man while his partner is in the midst of ejaculation. *Intoxicated Mystics* was on public display only once, during an exhibition titled *The Play of the Unmentionable*, which featured objects in the Brooklyn Museum's collection that "were at one point or another deemed controversial."[4] *Intoxicated Mystics* is a miniature painting. This means that it is a painting on paper and its artisans intended it to be incorporated as part of the aesthetics of a book. Artisans completed miniatures by applying small brushstrokes with the aid of a small, fine brush whose hairs were sourced from squirrel tail. The visual palette of *Intoxicated Mystics*, like that of many other miniature paintings produced in eighteenth-century India, drew from a variety of aesthetic

[2] This idea was born from reading Geeta Patel, *Lyrical Movements, Historical Hauntings: On Gender, Colonialism, and Desire in Miraji's Urdu Poetry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). Patel has considered the reception of the poet Miraji's *kulliyat* during and after Partition, which was dismissed mostly by Progressive critics for its overt reference to sex. She states: "It brought home to me the absolute necessity Miraji faced of creating reading strategies that would slip out of those provided for his poetry by the Progressives. It also brought into view the circularity of the assigning value, where the terms of assessment were the assumptions on which value was based" (13).

[3] Many letters and chronicles written by the nawabi rulers have, to date, not been translated or properly studied.

[4] Joseph Kosuth and David Freedberg, *The Play of the Unmentionable: An Installation by Joseph Kosuth at the Brooklyn Museum* (New York: New Press, 1992), ix.

techniques such as Indic, Mughal, Persianate, and European. Even though *Intoxicated Mystics* was completed on a small scale, it still has acquired controversy.

Fig. 0.1. *Intoxicated Mystics and Assorted Subjects*
Late Mughal or Avadh, c. 1775
Watercolor on paper with gold leaf, sheet
15 ¾ x 11½ in (40.0 x 29.2 cm)
TBM, anonymous gift, 84.183

Joseph Kosuth curated *The Play of the Unmentionable*. He drew objects from the Brooklyn Museum's collections that did not meet the funding criteria for the National Endowment for the Arts' 1990 legislation, which stipulated that artworks needed to have a standard of decency. As a show, *The Play of the Unmentionable* was a visual provocation to the conservative legislation that called for increased censorship of the arts and demonized sexual representations. The miniature painting *Intoxicated Mystics* was part of this show's visual program that included two Robert Mapplethorpe photographs, an Egyptian stone relief, Rodin sculptures, oil paintings with stereotypical representations of slaves, and other objects that were deemed potentially dangerous to exhibit.

Mapplethorpe's body of work serves as an interesting counterpoint to *Intoxicated Mystics* and at the same time elucidates why both aesthetic objects were subject to derision. Critics propelled Mapplethorpe into the art canon for his celebration of gay culture and photographs. Through his work, Mapplethorpe opened a debate on sexual and racial politics and aesthetic beauty in the United States. Many of his photographs depict BDSM and portray explicit scenes of penetration, such as the image of a bullwhip inserted into a man's anus. Art historians such as Kobena Mercer at first critiqued Mapplethorpe's work as "racial fetishism" because Mapplethorpe erotically objectifies black men as "racial otherness."[5] The antipornography movement even launched an attack on Mapplethorpe's photographs for his taboo sexual imagery.

[5] Kobena Mercer, "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe," in *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, eds. Emily S. Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 437–438.

Later, Kobena Mercer adjusted his critique of Mapplethorpe's oeuvre because he did "not want a black gay critique to be appropriated to the purposes of the New Right's antidemocratic cultural offensive."[6] He further argued that Mapplethorpe "enabled new forms of dialogue" through his intertextual citations of kitsch, pornography, and high art.[7]

Fig. 0.2. Robert Mapplethorpe (American, 1946–1989)
Male *Nude (Neck to Knees)*, 1982
Photograph, sheet: 19 ¾ x 15 ¾ in. (50.2 x 40 cm)
TBM, anonymous gift in memory of Jack Boulton, 1989.30.36
© artist or artist's estate (Photo: Brooklyn Museum, 1989.30.36_PS1.jpg)

I pause on Mapplethorpe's body of work to pose an important question. Why did the curator Joseph Kosuth assume that *Intoxicated Mystics* and Mapplethorpe's photographs would have elicited the same response from an audience? They are different mediums: one a miniature painting, which as a form functions by defying verisimilitude, and the other a work of modern photography, which as a form seems to validate the truthfulness of visuality. The differences in their media are more noticeable once their display contexts are taken into account.

Because *Intoxicated Mystics* is a miniature painting, a viewer must either examine the painting through a magnifying glass or stand in very close proximity to see it clearly. *Intoxicated Mystics* was affixed to a wall with a glass case filled with Japanese woodblock albums and other Indian miniatures positioned in front of it (fig. 3). As such, the viewer was prevented from stepping near the painting. No magnifying glasses were provided in the exhibition space. The curator solved the issue of visual accessibility by enlarging the miniature's scene of ejaculation in a black-and-white reproduction. The photograph is cropped to the standing figure's penis and the receiving man's head. Only these two body parts are presented. The viewer is given two views: a miniature painting that one can barely see, and a cropped version of what could be

[6] Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 203.
[7] Ibid., 204.

considered the most filthy or objectionable element in the painting. Mapplethorpe's photographs caused no such curatorial concerns. Mapplethorpe designed his photographs to be displayed in museums and affixed to a wall. His images tend to cut the human body into fragmented parts. In figure 2, only a torso of naked man is visible and his head and the bottom of his legs are cropped. In essence, Kosuth turned *Intoxicated Mystics* into a black-and-white photograph that was akin to Mapplethorpe's work of art (fig. 4).

Fig. 0.3. Photograph of the exhibition *The Play of the Unmentionable*

Fig. 0.4. Fragment of *Intoxicated Mystics and Assorted Subjects* as it appeared in the exhibition *The Play of the Unmentionable*

Through the shared space of the exhibition, *Intoxicated Mystics* was meant to evoke a kind of protestation similar to that of Mapplethorpe's photographs even though Mapplethorpe's work offered a more "real" depiction of sexuality and had at that point received greater public condemnation. In the exhibition catalogue, Kosuth addressed the relationship between these two works of art. David Freedberg, who worked with Kosuth, noted,

> In a direct allusion to one of the Mapplethorpe photographs singled out by the Cincinnati prosecution, Kosuth showed a Mughal painting, *Intoxicated Ascetics* [*Mystics*], the central scene of which is a man urinating directly into the mouth of another. Kosuth did not hesitate to have an enlargement made of this scene, as if in defiance of all "scientific" art historical commentary, which has never commented directly on it (even though the page itself is well-enough known). It is reported to be an illustration of the fastest way of allowing opium to enter the bloodstream; but once we have this information, there is yet another problem, yet another aspect of the play of the unmentionable. Are we somehow supposed to feel that historical knowledge—essentially social knowledge—somehow detracts from the transcendental status of art? Or does it have nothing to do with art at all?[8]

The Cincinnati case to which Freedberg refers was a trial in the 1990s in which the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center and its director were charged for violating the National Endowment

[8] Joseph Kosuth and David Freedberg, *The Play of the Unmentionable: An Installation by Joseph Kosuth at the Brooklyn Museum* (New York: New Press in association with the Brooklyn Museum, 1992), 54.

of the Arts' standards. To create a critique of the trial, Kosuth included in the Brooklyn show objects such as the Mapplethorpe photographs and *Intoxicated Mystics* that were considered outside the purview of normative sanctionable speech and visual consumability. They were all "unmentionable" and at one moment or another had been deemed obscene. Kosuth takes these points on, stating that art historically no one had directly commented on *Intoxicated Mystics*. Though it did not receive a direct assault of censorship and was not put on trial, like Mapplethorpe's work, scholars and curators had silently censored the work through their lack of engagement.

Kosuth calls into question whether a work's historical context invalidates and detracts from the "transcendental status of art." To press Kosuth's point, one might note that contemporary audiences have certain expectations for *Intoxicated Mystics* because it has been categorized as art. To be simultaneously a historical artifact with a past social meaning and a piece of high art brings up contradictions for this work regarding how American audiences should receive and treat its visual composition.

The 1992 exhibition, *The Play of the Unmentionable*, maintained that the image was late Mughal/Oudh.[9] On August 3, 2015, a Brooklyn Museum staff member classified this miniature as Lucknow/Avadhi in an unpublished memo. But *Intoxicated Mystics* is not from Avadh.[10] I assert once more that Avadh is not the site of production for this painting. It is from Mughal Delhi. The inscription of the patron reads "shāh 'alām pādshāh," which means this image was sponsored by Mughal ruler Shāh 'Ālam (r. 1759–1806). The miniature painting has been traced to Avadh, even though the inscription proves otherwise, because of the lascivious nature of the

[9] In another exhibition catalogue, the provenance of the miniature painting was identified as Avadh. Amy G. Poster with Sheila R. Canby, Pramod Chandra, and Joan M. Cummins, *Realms of Heroism: Indian Paintings at the Brooklyn Museum* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the Brooklyn Museum, 1994), 96.
[10] Because of the confusion over whether this painting is Late Mughal or Avadh, the provenance of this image has been changed to "Indian" at the Brooklyn Museum. "Intoxicated Mystics and Assorted Subjects," *Brooklyn Museum*, accessed June 24, 2017, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/111838.

composition. As the case of *Intoxicated Mystics* evinces, Avadh and the Avadhi painting style have become synonymous with obscenity in art historical discourse.

Unlike with the Mapplethorpe photographs, the contemporary reception of *Intoxicated Mystics* contends not only with racial otherness but also with religious otherness. In the exhibition catalogue, the religious element of the painting is referenced. The work is considered to be "problematic" as a pastiche that "draws on Muslim literary sources." The central figures "seem to be ascetics," the catalogue notes, but "whether they are Hindu or Muslim is unclear."[11] The ambiguity of meaning and religious signification is a point of contention, as the image cannot be neatly compartmentalized into conventional binaries and divisions in South Asian and Islamic art history.

In this regard, museums can contribute to audience's misconceptions on the idea of Islamic iconophilia, which would suggest that Muslim patrons such as the nawabs of Avadh or the Mughals would have disavowed image making altogether. Armed with the assumption that iconoclasm, a negative-leaning ambivalence toward image making, persists in Islamic treatises, museum audiences would therefore presume that Muslim artisans would be prevented from engaging in visual representations.[12] Calligraphy, Quran reproductions, and other abstract imagery are assumed to be the only form of art production within Islamicate localities.[13] According to this argumentation, aesthetic sensuality would be repudiated and would never be commissioned. Recent scholarship by scholars such as Sussan Babaie has overturned the misconception of iconoclasm and eroticism, showing that such imagery was indeed produced

[11] Kosuth and Freedberg, *The Play of the Unmentionable*, 103.
[12] Jamal J. Elias, prologue to *Aisha's Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 1–26.
[13] Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Concept of Islamic Art: Inherited Discourses and New Approaches," *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6 [Special issue, "Islamic art historiography"] (June 2012): 1–26, originally published in *Islamic Art and the Museum: Approaches to Art and Archeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Benoît Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber, and Gerhard Wolf (London: Saqi Books, 2013), 57–75.

under Islamicate administrations. Even so, such presumptions persist in the majority of museum-going audiences.[14] The inclusion of *Intoxicated Mystics* with Mapplethorpe's oeuvre makes more sense if one considers the role of American art institutions and audience expectations rather than merely evaluating the pieces' supposedly licentious subject matter. Thus, *Intoxicated Mystics*'s shock value stems from containing representations of amorous bodies when museum audiences would have assumed that such bodily depictions could not have been portrayed.

As *Intoxicated Mystics* makes apparent, the past and its visuality is contestable. How collective societies remember, re-remember, and appropriate Avadh's visuality is informed by how and why they accord differential values to histories and their art production. *Intoxicated Mystics* has been identified and remembered as an Avadhi painting because of its erotic imagery even though its inscription provides contrary evidence. Curators and museum personnel have undertaken the task of placemaking and have bound Avadhi miniature painting to unconventional sexual practices. The vernacular meaning of *Intoxicated Mystics*, including its political and religious connotations, has been misplaced in the process.

B. The State of the Field: South Asian Art History

> *Why Congress should not have welcomed Partition, I cannot imagine. It is quite the best thing that has ever happened in India.*
> –William Archer, 1957

The value of Avadhi material was established in the nineteenth century through academic disciplines such as South Asian and Islamic art history. Avadhi painting must be situated within these two academic inheritances and their display histories to discern how Avadhi art came to be constructed as objects of value or of derision—or both. For South Asian art history, experts in the field such as Ananda Coomaraswamy, William Archer, and Stuart Cary Welch established

[14] Finbarr Barry Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 4 (2002): 641–59.

miniature painting as a veritable field of study. I assess their language to distinguish where and when Avadhi miniature paintings figure within their wider discussions of the discipline. Later, scholars such as Hermann Goetz, Veronica Murphy, Patricia Barylski, and J. P. Losty attempted to salvage Avadhi painting from its blighted history by focusing on its stylistic components. Although they have reincorporated Avadh back into academic discourse, their main focus remains the paradigm of style, which has limited applicability to Avadh.

Ananda Coomaraswamy, who worked at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston from 1917 to 1947, is credited with introducing South Asian art to "Western" audiences and emphasized Rajput miniature painting in his lectures and writings. Early art historians such as Coomaraswamy promoted an authentic art form of South Asia by collecting objects from disparate collections that could better represent South Asia as a cohesive whole.[15] With his authoritative knowledge, Coomaraswamy legitimized the Rajput style of painting and its relationship to Mughal painting. The question becomes: why did Coomaraswamy deem Rajput painting to be more representative of South Asia than other schools of miniature painting?[16] A simplified answer is that Coomaraswamy equated South Asian art with Hinduism and spirituality and disregarded other artistic elements from a diverse subcontinent that did not meet his ideals of religion. In effect, Coomaraswamy reinforced the idea that some objects were classical and authentic while others were aberrant and fringe.

In alignment with Coomaraswamy's tenets, the first custodian of South Asian miniature painting were the Archers, William and Mildred Archer, who acquired a specialized knowledge of miniature painting that is still highly regarded. In the 1950s, William Archer was the *keeper* (curator) at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and helped shape one of the largest

[15] For a better synopsis of Coomaraswamy, see Brinda Kumar, "Of Networks and Narratives: Collecting Indian Art in America, 1907–1972" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2015).
[16] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting* (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1916), 14.

collections of South Asian painting. He was previously employed within the British Raj as an Indian civil service officer in Bihar, India. During his appointment at the Victoria and Albert, William Archer traveled to India at various points to either lecture on Indian art or search for new objects that could be added to his art collection.

His travel diary contains important information on his underlying assumptions regarding taste as it relates to South Asian art and painting. On February 9, 1957, while searching for painting folios, William Archer dismisses Avadhi painting in the following words:

> Nagar showed me the pictures. He has got them mounted as at the V. & A., but there was not a sign of Lucknow 18th century painting, only of the dreadful mess with which it ended in the 19th century, seedy Nawabs and diseased gentry.[17]

Here, William Archer characterizes the later nawabs as "seedy" and "diseased." He repeats colonial correspondences, which stated that the court was so excessively sexualized that many of the nawabs contracted venereal diseases.[18] More telling, Archer writes on Thursday, March 18, 1957:

> Reflecting on last night's lecture, I found myself quite absurdly angry with Hussain. I was beginning to like Muhammadans, for M. Quaja Ahmad has been so solicitous and kindly that my heart began to warm toward his community. But Hussain was so stupidly bombastic about the Mughals, so insensitive to Kangra art, so contemptuous, by implication, of the Hindus that I found myself shouting, "Death to these barbarous puritans." The fact, I suppose, is that in Hyderabad the revolution has liquidated the older Muslim families. Socially and economically, they are gone and their only refuge is a kind of aggressive vindication of the Muslim role. During the last five years, I have changed my ideas about the Mughals quite a lot but much as I admire Akbar, and loathe Aurangzeb, I shall never feel about them as I do about Goverdhan Chand, or Balwant Singh [Kangra/Rajput artists]. As we drove around, I realised how much I loathed the Muslims and the Muslim spirit. Why Congress should not have welcomed Partition, I cannot imagine. It is quite the best thing that has ever happened in India.[19]

These are the thoughts of one of the most influential curators of the early twentieth century. His Islamophobia and advocacy for the partition of India and Pakistan is disconcerting. His aversion

[17] BL EUR F236/117, folio 160.
[18] It was widely reported that the last Nawab, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh (r. 1847–1856), contracted gonorrhea. See chapter 5.
[19] BL EUR F236/118, folios 282–83.

to and disgust for Muslims is palpable in his statements of "loathing" Muslims. His high praises for Kangra art and other art works produced under "Hindu" courts is also not isolated to this diary entry. Archer spent the majority his career attending to folk art and Krishna devotional bhakti poetry. He, like Coomaraswamy, favored paintings that could be pigeonholed as Hinduized versions of Indian painting. Archer and his beliefs represent a crucial passage between colonialism, nationalism, and South Asian art history with its lingering prejudices. His legacy has had far-reaching consequences.

Stuart Cary Welch (1928–2008) bridged the disciplines of Islamic and South Asian art. He worked at various museums in the United States including the Metropolitan Museum and at Harvard, and shaped their collections and curriculum to bring South Asia into conversation with Islamic art. Welch in 1978 described Avadhi miniature painting in the following manner:

> Nawab Asaf-ud-daula (r. 1775–1797), convinced by the British that their troops guaranteed security, devoted himself to a life of pleasure. He transferred his court from Faizabad to Lucknow, where he spent huge sums on palaces, mosques, and shrines, determined to make it more splendid than Hyderabad, the Nizam's capital in the Deccan. If one regards the late Mughal period in Oudh as a phase of decline, 1775 marks the beginning of the end.[20]

For Welch, there is a clear moment of aesthetic decline, which is marked by the rise of Āṣaf al-Daula in 1775. In colonial writings, Āṣaf al-Daula is also accused of ruining the nawabi court with his effeminacy. Recent historians have noted that the British renegotiated their treaty with Āṣaf al-Daula, leaving him with limited political powers for maneuvering or challenging British forces. Within Welch's catalogue entries, the old historical colonial paradigms of decline persisted, which is indicative of the field of South Asian art history in the 1990s even as historians were rewriting the history of eighteenth-century Avadh.

Outside of these references, Avadhi painting has predominantly been absent from art

[20] Stuart Cary Welch, *Room for Wonder: Indian Painting during the British Period, 1760–1880* (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1978), 92.

historical scholarship because of its association with the eighteenth century, which was considered a period of decline. As Archer's excerpt indexes, the language of empire seeped into art historical studies of the late Mughals and to the regional courts of North India in the early modern period. In his diary, Archer propagated the myth of Akbar "the great" and Aurangzeb "the bad" based on their religious sentiments and their differing levels of religious conservatism. Archer considered Akbar a liberal and Aurangzeb a religious zealot.[21] His repugnance for later Indo-Islamicate art, which was produced after Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), is evident. In the last ten years, a number of scholars, most notably Chanchal Dadlani, have returned to the eighteenth century to remedy this gap in art historical scholarship.[22]

Following the historical trend of revisionism such as that set by the Aligarh school, art historians turned to study the art production of the eighteenth century. Goetz in 1953 was the first scholar to undertake such a project and wrote an early article, "Oudh School of Mughal Painting." He remarked that "modern art historians no more have such prejudices" in considering the eighteenth century to be a period of historical and art historical decline.[23] Even so, Goetz later states that in some Avadhi paintings "the decadence is obvious."[24] After a period of silence, Veronica Murphy in 1990 and Patricia Barylski in 1993 wrote two stand-alone articles in an attempt to reevaluate Avadhi painting.[25] Later, J. P. Losty in 2002, 2003, and 2013 was the first

[21] BL EUR F236/118, folios 282–83.
[22] Chanchal Dadlani, "The 'Palais Indiens' Collection of 1774: Representing Mughal Architecture in Late Eighteenth Century India," *Ars Orientalis* 39, Globalizing Cultures: Art and Mobility in the Eighteenth Century (2010): 191.
[23] Hermann Goetz, "The Early Oudh School of Mughal Painting: Albums in the Baroda Museum," in *Bulletin of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery* 9, pt. 1–2, ed. V. L. Devkar (Baroda: Chetana Press Ltd, 1955), 9.
[24] Ibid., 23.
[25] Veronica Murphy, "The Later Provincial Courts and British Expansion" in *Arts of India: 1550–1900*, ed. John Guy and Deborah Swallow (London: V&A Publication, 1990), 173–208; Patricia Bahree Barylski, "Painting in Avadh in the 18th Century" in *Islam and Indian Regions*, eds. A. L. Dallapiccola and S. Zingel-Avé Lallemant (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1993), 351–66. Before Murphy and Barylski, Edward Binney collected a great deal of later Mughal and Avadhi paintings. See Edwin Binney III, "Later Mughal Painting," in *Aspects of Indian Art: Papers Presented in a Symposium at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, October, 1970*, ed. Pratapaditya Pal (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 118–124.

to truly investigate the stylistic ties between Avadh and Murshidabad (Bengal) painting.[26] In a 2011 catalogue, Losty writes more generally about early modern Indian painting and provides an extensive view of this period's production.[27] Malini Roy, who works closely with Losty and is the current curator of the British Library, penned a dissertation in 2009 on the Avadhi artist Mihr Chand and his relationship with European patrons.[28] Roy continues to work on late Mughal painting, which culminated in her contribution to the first exhibition on Avadhi painting that was held in Los Angeles in 2010.[29]

Besides these art-historically trained scholars, Madhu Trivedi, Preeti Awasthi, and Natasha Eaton have also discussed the arts of Avadh. In her 2010 book *The Making of Awadh Culture*, Madhu Trivedi devotes a complete chapter to Avadhi painting. In her book and her dissertation, she states that the "subjects [of Avadhi painting] are mostly erotic and give us an interesting insight into the cultural environment, fashions, customs, modes and manners of the period."[30] Regurgitating much of Trivedi's work and Mildred Archer's scholarship, Preeti Awasthi in her 2014 dissertation on Avadhi painting states that "in the iconographies of Awadh school, we find a motley mixture of Rajasthani and Mughal tradition, often with a high rate of mix ups, a good number of compositions with no traditional ties to earlier Ragamala paintings, some very outspoken erotic scenes, and an occasional portrait of a patron in the role of the

[26] Jeremiah P. Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism: Portraiture in Murshidabad and Avadh 1750–80," in *After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, ed. Barbara Schmitz (Mumbai: Marg Publications on behalf of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, 2002), 34–55; Ibid., "Painting at Lucknow 1775–1850" in *Lucknow Then and Now*, ed. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2003), 118–33; Ibid., "Painting at Murshidabad 1750–1820" in *Murshidabad: Forgotten Capital of Bengal*, ed. Neeta Das and Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2013), 82–105.
[27] Jeremiah P. Losty, "Indian Painting from 1730 to 1825," in *Masters of Indian Painting*, vol. 2, ed. Milo Cleveland Beach et al. (Zurich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 2011), 579–594.
[28] Malini Roy, "Idiosyncrasies in the Late Mughal Painting Tradition: The Artist Mihr Chand, Son of Ganga Ram (Fl. 1759–86)" (PhD diss., SOAS, 2009).
[29] Malini Roy, "The Revival of the Mughal Painting Tradition during the Reign of Muhammad Shah," in *Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi, 1707–1857*, ed. William Dalrymple (New York: Asia Society Museum, 2012).
[30] Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of the Awadh Culture* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 152. Also quoted in Trivedi, "The Cultural History of Awadh" (PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim, 1977), 57.

nayaka."[31] Natasha Eaton, in her 2013 book *Mimesis across Empires*, investigates British collecting networks around Avadh.[32] She argues that Avadhi aesthetics registered the social and historical entanglements occurring between Indians and the British. Eaton focuses mostly on oil painting and the act of collecting rather than on miniatures.

The authors of this recent scholarship on Avadhi painting are invested in revitalizing Avadhi art and artists. They do so, for the most part, by pursuing style at the core of their art historical investigations. In the twentieth century, scholars created stylistic schools to study South Asian painting, which tethered paintings to their geographic site of production. Archer, for one, was deeply invested in this important aspect of connoisseurship of miniature painting. Because he treated Indian painting as if it continued in stylistic waves of tastefulness, he dismissed nineteenth-century Avadhi style as a "dreadful mess."[33] In contrast, recent scholars such as Roy and Losty have argued that within the pictorial program of Avadhi painting there is stylistic beauty.

Stylistic schools figured prominently in how Avadhi art has been assessed within the discipline. During the inception of South Asian art history, miniature paintings needed to be a concentrated form with a distinct Indian aesthetic and a clear provenance. In museological taxonomies, proper documentation such as artists' signatures is needed to authenticate paintings historically and artistically. Through inscriptions and visual cues, one can locate a painting's place of production and promote the idea of artistic geniuses. Artists in Avadh and in most parts of India worked in a *kitāb-ḵẖāna*, which was an artisan workshop in which multiple artists worked on a series of paintings. Patrons actively sought out individual artists, but how much

[31] Preeti Awasthi, "Awadh—Congenial Home for Nuturing Arts—in Historical Perspective of Painting and Music (1722–1856)" (PhD diss., University of Lucknow, 2014), 119.
[32] Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765–1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).
[33] BL EUR F236/118, folios 282–83.

sway individual artists had in creating a painting style or a drafting composition is still a topic of debate.

Avadhi painting has always proven difficult to study under the rubric of style (chapter 2). Yuthika Sharma and William Dalrymple, in their discussion of later Mughal painting that was produced alongside Avadhi painting, state that an artist's "migration rendered the artistic style of Delhi virtually indistinguishable from that of the provincial courts, making the intermediate phase of Mughal painting a particular challenge for an art historian."[34] Patricia Barylski writes, "Avadh painting in the 18th century is difficult to characterize."[35] In other words, the migrant artist who worked in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had a painting style that bled across the provincial courts of Avadh, Delhi, and Murshidabad. The most famous artists from the Avadhi school of painting such as Mihr Chand, Nidhā Mal, Mīr Kalān Khān, and Muḥammad Faqirullāh Khān arrived in Faizabad and Lucknow after they'd been trained in the Mughal school. They then traveled farther to different courts in India. For instance, the Lucknow artist Bahadur Singh was employed in Murshidabad and produced images in both Lucknow's and Murshidabad's artistic idioms. His style in Bengal is almost identical to his paintings produced in Avadh. Even when one can locate his signature, the area of production and the stylistic school of his paintings remain fuzzy.

Even for specialists trained in and attuned to slight changes in style, it is difficult to distinguish between different schools of painting in the eighteenth century. The Avadhi school in particular proves indecipherable. The inability to authenticate the paintings' site of production has influenced the marketability of Avadhi painting. Without a clear provenance, a gap of authentication occurs, causing these painting to languish in storage rooms.

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[34] William Dalrymple and Yuthika Sharma, *Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi 1707–1857* (New York: Asia Society Museum in association with Yale University Press, 2012), 23.
[35] Barylski, "Painting in Avadh," 352.

The disciplinary constraints of South Asian art and the documentary evidentiary nature of history have prescribed a set of criteria that has influenced how Avadhi art has been interpreted. Early South Asian art historians such as William Archer vilified and excluded Avadhi aesthetics from larger academic studies because of their persistent belief that the nawabs had been too preoccupied with the flesh and fleshly pursuits to govern properly. To counter this discourse, recent art historians have turned to Avadh's stylistic characteristics to prove that Avadhi painting is worthy of study. Style in the case of Avadhi painting can be applied only so far, however, as the early modern period was marked by cross-cultural dialogue and artistic exchanges.

C. The State of the Field: Islamic Art History

Avadhi miniature painting has been cited more often within the discipline of South Asian art history than in Islamic art history. While South Asian and Islamic art history have two different origin stories, the two fields do intersect, especially in the study of Mughal painting. Yet it is worth interrogating why Mughal painting, and not Avadhi, has entranced the fields.

Islamic art as a discipline is contested and challenged today. Iftikhar Dadi has noted that "many scholars of classical Islamic art view the term itself with suspicion."[36] During the discipline's formation, Islamic art was visually differentiated from other material cultures through the abundance of "abstract geometry" in a variety of media such as architecture, painting, and pottery.[37]

Broadly, the category of "Islamic art" denotes artistic practices produced in specific geographic areas where Islam was the dominant religion practiced and/or where Islam was the official state religion. Within these broad parameters, specialists have acknowledged that other religious groups such as Christians sponsored Islamic art and non-Muslim artisans participated in

[36] Iftikhar Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 2.
[37] Oleg Grabar, "Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 1–14.

crafting objects that have Islamic aesthetics. Finbarr Barry Flood and Avinoam Shalem have recently expounded on the limitations of the Islamic art discipline, arguing that the Middle East as a geographical region continues to act as the authentic center in the field to establish a clear opposition to other European styles.[38] Islamic objects and paintings produced in different locations must secure an aesthetic relationship with the Middle East to be authenticated. Moreover, certain geographic regions are completely missing from Islamic art historiography. Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, which currently has the highest population of Muslims in the world, has been largely excised from the Islamic art narrative. Islamic art surveys typically terminate during the age of the gunpowder empires of the Safavids, Mughals, and Ottomans whereas contemporary objects are forgotten or regulated to the footnotes.[39] This is because Islamic art was initially forged through colonial practices and "as a discipline was viewed through European hierarchies of fine/applied art and by denial of any relationship to modernity."[40] Because of its colonial past, there is a paucity of academic work on modern Islamic art, as if one day Muslims stopped producing art altogether.

Avadhi art has never been included in any formal Islamic art survey although Avadhi painting does abide by all the parameters set within the Islamic art discipline.[41] In this regard,

[38] Finbarr Barry Flood, "From the Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the End of Islamic Art," in *Making Art History: A Changing Discipline and Its Institutions*, ed. Elizabeth Mansfield (New York: Routledge, 2007); Avinoam Shalem, "What Do We Mean When We Say 'Islamic Art'? A Plea for a Critical Rewriting of the History of the Arts of Islam," *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (June 2012): 1–18.
[39] Margaret S. Graves, "Feeling Uncomfortable in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (June 2012): 1–27; Doris Behrens-Abouseif and Stephen Vernoit, *Islamic Art in the 19th Century: Tradition, Innovation, and Eclecticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
[40] Dadi, *Modernism,* 2.
[41] The closest inclusion is Nebahat Avcıoğlu and Finbarr Barry Flood, "Introduction: Globalizing Cultures: Art and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century," *Ars Orientalis* 39 (2010): 7–38. Vernoit also includes some Avadhi works in the Islamic canon. See Stephen Vernoit, *Occidentalism: Islamic Art in the 19th Century* (New York: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University, 1997). The galleries at the Metropolitan Museum have also tried to remedy this gap by introducing a section within their Islamic art galleries titled "Later South Asian Art."

Avadhi art is very similar to Qajar art, which was produced in Iran from 1785 to 1925.[42] Both have a peripheral status within the canon. Like Avadhi art, Qajar art was produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with a strong influence from European painting. Finbarr Barry Flood notes that

> [i]f the hybridity of the art produced in Iran under Mongol rule has been traditionally seen as a breakthrough for Iranian artists, the reception of Qajar art has been less enthusiastic, as the entry on Qajar painting in the *Cambridge History of Iran* makes plain: the emphasis on artistic autonomy and authenticity as anterior to contact with European culture is common to the reception of other forms of "non-Western" art (a category that is necessarily exclusionary).

The academic aversion to Qajar painting is tied to its eclectic style, with its "striking combinations of European neoclassicism and indigenous forms which is taken as vulgar sign not only of cultural but also of moral and political decadence."[43] Avadhi art, too, has been distinguished and defined by its hybrid style and its adaptation of European techniques such as perspective and shadow. Akin to the overlooking of Qajar art, Avadhi art's absence from the field of Islamic art is a product of its stylistic components' failure to meet the authenticity paradigm. Artists in Avadh regularly came into contact with Europe, which is reflected in Avadhi miniature paintings' composition, iconography, and style.

During the early modern period, it has been widely accepted and acknowledged that native artists regularly sketched, borrowed, and modified European materials. Though early Mughal artists were influenced by European prints,[44] it is Avadhi painting that is more often hailed for its "in-betweenness" and its so-called mimicry of European painting. J. P. Losty fights

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[42] For an overview of Qajar art, see Sims, *Peerless Images*, 78–90; Layla S. Diba, Maryam Ekhtiar, and B. W. Robinson, *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch, 1785–1925* (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum of Art in association with I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998).

[43] Flood, "From the Prophet to Postmodernism?," 36.

[44] For a brief introduction to this visual phenomenon, see Khalid Anis Ahmed, *Intercultural Encounter in Mughal Miniatures: Mughal-Christian Miniatures* (Lahore: National College of Arts, 1995); Milo Cleveland Beach, "The Mughal Painter Abu'l Hasan and Some English Sources for His Style," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 38 (1980): 6–33; Gauvin A. Bailey, *The Jesuits and the Grand Mogul: Renaissance Art at the Imperial Court of India, 1580–1630* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1999).

against this discourse and writes, "First-rate Avadhi painters were not overwhelmed by Kettle's influence, but perfected their own what might be called internally induced Europeanisms."[45] Tilly Kettle was a British artist in Avadh who painted a number of portraits of the nawabs. Miniature artists such as Mihr Chand translated Kettle's oil paintings into the miniature format while adding and subtracting formal features. Losty here suggests that Avadhi artists were not blind followers of European style. They were inventors who produced new localized "internal" formations of European technique. Some Avadhi artists, for instance, adapted the notion of European perspective in their compositions. Many others borrowed from other regional schools of painting such as Rajput and Deccani. In common accord, most scholars consider hybridity in reference to Avadhi artists' relationship to European style rather than in their interregional dialogue with other South Asian courts.

Unlike with Avadhi painting, Mughal painting's inclusion in the field of Islamicate art history is widely accepted. The Mughals traced their lineage to Timur, founder of the Timurid Empire, and their genealogy is described as Turco-Mongol. The early Mughals solidified these ancestral ties by summoning painters to North India from Central Asia who practiced in the Timurid style.[46] In this regard, Mughal paintings adhere to the guidelines of Islamic style by having a legitimate ancestral base in Central Asia and the Middle East.

The nawabs, too, harkened back to earlier visualities. They actively collected objects produced under the Mughals, hired Mughal trained artists, and patronized building projects in Iraq. Both the royal ruling families of the Mughals and the nawabs had visual capillaries that connected to Islamicate centers of the Middle East. A closer look is needed as to why the

[45] J. P. Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism: Portraiture in Murshidabad and Avadh, 1750–80," in Schmitz, *After the Great Mughals*, 51.
[46] Priscilla P. Soucek, "Persian Artists in Mughal India: Influences and Transformations," *Muqarnas* 4 (1987), 166–181.

Mughals and not the nawabs of Avadh have been included in this Islamicate field.

One of the greatest Mughal manuscripts included in the Islamic art canon is Mughal Shāh Jahan's *Pādshāhnāma* (1636). Art historian Milo Beach was part of the collaborative team that worked on the catalogue and is considered a specialist in Indian painting. Although he has a high regard for Mughal painting, Beach is quite dismissive of Avadhi painting, especially one particular painting, *Entertains Europeans at Dinner*. He states:

> One of the most extraordinary figures of this period was Ghazi-ud-din (r. 1814–1827) of Oudh, given the title King of Oudh by the British. The decadence of his court is somehow communicated in *Ghazi-ud-din Entertains Europeans at Dinner*. There is no decorum in evidence; courtiers and entertainers crowd the king and his guests, and to compound the spatial claustrophobia, fireworks once again fill the sky. The artist is intent on packing the composition with details: European silverware, and a clock about to be presented by a man wearing eyeglasses; chandeliers; jewelry and fashionable hair styles on the women; elephants and distant armies. There is no dignity here. It is an entertaining illustration, but the taste it reveals is coarse, and it perfectly confirms the verbal portrait of Oudh presented in *The Private Life of an Eastern King*, written anonymously by "a member of the household of his Late Majesty, Nussir-u-deen, King of Oudh [son of Ghazi-ud-din]." In complete contrast to the works made for Shahjahan—or even the portrait *Shah Alam II*—this scene reveals a world out of control. It is also a world out of touch with traditional India.[47]

In Beach's 2008 statement, the conditions of Avadhi art's marginality are made apparent. He reproduces the disciplinary borders of Islamic and South Asian art by reinforcing colonial notions that there was an ideal period of painting under the earlier Mughals that deteriorated over time. He describes the Avadhi painting in question as "decadent" and "coarse" and claims that it exhibits a lack of "decorum." Basically, he marks Avadh as other and the Mughals as the normative ideal. He treats the miniature as a "verbal portrait." Through his reference to "a world out of control," the Avadhi miniature is treated as visual proof of the "decadent" events occurring in Avadh. For scholars such as Beach who straddle both disciplinary fields, Avadh is considered a period of decline for South Asian art history and Islamic art. Under the rubric of style, as Milo

[47] Milo Cleveland Beach, *Mughal and Rajput Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 222.

Beach's work exemplifies, art historical disciplines continue to police and mark Avadhi art as excessive and "coarse."

Because of the Islamic art referent or because Muslims patronized Avadhi art, visual interpretations of Avadhi art are entangled with religious doctrine that has proscriptions against corporeal representation. There is a sense that in Avadhi society and other cultures in Islamicate regions, erotica is taboo and a violation of normative and religious injunctions. Jamal Elias in *Aisha's Cushion* provides a succinct overview of the debate over whether Islamicate societies are banned from crafting images writ large.[48] To unpack the controversy over image making, Elias looks at the circulation of representational religious art in popular circles. As Elias states, in the field of Islamicate art and within societies with Muslim practitioners, there is a rejection of some forms of image making, much as there is in any society. There are diverse perspectives since Islamic art is produced not only by Muslims and Muslim patrons but also by other members in the community. As a result, Elias argues that there is not a singular way of approaching Islamic image production and iconoclasm.

Extending Elias's argument to the case of Avadh, I would claim that Avadh represents a contradiction of sorts in promoting a visual discourse of sexual arousal within an Islamicate court. Such a contradiction has been present across the Islamicate art canon and in other art historical fields as well. As pictorialized in *Intoxicated Mystics*, the representation of ascetics intoxicated by wine and consuming opium was a standard trope from medieval Persianate to late Mughal painting. In such miniature painting, ascetics perform in a series of pleasurable and non-normative acts in their search for divinity. Many elites patronized these images because the representations of sexual and illicit acts have metaphysical and/or religious significance. While not all patrons believed sexual representation were spiritual conduits, many did because

[48] Elias, *Aisha's Cushion: Religious Art,* 1–26.

according to the principles of Sufism transgressions can lead you closer to God.

Although she does not engage with Avadh directly, Sussan Babaie has investigated the theoretical issues of eroticism and Islamic art. She searched beyond the well-studied area of mystical poetry and investigated the social reasoning behind producing erotic images in Timurid and Safavid art.[49] Her latest article is part an edited volume, *Eros and Sexuality in Islamic Art*, that explores the social and philosophical implications of visualizing sexual acts for Islamicate audiences.[50] Similarly, outside of the art history discipline, the new book *Islamicate Sexualities* utilizes the paradigm of sexual desire in an Islamicate context to rethink the utility of sexuality in the creation of self-subjectivities and in the pursuit of historical research.[51] These recent areas of focus in the field, which have coupled sexuality and sexual representations to Islam, have greatly enriched this dissertation.[52]

This reweaving of Islamic art history's regional and visual margins to include Avadhi visuality brings into relief how objects are constituted and produced as high art. Both Qajar art and Avadhi art trouble the conceptual and stylistic categories of Islamic art. Neither can ever be non-Western enough, Islamic enough, or authentic enough. Avadhi painting is important for the field of Islamic art because it both fits securely within its aesthetic criteria and also, at the same time, produces a moment of crisis in the field by doing so. The inclusion of Avadhi art in the canons of Islamic and South Asian art history means that labels such as proper "Islam," proper

[49] See Sussan Babaie, "Frontiers of Visual Taboo: Painted 'Indecencies' in Isfahan," in *Eros and Sexuality in Islamic Art*, eds. Francesca Leoni and Mika Natif (Farnham Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013), 159–186; "Visual Vestiges of Travel: Persian Windows on European Weaknesses," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13 (2009), 1–32; "Delicate Displays: On a Safavid Ceramic Bottle at the Museum of the Cairo University," in *Ferdowsi*, *the Mongols and the History of Iran: Art, Literature and Culture from Early Islam to Qajar Persia: Studies in Honour of Charles Melville,* ed. C. P. Melville, Robert Hillenbrand, A. C. S. Peacock, F. I. Abdullaeva, and Linda Komarof (London: I. B. Tauris in association with the Iran Heritage Foundation, 2013), 375–381.
[50] Francesca Leoni and Mika Natif, *Eros and Sexuality in Islamic Art* (Farnham Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013).
[51] Kathryn Babayan and Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University, 2008).
[52] In South Asian art history, the erotic has been more widely studied. For instance, Krishna, who is an avatar of Vishnu, is commonly depicted with gopis in amorous states.

"masculinity," and proper "art" are no longer serviceable. Instead, the case study of Avadhi images showcases how aesthetic objects can contribute to an understanding of a society's social and political history and enrich both fields in the process.

D. Chapters

Avadhi miniatures whose compositions represent in some form or another sexual arousal were in the eighteenth century part of literary, poetic, and visual book genres. A miniature can index textual sources through visual motifs, as is the case with *Intoxicated Mystics*, which references the famous Persianate manuscript *Shāhnāma* (Book of kings) in its composition. These textual and visual sources are difficult to pin down now that miniature paintings, which were once part of the illustrated program of complete manuscripts, have been sold on the art market as singular folios apart from them. In light of this, the majority of my chapters are divided according to the following Indo-Persianate textual registers: loose leaves (chapter 2), visual music (chapter 3), scrapbooks (chapter 4), and biography (chapter 5).[53] By inserting Avadhi paintings back into the textual and visual formats in which they were originally transmitted, I begin the task of recuperating why the nawabs and their courtiers patronized paintings that fall outside the logics of orientalism. A sinuous historical analysis of Persian and Urdu book sources is performed in order to repoliticize Avadhi painting as objects of intention.

Chapter 2 is centered on style and place, seeking to define Avadh and the Avadhi miniature painting style. For the majority of miniature paintings, there is a lack of dates and signatures. As a result, museum personnel, scholars, and collectors employ a tacit zoning of dating and place making when assigning miniature painting to geographic locales such as Avadh.

[53] As it has been classically stated: an audience's or reader's horizon of expectation changes based on the mediation of genre. Bo Utas, "'Genres' in Persian Literature 900–1900," in *Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective*, eds. Anders Pettersson, Gunilla Lindberg-Wada, Margareta Petterson, and Stefan Helgesson (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2006), 199–241.

In the process, scholars have left behind piles of papers discussing their analysis. I excavate their discursive practices, which have allowed Avadhi painting to be valued as a lesser form of art. I examine individual folios in this chapter since they are principal form by which scholars study stylistic integrity.

Chapter 3 focuses on rāgamālā paintings, which are paintings of musical modes. As I have explored elsewhere, museum personnel, art historians, and collectors interpreted rāgamālā paintings from Avadh as obscenity and pornography.[54] Similarly, the rāgamālā album discussed in this chapter, *J.42*, was labeled as obscene. Beyond such charges of obscenity, the rāgamālā painting genre has been signified and attached to Hinduism and Hindu court patronage. Recent scholarship has provided a rejoinder to this discourse, showing that Muslims and other communities patronized and translated this art form. My chapter builds on this new scholarship by tracking how rāgamālā albums in the eighteenth century were part and parcel of the nawabs' Indo-Islamicate poetic and visual canon. Therefore, they should be folded into Islamic art history.

Chapter 4 discusses the genre of muraqqa‘ albums, which are akin to scrapbooks and are composed of single sheet paintings that present a heterogeneous array of representations and calligraphic text. I focus on the muraqqa‘ form not to discuss its vernacular meaning for the nawabs but to show how colonial political networks and muraqqa‘ collecting practices have rendered Avadhi painting economically unviable. Robert Clive, who was a British colonial officer, and his muraqqa‘ albums are instrumental case studies in this chapter for the ways in which they show how muraqqa‘ albums were disbounded and displayed in homes and museums. Using the history of Clive's muraqqa‘ albums as an anchor makes it clear that the Avadhi paintings were mistakenly seen as degenerate Mughal copies because of collecting practices in

[54] Natalia Di Pietrantonio,"Art or Pornography: Avadhi Minaitures," *Porn Studies* (forthcoming).

the colonial infrastructure, which sought to extract knowledge, paintings, and goods from India, as well as because of discursive museological mandates that sought to present cohesive representations of the global south.[55]

Chapter 5 centers on the genre of biography (vaqa'i) by examining the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript, written by the last Avadhi ruler, Wājid 'Alī Shāh, in 1849. Containing 131 short stories and 103 accompanying miniatures, the *'Ishqnāma* opens with Wājid 'Alī Shāh's first love affair, which he commences at the age of eight. Given this snapshot, it is no surprise that historians and litterateurs primarily saw and read the *'Ishqnāma* as merely signifying sexual decadence and as a kind of truthful sexual biography. Yet the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript employs these erotic and textual devices to promote Wājid 'Alī Shāh's political legitimacy. While the *'Ishqnāma* text may be laden with intimate sexual detail, the miniature paintings are quite sterile and tame. The textual and visual balance within the manuscript was a means to conveying the courtly *adab* (ethics) of Wājid 'Alī Shāh. His refinement and adherence to an ethical life indicated that he had the right to political power.

Chapter 6 ruminates on the Gayer Anderson twins, Indian art collectors who were employed in the British Raj administration. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a new interval of government and empire took hold that ushered in a shift in market demands. At this time, Avadhi miniatures attained new roles and meanings within the larger social and political context in European and Indian auction houses and museums. As the case of the Gayer Andersons' collecting practices make clear, in the quest to create visual messages of British imperial strength, museum personnel and historians have suppressed collectors' prurient interest in Indian painting and have instead foregrounded the idea that native courts were oversexualized.

[55] See Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750–1850* (New York: Random House, 2005); Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765–1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

This concluding chapter argues that it was collectors that drove Indian and Avadhi miniatures into the categories of erotica, obscenity, and pornography. If one casts a stone at the nawabs for their preoccupation with sexual images, then one must also accuse the British for collecting, patronizing, and loving these objects as well.

Overall, these chapters emphasize that the enterprise of pronouncing aesthetic objects obscene or degenerate depends on the placement of an image within a given textual composition, folio, and/or literary genre. Instead of attempting to concretize what eroticism means and delineating a rubric by which it should be defined, my investigation charts the vacillations in how we circumscribe and compartmentalize visual imagery as erotic and decadent. For instance, when Avadhi miniatures contain a nude form, the miniature is reprinted in art catalogues with the body of the figure emphasized. This is done through the removal any extraneous material from the nude representational form. The *hashiya* (borders) of the miniatures are occluded. In museological settings, framing devices can mask the accompanying calligraphic text of Indian miniatures or any sign that the miniatures were originally part of a literary construction. As such, in museums that feature eighteenth-century Indian miniatures, the visual is largely given prominence over the textual. In the process, the idea of eroticism gains greater potency since there is a lack of any other competing visual features such as text. To restore some of the vernacular meaning to Avadhi erotic painting, my chapters emphasize the textual as well as the marginal visual elements within them.

E. Methodology

Recoupling erotic imagery to their eighteenth-century genres provides an opportunity for interrogating when and why erotic visuals have been divided from their manuscripts and literary counterparts. In the twentieth century, the vast majority of Avadhi images were sliced out of

these manuscripts and placed within new repositories as single-leaf images. Because of these new settings, the miniatures' eighteenth- and nineteenth-century and Indo-Islamicate functions are difficult to ascertain. As a result, because of the seeming profusion of erotic imagery and lack of textual remnants, many of these miniatures have become contested objects and have acquired the label of pornography or of obscenity.

This project thus pursues the question of how Avadh's eroticism and erotic visuality is produced and reproduced by the very nature of archive formation and institutions. Scholars such as Anjali Arondekar have laid the groundwork for such a pursuit. In her book *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India*, Arondekar traces "how sexuality is made visible in the colonial archive and . . . how this process paradoxically discloses the very limits of that visibility."[56] Instead of discussing sexual practices as a fringe object of study, Anjali Arondekar claims that sexuality is at the very heart of colonial discourse. Similarly, colonial correspondences, and in turn the archives that house them, always already had a discourse on the sexuality of the nawabs. Later, scholars reproduced that discourse through their intellectual conceptualizations of Avadhi miniatures. Displaced in the archive and in museums, however, was the functionary import of eroticism. While this project does take into account Arondekar's marvelous analysis of the limits of archival visibility and the dangers of archive recuperation in search for lost origins, I do believe some forms of vernacularism need to be uncovered and restored for contemporary analyses.

My point of entry into assembling a history of Avadhi miniature painting began with Foucault. In the *History of Sexuality, Vol. I,* Foucault argues that discourses on sex and sexuality proliferated during the nineteenth century at the same time that societies repressed language on

[56] Anjali R. Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 3.

sex. Before Foucault, there was an assumption that sex was controlled by discursive injunctions and social restrictive practices. Reversing this process, Foucault states that discourses that attempted to analyze, repress, and describe sexual phenomena actually had a germinative function, producing additional knowledge about sex and in turn enacting new forms of social behaviors. Foucault's conceptual apparatus is useful for the study of Avadhi paintings. By weaving in Foucault, might not the codification of Avadhi miniatures as deviant sexualized objects be a by-product of the discourses employed by the very experts who "claim to be merely describing" the paintings?[57] In other words, might not the experts in the fields of history and art history, through a range of discourses, have naturalized Avadhi painting as deviant, erotic, and overly sexual? Along these lines, colonial and modern discourses, which represent the nawabs as excessively carnal and as sexual anomalies, produced and reproduced the idea that the nawabs were idiosyncratic by identifying them with sexual aesthetics. To counter this structure, I note that the nawabs' visual program of eroticism was not a unique phenomenon but was a visual move that continually harkened back to Indo-Persianate antecedents such as the Mughals and Safavids.

Lastly, my reading strategy is informed by Gayle Rubin's canonical text "Thinking Sex," in which she develops a critical sexual theory according to which erotic life is politically constituted and renegotiated during moments of political and social stress.[58] She further argues that there is a political and social "imaginary line which separates 'good' and 'bad' sexual acts," and sexual order and deviance.[59] Thus, Rubin posits that the intellectual category of deviancy is

[57] Jonathan D. Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.
[58] Gayle Rubin thinks of sexual minorities broadly and attends to acts, which did not necessarily adhere to gay and lesbian sexual identities. To understand the caveats related to Gayle Rubin's text, see Judith Butler, "Against Proper Objects," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2/3 (1994): 1–26.
[59] Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole Vance (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 152.

not an immovable force but is subject to social and legal change.[60] Through Rubin's theoretical intervention, the strategic deployment of deviancy in the case of Avadh needs to be rethought since such a deployment carries with it a moral paradigm that characterizes pictorial compositions as stylistically classical/good or decadent/bad. In addition, scholars have positioned Avadhi painting to fit within a narrow ethical line range in which paintings are said to either adhere to or repudiate Islamic precepts. The Avadhi images, which can be construed as representing monogamous and heterosexual sexuality in moderation, are deemed normative, whereas other paintings, which depict polyamorous and homosexuality, are labeled as deviant. The agencies constructing, censoring, and establishing these norms are delineated throughout this dissertation in an effort to understand the mechanisms that place sexuality along an axis of good and bad.

In contrast, through deductive reasoning, a "certainty of absolutes"[61] emerges that would declare the production of erotica itself proof that the nawabs were a degenerate, sexualized court. Miniatures are not documents. They do not produce a vertical, singular univocal reading. My readings of Arondekar, Foucault, and Rubin make it clear that the intensification of pleasures on the part of the nawabs was not equivalent to political weakness and that, therefore, these erotic paintings and nawabi culture did not reinforce colonialism. Rather than reflecting reality or revealing the truth of the Avadh nawabs' ineffectuality as rulers, these erotic images offer a challenge to such truth-making claims by refusing to be read as only a unilinear teleology of history.

By partially excavating the museological practices in Avadhi painting such as in *Intoxicated Mystics* and the discourse in the art historical fields of Islamic and South Asian art, I

[60] I am indebted to conversations with Syantani Chatterjee in 2014 for explaining Rubin's work.
[61] Foucault quoted in Jennifer Terry, "Theorizing Deviant Historiography," *differences* 3 (Summer 1991): 55–74.

hope that I have earned the benefit of the doubt from my readers regarding my claim that an intellectual genealogy of decline and decay has been constructed around the study of Avadhi painting. If further proof of the rhetorical force of degeneracy is needed, chapters 2 and 4 examine the economic and art historical devaluation of Avadhi painting. More trying was the effort to arrive at a historical particularization of Avadhi painting that does not essentialize vernacularism. In chapters 3 and 5, my methodological investments recover the vernacular meaning of Avadhi painting. *Intoxicated Mystics* will make its return in the conclusion, its vernacularism partially restored, as I contend that such vernacular meaning is fragmented, fractured, and multi-resonant. Through such fragmentations, I implore my readers to understand these paintings as elaborations of new artistic and social "worlds" that reconstitute the order of society through intimate bonds.[62] May future scholars pick up these shards of thought and create a more holistic picture of eighteenth-century aesthetics.

[62] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by MIT Press, 2002), 57.

CHAPTER ONE

WHO/WHAT/WHERE/SEX

Before I launch into the literature, poetry, and arts of Avadh, a brief historical overview of the nawabs and the geographic expanse of Avadh is needed. In this chapter, I attend to the following questions: Where is Avadh? Who were the nawabs? And why are sex and eroticism associated with them? In answering these questions, this chapter is divided into five parts. Section A addresses who the nawabs were and clarifies their role in key historical moments. Section B illustrates how complicated it is to answer where the territory of Avadh lies since its borders were shrinking and expanding at different times, which ultimately affected artistic patronage. Section C provides a genealogy of how colonial officers sexed and gendered the nawabs as effeminate, queer, and voluptuaries. Section D shows the remnants of colonial thought within the study of Avadhi art. Relatedly, in section E, I attend to how nationalism's empirical horizon has extended into the reception of Avadhi painting as obscene.

A. The nawabs

Avadh (spelled in a variety of ways such as Avadh, Awadh, Oudh) was located in the upper Gangetic plain in present-day Uttar Pradesh, India. The nawabs, a Shī'a ruling elite, exercised authority over the province of Avadh from 1722 to 1856. They seized the northern Indian territory from the fractured Mughal Empire. While the nawabs rose to power, competing local principalities such as the Marathas, the Rohillas, and the Bangash rulers of Farrukhabad continually encroached on their territory. The British East India Company (EIC), which would later morph into a British colonial state, gained a foothold in India and eventually seized the entirety of the nawabs' territorial rights in 1856. The imperial state of the British Raj was founded with the dissolution of the Avadhi court in 1857. While these events serve as useful

markers, the nawabs' long history needs to be more carefully unpacked.

Before the EIC had acquired much political clout, in 1722, the Mughal ruler Muhammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748) appointed Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān (r. 1722–1739) the nawāb-wazīr (governor) of the sūbadār (province) of Avadh.[1] The headquarters of Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān's princely state was the city of Faizabad. He was a Shī'a Muslim. His family migrated from Khurasan, Iran, to the Mughal Empire in pursuit of government positions. As such, Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān was a community outsider to the Avadh province because the governing population was composed of mostly Hindus and Sunni Muslims.[2] Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān selected Faizabad as his capital because of its proximity to the ancient city of Ayodhyā, the birthplace of Rama, who is an avatar of Vishnu and the hero in the epic *Ramayana*. Hindu and Sunni Muslim landowners governed the city of Ayodhyā and the rest of the sūbadār of Avadh before Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān's political entrance. Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān established a well-governed army to consolidate the support of these rival factions.

Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān's reign came to a close after Nādir Shāh, the ruler of Persia, sacked the Mughal seat of power, Delhi, in 1739. During a military battle, Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān was captured by Nādir Shāh, after which he may have provided Nādir Shāh with intelligence that aided Nādir Shāh's conquest of northern India. The exact role he played in Nādir Shāh's domination is unclear since he died shortly thereafter.[3] His son-in-law Safdar Jung (r. 1739–1754) paid a large tribute to Nādir Shāh and was awarded the sūbadār of Avadh. During Safdar Jung's reign, he continued to discipline the region for his own economic gain. During his tenure, another sack of

[1] For a painting of Muḥammad Shāh and Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān, see British Library Johnson Album 4, no. 4. Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1981), 108, figure 163.
[2] Richard B. Barnett, *North India between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British, 1720–1801* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 3.
[3] Ibid., 32; Michael Herbert Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British, and the Mughals* (Riverdale, MD: Riverdale Co., 1987), 31–32.

Delhi occurred in 1748. This time Ahmad Shāh Durrani "Abdali" of Afghanistan was the aggressor.

The Mughal emperor Ahmad Shāh (r. 1748–1754) in 1754 replaced Safdar Jung with his son Shujā' al-Daula (r. 1754–1775) after Safdar lost favor in the Delhi court. Shujā' al-Daula is the most well-regarded nawab, and he commanded Avadh to its political height. He participated in a crucial moment, the Battle of Buxsar of 1764, in which the Indian principalities of Avadh, Delhi, and Murshidabad faced off against the EIC. Under the Treaty of Allahabad that followed the battle, Robert Clive, a British officer for the company, allowed Shujā' al-Daula to stay in power. Yet Clive did so only with certain stipulations. Shujā' al-Daula and other subsequent nawabs were forced to regularly maintain company troops and to maintain a British resident who would oversee Avadh's finances and promote British interests.[4] This political jockeying ensured that European officials had an advantage over Avadh's local powerbrokers such as Rajput, Bhumihar Brahmin, and Sunni Muslim *zamindars* (hereditary landowners). The Mughal emperor Shāh 'Ālam II (r. 1759–1806) appointed Shujā' al-Daula's son Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797) as the succeeding nawab after Shujā' al-Daula's death. Āṣaf al-Daula, more than his father, had to diplomatically combat the EIC in his day-to-day affairs.

Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1814–1827) marks another transitional moment in the nawabs' historical lineage. He abandoned the title of nawab because it signaled deference to the Mughal emperor. Instead, he opted for the title of king. The EIC in conjunction with Ghāzī organized a ceremony in which he officially severed tied with the Mughal emperor and turned to the EIC as his future provider. Subsequently, Mughal emperors no longer ratified the successor nawabs. Instead, the EIC took over these ceremonial rites. In other arenas such as for cultural capital, the

[4] On the economic dimensions of the British interest in Avadh, see P. J. Marshall, "Economic and Political Expansion: The Case of Awadh," in *The Eighteenth Century in India*, ed. Seema Alavi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113–31.

nawabs continued to rely on the Mughals.

Wājid ʻAlī Shāh (r. 1847–1856) was the last ruler of Avadh. A number of historians and cinematographers have attempted to rewrite his history, which has largely been disparaged. Chapter 5 deals directly with Wājid ʻAlī Shāh and unpacks his association with the oriental paradigm. He has largely been portrayed as a weak, ineffectual, and effeminate ruler. Imprisoned during the rebellion of 1857 in Fort William, he lived out his days in exile in Calcutta.

B. Geography of Avadh

The core of the Avadhi nawabs' territory lies in the upper Gangetic plain of northern India, situated between the Ganges River and the Himalayan Mountains (Fig.1). The location of Avadh was politically strategic because it allowed the Mughals to impede competing powers such as the Rohillas Afghans and the Marathas from gaining additional ground. It was also a very wealthy province. Zamindars, for instance, drew large sums of money from its agrarian lands. When Sa'ādat ʻAli Khān was appointed the first nawāb-wazīr, he quickly went about expanding Avadh's territory by subduing the zamindars and other rival suzerains. As indicated in the map below, in the 1730s Sa'ādat ʻAli Khān acquired three "large sarkars of Benares, Jaunpur, and Chunargath" to the east of Faizabad.[5] In another move toward expansion, in 1735 he defeated Bhagwan Singh Khichar, zamindar of Ghazipur and Asothar.[6]

Fig. 1.1. Map of Avadh
From Barnett, *North India Between Empires*, xviii

Under the subsequent nawabs, the borders of Avadh continued to be redefined and so, too, did their sovereignty. Safdar Jung (r. 1739–1754), the second ruler of Avadh, in 1749 "confiscated the territory" around Farrukhabad, which amounted to "thirty three parganas

[5] Richard B. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 28.
[6] Ibid., 27.

[groups of villages] from the Bangash Nawāb."[7] The city of Farrukhabad remained in the hands of the nawabs of Bangash until 1774–75, which formed a space of exemption around the Avadhi nawabs' reign.

Of all of the nawabs, Shujā' al-Daula (r. 1754–January 26, 1775) was the most successful in expanding his territory. In 1764 he lost the Battle of Buxsar against the EIC. In turn, the EIC confiscated Shujā' al-Daula's lands but later restored them on the condition that he grant other economic and political concessions. In 1774, with the assistance of EIC, he gained Rohilkhand, which was a region North of the original sūbadār of Avadh. The space around the city of Rampur, however, became a territorial exception. Although Rampur sat in the middle of Rohikhand, which was then under Shujā' al-Daula's surveillance, the nawab of Rampur still maintained full control of the city. In 1775, without the aid of the EIC, Shujā' al-Daula incorporated Etawah, Farrukhabad, and the middle Doab, the strip of land between the Ganges and the Yamuna Rivers. As a result, he effectively pushed back the expansion of the Marathas.

Quickly, thereafter, Shujā' al-Daula's lands were chipped away. In 1775, EIC renegotiated their treaty with Nawāb Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797), forcing him to surrender the Benares region along the Ganges River.[8] Besides losing territory, Āṣaf reconfigured Avadh in other ways. To escape political intrigue orchestrated by his filial connections, in 1775 Āṣaf al-Daula shifted the official capital of Avadh to Lucknow.

Another major blow occurred in 1801 when the EIC swallowed Rohilkhand and other largest tracts of land from the nawab Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān II (r. 1798–1814). Wellesley, who was governor general of India during Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān's reign, had annexed "approximately 135,000 square miles (nearly 350,000 square kilometers) of land from Mysore, Awadh, and the

[7] Ibid., 36.
[8] Fisher, 81.

Marathas" from 1799 to 1806. This would be equivalent to annexing Germany today.[9] In 1801, the nawabs' territory had shrunk to half its size from its fleeting height in 1774. Sa'ādat 'Ali Khān II inherited a shell of Shujā' al-Daula's former territory. In 1774, Avadh's landmass compried about 90,000 square miles, roughly the size of "England, Scotland, and Wales combined,"[10] and was approximately 80 percent of the modern state of Uttar Pradesh.

The geographic expanse of Avadh was never completely under the nawabs' control. As Fisher states, in 1849 the forest beyond the Rapti River, which "comprised one fifth of Avadh" remained "hostile" to the nawabs of Avadh and the landholding rajas considered themselves "independent."[11] As such, while Avadh's borders were continually drawn and redrawn, the nawabs' sovereignty was never absolute. The British and the nawabs may have drawn the borderlines on official maps, but some rajas and zamindars never fully accepted their authority.

During the years of 1848–1856, when Wājid 'Alī Shāh was the last nawab, the British vilified his authority. The EIC in the nineteenth century hungered for land. It annexed 250,000 square miles (680,000 square kilometers) of princely territory throughout India, "equivalent to acquiring an Austria every year."[12] In 1856, Wājid 'Alī Shāh (r. 1847–1856) was forced to surrender what remained of Avadh to the EIC.

The political and geographic fragmentation of eighteenth-century North India affected artistic patronage and practices. With the sacking of Delhi by Nādir Shāh in 1739 and by Ahmad Shāh Durrani "Abdali" of Afghanistan in 1748, and with the death of Mughal emperor Ahmad Shāh in 1754, many artisans such as poets, musicians, and painters fled Delhi to Avadh to seek

[9] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 190.
[10] Barnett, 2.
[11] Fisher, 29.
[12] Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire*, 197. Chatterjee's source material was derived from Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India, 1757–1857* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), 22.

royal and mercantile patronage, first to Faizabad, which was the capital of Avadh from 1722 to 1775, and then to Lucknow, the nawabs' capital from 1775 to 1856. Many artisans who resided in Avadh had thus trained in workshops overseen by the Mughal rulers Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748) and Ahmad Shāh (r. 1748–1754). While stationed in Avadh, European merchants and travelers patronized local artists as well. European patrons moved from city to city depending on their assignments from the British EIC or the French Compaigne des Indes. Artisans, in turn, were forced into itinerancy. Following their European employers, they, too, traveled across northern India from Murshidabad, Patna, to Avadh.

During this time of political crisis, the hereditary nawabs of Avadh intensified their promotion of the arts, which ranged from calligraphy, painting, and architecture to lesser-known forms such as kite flying and betel leaf preparation in their capital cities in order to establish some sense of cohesion within the region. The nawabs sponsored miniature painting that drew from the varied artistic repertoire of their populace. Paintings of the Hindu deity Krishna were popular alongside Sufi devotional tales. Painting pigments for miniatures were derived from natural minerals, stones, and vegetable extracts mixed with water and gum arabic. In contrast, oil painting was also available as a result of the migrational influx of Europeans artists who traveled from England to Avadh seeking patronage from the court of the nawabs.[13] These oil paintings were mostly portraits. As these two distinct painting formats of miniature and oil indicate, new forms of sociability and new cross-cultural aesthetic practices occurred in Avadh during the nawabs' tumultuous reign.

[13] For a brief overview on European artists in India, see Mildred Archer and W. G Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770–1880* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955); Pratapaditya Pal and Vidya Dehejia, *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765–1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

C. Discomfort with the nawabs' Sexuality

A discourse of native sexual non-normativity was part and parcel of the British imperial and colonial project to undermine the political sovereignty of the nawabs and other native princes. The roots of this discourse began in the eighteenth century and stretched to the sunset of the nawabs' reign in 1856. Colonial and imperial officers disparaged the role of women in the nawabi court, the nawabs' clothing, their femininity, and their non-normative sexuality, for the following nawabs: Shujā' al-Daula (r. 1754–1775), Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797), Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1814–1827), Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1827–1837), Muḥammad 'Alī Shāh (r. 1837–1842), and Āmjad 'Alī Shāh (r. 1842–1847). The last nawāb, Wājid 'Alī Shāh (r. 1847–1856), accrued all of his forefathers' deviant signifiers. By tracing the archiving principle of non-normativity within the nawabi bloodline, I track the role of empire and colonialism in characterizing the nawabs and their sexuality as excessive.

Europeans first began to openly discuss the sexual life of the nawabs starting with Shujā' al-Daula, the third nawab (r. 1754–1775). As stated, Shujā' al-Daula was involved in the Battle of Buxsar of 1764 against the EIC, which resulted in him surrendering much of his fortune to the British in the Allahabad Treaty. To solidify their territorial expansion, many British colonial officers discredited Shujā' al-Daula by accusing him of practicing a non-normative sexuality. In one particular incident retold in a number of Persian sources, Shujā' al-Daula was accused of abducting a Khatri girl who was from Ayodhyā. Ghulām 'Alī Khān, who was in the EIC's service, wrote *'Imād al-Sa'ādat* in 1807. In the text, Ghulām 'Alī states that after Shujā' al-Daula's accession to the *masnad* (throne), he started to engage in sexual dalliances (*husn-parast* and *amrad-dost*), including kidnapping a Khatri girl. It was hypothesized that Shuja engaged in an aberrant amount of sexual activity because he was finally free of the household of his mother,

Sadr-i Jahān Bēgum.[14] The presence of Shujā‘ al-Daula's overpowering mother in Ghulām ‘Alī Khān's story emasculates Shujā‘ al-Daula and is a narrative device that also appears in later chronicles of the nawabs. The abduction story seems unlikely since Shujā‘ al-Daula ruled primarily a non-Shi'a population of Avadh. By forcibly abducting a member of the Hindu population, Shujā‘ al-Daula would have agitated his power base. He would, therefore, have to have been so enthralled at the prospect of sex that he ignored political reasoning and engaged in the affair. If there is truth to the kidnapping incident, Ghulām ‘Alī Khān narrated it solely to discredit Shujā‘ al-Daula and aggravate his constituencies.

Besides the accusation of abduction, Shujā‘ al-Daula was linked to an excess of sexuality through his association with females in his court. It was reported that his mother, Sadr-i Jahān Bēgum, "used her influence to get thirty of Shujā‘ al-Daula's courtesans dismissed from his service" so that he could concentrate on ruling Avadh.[15] In this story, courtesans are sexualized figures that distract the nawab from his political duties with their hypersexuality. Moreover, Shujā‘ al-Daula was accused of spending too much in the zanana and listening too freely to female counsel.[16] Unlike other nawabs such as Wājid ‘Alī Shāh (r. 1847–1856), Shujā‘ al-Daula's military expeditions salvaged his masculinity in Persianate colonial historiography, and he was regarded overall as a just ruler.

At the start of the nawabate, the British and their paid Persian scribes were already invested in the nawabs' sexuality, which they used as a discursive weapon against native statesmanship. After he ascended the throne, the fourth nawab, Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797), also came under scrutiny, but this time he was disparaged for his involvement with same-sex partners. Āṣaf al-Daula's heterosexuality was regularly called into question. He was said to be

[14] Ghulam Ali Khan Naqvi, *Imad-us-Sa'adat* (Lucknow: Matba' Munshi Nawal Kishore, 1897), 66–67.
[15] K. S. Santha, *Begums of Awadh* (Varanasi: Bharati Prakashan, 1980), 41.
[16] Ibid., 40–44.

"in the pursuit of forbidden pleasure."[17] These allegations were repeated in English and in many Persian chronicles. In describing Āṣaf al-Daula's marriage, it was speculated that it "was never consummated. He never exhibited desire for her society and never slept with her."[18] Another writer labeled Āṣaf al-Daula an "invert."[19]

The British took the opportunity to repudiate Āṣaf's progeny, Wazīr 'Alī Khān, on the grounds that Āṣaf al-Daula had only same-sex relationships. Āṣaf was considered "impotent (paidā'ish 'innīn)."[20] As a result, the British permitted Āṣaf's son, Wazīr 'Alī Khān, to reign as a nawab for only one year, from 1797 to 1798. His uncle, Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān II, replaced him. The justification for denying Wazīr 'Alī Khān's sovereignty stemmed directly from Āṣaf al-Daula's sexual identification. In regard to Āṣaf al-Daula and his son, the British activated a sexual rhetoric to question the purity of the nawabs' bloodline so that they could install their own figures in power.

Āṣaf al-Daula was belittled for his physique in addition to his sexuality. In 1815 Faiz Bakhsh, who once worked for the Avadhi court and for the EIC, said the following of Āṣaf al-Daula:

> From his childhood, he was obese; his fat ears, neck and double chin were one fleshy mass. His fingers and palm were short and plump. From his boyhood, he was addicted to frivolities and his natural inclinations and attachments were for low, ill-born and base-minded associates. He used to laugh unseasonably, fling derisive abuse at others and desire derisive abuse in return. He delighted in meaningless amusements and was immensely pleased with anyone who indulged in filthy language; and the more obscene the conversation was in any company the better he was pleased.[21]

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[17] Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh, William Hoey, and H. A. Qureshi, *Memoirs of Faizabad, Being a Translation of the 'Tarikh-i Farahbakhsh' of Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh* (Lucknow: New Royal Book Co., 2004), 24.
[18] Ibid., 18
[19] Purnendu Basu, *Oudh and the East India Company, 1785–1801* (Lucknow: Maxwell Co., 1943), 2.
[20] 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, and Muḥammad Ikrām Cughāī, *Guzashtah Lakhnaū: Hindustān men Mashriqī Tamaddun kā ākhirī Namūnah* (Lahore: Sang-i Mīl Publications, 2006), 77.
[21] Muhammad Faiz Bakhsh, *Memoirs of Faizabad*, 16.

Āṣaf al-Daula's body and sexuality garnered an abounding number of aberrant descriptors because he was the first nawab to ascend to power under the dominating presence of the English. In the first year of his reign, the East India Company renegotiated its treaty with him, which forced him to surrender the Benares region along the Ganges River.[22] Unlike Shujā' al-Daula, Āṣaf al-Daula was marred from the start, as he was unable to defend or expand his territory. The British needed to portray him as weak, sexually deviant, basically unfit to rule, to justify their own claims to power. Consequently, Āṣaf al-Daula's body was fashioned as unmanly.

Although the British Empire enacted new policies and new forms of ideological differentiation in the second wave of empire in the nineteenth century, much of its discourse harkened back to earlier colonial writing composed in the eighteenth century. In colonial and imperial historiography in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, British officers reconstructed a political reality by conjuring "sexual truths." For instance, in 1781, Warren Hastings, the governor-general of India during the reign of Āṣaf al-Daula, wrote:

> Lucknow is a sink of iniquity and a school of rapacity… What will you say of beardless boys rejecting with indignation the offer of monthly gratuities of 3,000 and 5,000 rupees? What will you think of clerks in office clamoring for principalities, threatening those who hesitated to gratify their wants with the vengeance of patronage?[23]

Hastings's remarks on the "beardless boys" are a direct allusion to male same-sex relationships in which older partners cared for youths whose age precluded them from growing a full beard. Because of the criticism surrounding Āṣaf al-Daula's same-sex sexual partners, Warren Hastings feels the need to dismiss the entire city of Lucknow and its inhabitants. Even more appalling for

[22] Michael H. Fisher, *A Class of Cultures: Awadh, the British and the Mughals*, 81.
[23] Letter to Sir John Macpherson, December 12, 1781. Warren Hastings, John Macpherson, and Henry Dodwell, *Warren Hastings' letters to Sir John Macpherson* (London: Faber & Gwye, 1927), 106. Quoted in Cuthbert Collin Davies, *Warren Hastings and Oudh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 155, and in Mildred Archer and W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770–1880* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 52–53.

Hastings is the fact that these beardless young boys had some semblance of power in their ability to extract extra money from their older sexual partners.

Mirroring the dynamic of father and son Shujā‘ and Āṣaf al-Daula, the next two nawabs attacked for their sexuality were father and son Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1814–1827) and Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1827–1837). Only Sa’ādat ‘Alī Khān II, who ruled from 1798 to 1814, escaped ridicule, as the British had installed him on the throne themselves. In 1838 Abdul Ahad, an East India Company employee, wrote the *Tārīkh Badshāh Bēgum*, which disparaged the vices of Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar; his wife, Badshāh Bēgum; and his son Nāsir al-dīn Ḥaidar.[24] Abdul Ahad paints Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar as weak willed. Using Badshāh Begam and Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar as a springboard, he suggests that the entire nawabi courtly environment was infected with depravity that adversely affected their son, Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar. According to Abul Ahad, the “the evil effects of training given by the Bēgum [his mother] were that he [Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar] spent the whole of his life in these practices and had little leisure to devote himself to the political and financial affairs of the Kingdom.”[25] Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar is described as speaking “like a woman and dress[ing] like a woman.”[26] In his account of Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar, W. H. Sleeman, the British resident of Avadh from 1849 to 1854, echoed Abdul Ahad’s sentiments. He ridicules Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar because of his “drinking and other vicious indulgences.”[27] Abul Ahad’s and Sleeman’s views on Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar had a counterpoint in the writings of other colonial officers such as Colonel John Low (1788–1880), Warren Hastings, and Lord Dalhousie, who “spoke favorably

[24] W. Knighton claimed that Ḥaidar had an unfavorable disposition; see Knighton, *The Private Life of an Eastern King* (New York: Redfield, 1855), 44.
[25] ‘Abdulaḥad Rabiṭ, *Tarikh Badshah Begam: A Persian Manuscript on the History of Oudh*, tr. Muhammad Taqi Ahmed (Delhi: Ibarah-i Adabiyat-i, 1997), 14.
[26] ‘Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Lucknow, the Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* (London: Elek, 1975), 57; Sharar, *Guẕashtah Lakhnaū*, 87.
[27] Sleeman, *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849–1850* (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 2:151.

about his habits, manners, and disposition."[28] For the most part, however, colonial institutions and infrastructures commented on Nāṣir's femininity to constitute a normative masculine ideal in themselves and portrayed him, in contrast, as non-normative. In another instance, Nāṣir was accused of sleeping with Christian Anglo-Indians—an act that transgressed religious and social ethics of sexual propriety.[29] All in all, Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar was marked as vulgar, different, and pathological.

As the British usurped more and more political power, they continued to disparage the nawabs' sexuality and masculinity. Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar's successor, Muḥammad ʻAlī Shāh (r. 1837–1842), the grandfather of the last nawab, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, was considered sexually "licentious." For contracting a venereal disease, the EIC dismissed his ability to govern.[30] In this sense, the EIC drew a corollary between his diseased body and a diseased, ill-fit court. The short reign of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's father, Āmjad ʻAlī Shāh (r. 1842–1847), received censure for his inability to rebuke the power of the females of his zenana, including his lovers and his filial relations.[31] A discourse of sexual negativity in terms of excessive sexual and bodily practices would eventually be imposed on the body of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh.

Captain Shakespeare, a British officer stationed in Avadh, wrote a dismissive report about Wājid ʻAlī Shāh (r. 1847–1856) to the governor-general of India on September 29, 1845, stating:

> The prospect that the present reign offers is truly a melancholy one and in case of anything happening to the King [Āmjad ʻAlī Shāh], I should much dread that the future will become still more clouded. The heir-apparent's [Wājid ʻAlī Shāh] character holds out no promise of good. By all accounts his temper is capricious, and fickle, his days and nights are past in the female apartments and he appears wholly to have resigned himself

[28] K. S. Santha, *Begums of Awadh*, 110.
[29] A. Mukherjee, "King Nasir ud Din Haidar of Awadh (1827–1837)," *Journal of Indian History* 45, part 2 (August 1967): 604.
[30] Ibid., 14.
[31] Ahmed El Safi, *Two Kings of Awadh: Muhammad Ali Shah and Amjad Ali Shah, 1837–1847* (Aligarh: P. C. Dwadash Shreni, 1971), 39, 50, 54. The author cites correspondences from 1844.

> to debauchery, dissipation and low pursuits, and for some time past has been on distant terms with his father [Āmjad ʻAlī Shāh].[32]

For Shakespeare, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh deviated too far from the line of propriety in terms of his decorum and sexual practices. Shakespeare's authoritative text was a technique of the modern British Empire to impose its sovereignty and forcefully seize desired territory. These were not mere words but a rhetoric employed to enact a full-scale dismissal of native rule.

Shakespeare's statement was later utilized in the 1855 Outram report, a document that justified the annexation of Avadh by depicting Wājid ʻAlī Shāh as an unfit ruler. The Outram report was named after James Outram, who was the final British resident of Avadh from 1854 to 1856. Much of Outram's rhetoric was an extension of Shakespeare's and Dalhousie's writings. Dalhousie was appointed governor-general of India from 1848 to 1856, and he, too, had a low opinion of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh.[33] Together, these officers' writings formed a citational chain that attempted to justify the deposal of Avadhi courtly culture.

The East India Company's aggressive campaign was waged against Wājid ʻAlī Shāh during his rule and even after he was forced into exile. An English writer, Knighton, described Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's final days in the following manner:

> The king was sitting alone and crying. When he saw his mother the queen enter, he covered his face with his hands, and sobbed aloud. She made him three salaams as she advanced, saying, "Are you now satisfied? Have you got at last the wages of your dancing, your singing, and your fiddling? Have I not often told you it would come to this? Did any of your fathers sing and dance and fiddle in women's clothes?" Bahara Nissa alone ventured to remonstrate with the queen. The king said never a word.[34]

[32] National Archives of India, Foreign Department Political Consultations, November 29, 1845, no. 186 quoted in G.D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh under Wajid Ali Shah* (Varnasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1968), 7.
[33] Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire*, 204.
[34] W. Knighton, *The Private Life of an Eastern King* (New York: Redfield, 1855), 261.

In this passage, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh is not an active participant in the annexation of Avadh. He is left as a mere witness to its fate. The women in his palace are described as domineering in order to further emasculate him.

During the aftermath of annexation and before his exile in Calcutta, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh decided to make the sea journey to England to petition the British Parliament and Queen Victoria to return Avadh to him and his family. On his journey, he brought with him many of his wives and courtiers as symbols of his power. En route to the port, he was taken ill and decided not to leave India. Some of his family members including his mother and brother completed the journey on his behalf. While his family was abroad in England, British officers granted Wājid ʻAlī Shāh four houses on the riverbank of Garden Reach, Calcutta, in the interim. During the first few months of his exile, the 1857 rebellion erupted and the rebels declared Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's ten-year-old son, Mirzā Birjīs Qādir, the new nawab. To prevent the rebellion from succeeding, the British sent Wājid ʻAlī Shāh to prison in Fort William, where he spent his time writing love letters to his wives. After the rebellion had tapered off, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh was sent back to Calcutta. By that time, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh received word that his petition to Queen Victoria had proven ineffective.

Colonial and imperial officers' emasculating descriptions of these events omitted any mention of the various ways in which Wājid ʻAlī Shāh attempted to exert some semblance of power after his dethronement. From resolving to go to England to writing letters, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh did not spend the remainder of his days merely "crying" and in engaging in "low pursuits." He was invested in refining his disposition through culture and the arts. For the English, they reduced politics as military exploits that could quell rival territories, whereas Wājid ʻAlī Shāh was interested in aesthetic rituals that had the potential to accrue power in his court in the

everyday. Wājid ʻAlī Shāhʼs concern with aesthetics was not born out of laziness. It was his only political outlet since the British forced Wājid Ali Shah to curtail overt signs of his political power such as the dissolution of his personal army in 1848.[35]

D. Avadhi painting and Colonialism

> The Lucknow [Avadh] of the first decades of the nineteenth century was given to sensuousness and artificiality encouraged by the denigrate Nawabs who came to power
> –Ahmed Ali in 1973.[36]

The value of Avadhi paintings is still assessed through the discursive legacy of colonialism, which later seeped into nationalist thought, which was, in turn, absorbed into contemporary art historical discourse. The colonial rubric disparaged the nawabs and their sponsorship of the arts because of the cost of production for painting and because the compositions were considered "effeminate." By foregrounding these pillars of thought in the colonial period and their currency in contemporary art historical speech, I show the continual traction of an emasculating discourse in the discipline of art history. I compare the writings of colonial officers such as Lord Cornwallis and John Lumsden with art historians such as Linda Leach and Dallapiccola.

Colonialism as a historical moment in India was quite complex. For simplicity's sake, the term *colonialism* here refers to British colonialism even though the French and the Dutch also colonized India. This is because British colonialism directly influenced the formation of the art historical canon of miniature painting. The language employed by its first collectors under British colonialism was incorporated and cemented into later nationalist art historical investigations.

By the late eighteenth century, the British aspired to have an empire that was separate

[35] G. D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh under Wajid Ali Shah* (Varnasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1968), 43–44.
[36] Ahmed Ali, *The Golden Tradition: an Anthology of Urdu Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 212–213.

from India's past.[37] Prior to this moment, the British had employed many courtly symbols and references that drew from the Mughal Empire's cultural apparatus.[38] Because of a changing political tide in England and in India in the late eighteenth and early ninetieth centuries, however, the British attempted to further delineate themselves from their colonized subjects.

One of the ways they accomplished this was through the rhetoric of expenditure. The Avadhi nawabs' spending habits were consistently labeled extravagant. This was meant to stand as a strong contrast to the East India Company's frugality. As such, the budgets of the nawabs were closely monitored. The British resident of Avadh, John Lumsden, stated on June 30, 1798, "I avail myself of this opportunity to request that your lordship will be pleased to instruct me how far I am authorized to interfere to prevent any acts of extortion [undefined presents] by the nabob [nawab]. . . . I trust he [the nawab] will not resort to this mode of filling his coffers."[39] The act of extortion that Lumsden refers to is the practice of gift giving, or the presentation of *nazr*. This was a common practice employed by the nawabs, courtiers, and even other Europeans administrators, who would exchange gifts with one another as a sign of respect and allegiance. Paintings and painting albums were part of this exchange process. For instance, the nawabs gave British officer Robert Clive, who negotiated the peace treaty after the Battle of Buxsar, completed painting albums (Chapter 4).

In 1793 Lord Cornwallis, a British army officer, wrote to Husain Raza, a minister of the nawab, and argued that the nawab's debt was a direct result of an increase in "number of menial servants, elephants, camels, horses, gaudy equipage, and frivolous expenses."[40] By extension, many art objects began to be considered frivolous because of the costliness of the enterprise.

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[37] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*.
[38] Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth Century India: The British in Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[39] BL IOR/H/236, Lucknow, June 30, 1798.
[40] BL Home/misc/57/39.43:581, January 29, 1793.

Visual objects such as miniature paintings, which were once exchanged during courtly ceremonies and represented political relationships (*nazr*), were now seen as frivolous and as a form of extortion. The EIC saw itself, in contrast, as an efficient machinery that practiced economic restraint. This was not the case on the ground, as the East India Company was deeply in debt and borrowed consistently from the nawabs. The EIC masked this fact in order to carve out a narrative that presented itself and the nawabs as embodying two separate poles of spending. As a result, the art and culture of the nawabs began to stand for a hollowness in economy.

This concern over money and proper expenditure expressed first in colonial correspondence is reflected in how modern art historians have treated the cost of production of Avadhi painting. Leading art historian Linda Leach appraised Avadhi painting as a visual form that surpassed the limits of expenditure and decorum. In 1996, Linda Leach wrote at length that:

> Miniature painting in Lucknow reflects both a new openness and a confusion of identity in the capital. The city was known for its endless social gatherings, which were a natural release from the strict protocol that had been imposed in Delhi. The rigid social hierarchy fostered by the Mughal rulers in an effort to maintain power was largely irrelevant in Oudh; free of these restraints, the citizens rejoiced in convivial parties, sports or dramas which formed an important subject for paintings. At the same time, the new urban class seems to have realized at least subconsciously that imperial instability in Delhi and British pressure to the East made their political and economic situation precarious. Their reaction was a hedonism reflected in leisure pursuits—such as wagering on kite-flying, cockfights or contests between larger animals—and in quickly constructed, quickly decaying architecture as well as often-superficial miniature paintings.[41]

Leach's fascination with the cost of maintaining animals aligns with Lord Cornwallis's earlier concerns about the nawabs' luxurious lifestyle. Both Leach and Cornwallis suggest that animals such as cocks, "elephants, camels and horses" are not courtly necessities. Linda Leach also describes the "leisurely pursuits" of the nawabs as a costly distraction, which included the construction of "decaying architecture" and the sponsorship of "superficial miniature paintings."

[41] Linda York Leach, *Paintings from India, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art* (London: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1998), 166.

According to Leach, frivolous purchases and a hedonistic court culture resulted in the demise of proper governance. Leach held in disdain the subject matter of Avadhi painting, which she considered to be too preoccupied with "convivial parties." As Leach's statement illustrates, art historians have continued to reproduce colonial discourse in their description and evaluation of Avadhi miniature painting.

According to the formulation of correlation, a premise to which art historian Linda Leach acquiesced, Avadhi erotic panting and other aesthetic objects function as visual evidence and act as testaments to the era's decadency and ineptitude.[42] Such polemics argue that the nawabs of Avadh were oriental despots whose spending detracted from proper governance. And by homing in on the aesthetics of excess, this discourse claimed that British colonialism needed to rise to power once and for all to overthrow the nawabs' erotic deviance. Continuously elided in this narrative is the fact that European merchants in Avadh actively sponsored and supported erotica and images of "convivial parities."

In another move to safeguard their differentiation, British officials frequently depicted the nawabs of Avadh as effeminate (*zanana-pan*), painting them as preoccupied with social etiquette, sexual affairs, and with the women of their household. The EIC was concerned with how much power women wielded within the nawabs' familial and political structures. The strength of Bahu Bēgum (1720s–1815), who was the wife of Nawab Shujā' al-Daula (r. 1753–1775) and mother of Nawab Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797), was questioned. In 1834 Ghulam Hussain Tabataba'i, who was in service to the EIC, commented that Shujā' al-Daula failed to protect his manhood by allowing Bahu Bēgum to usurp his power: "Whatever [Shuja-uddaula] obtained, he gave [the Bēgum] the remainder, after expenses, and in truth, he had to do so. 'Who was this man who was

[42] This was a similar line of attack on riti literature and its writers; see Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

less than a woman?"'[43] For Tabataba'i, the Bēgum weakened the nawabs' political power and their masculinity.

The discourse on the social fabric of Avadh and the role of women therein had later transference in art historical studies. To this day, a vast array of paintings from Avadh have been said to portray courtesans because in the popular imaginary, courtesans (*tawa'if*) are synonymous with the sexual landscape of the nawabs of Avadh. The popularity of later novels such as *Umrao Jaan Ada*, which focuses on the story of a tawa'if from Avadh, has led the city of Lucknow to be irrevocably linked with courtesans and with femininity writ large.[44] Two recent Umrao Jaan movies from Bollywood have reinforced this association between courtesans and Avadh in the popular imagination.[45] In 1978, art historian Dallapiccola described the relationship of tawa'ifs with Avadhi culture in an art exhibition catalogue, stating:

> The nawabs held a sumptuous court there [in Lucknow] and permitted a crowd of remarkable artists: painters, musicians, singers, writers and poets, to exercise their talents. It is there that lived the most celebrated courtesans of their time and intrigues, corruptions and scandals were a part of their daily life.[46]

The association of courtesans with Avadh, first mobilized by colonial officers, is now present in contemporary museological practices. Statements in contemporary exhibition catalogues about

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[43] Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān Ṭabāṭaḇā'ī, *A Translation of Seir Mutaqherin, or, Views of Modern Times: Being an History of India, from the Year 1118, to the Year 1194, of the Hedjrah*, Vol. II (Calcutta: R. Cambray & Co, 1902), 586. Ghulām Ḥusayn Khān Ṭabāṭaḇā'ī, *Siyar al-muta'akhkhirīn: tārīkh-i mamlakat-i Hind az ibtidā-yi sanah-i 1118 h. tā 1194 h. mutābiq-i 1782 m. mubtanī bar aḥvāl-i salṭanat-i haft salāṭīn-i muta'akhkhirīn-i Hindūstān ʻumūman*, ed. ʻAbd al-Majīd (Calcutta: Dār al-Imārah, 1832), 351. The exact Persian is "che mardi bud ke-z zani kam bud."

[44] Mirza Hadi Ruswa first published *Umrao Jaan* in 1899. Recent scholars such as McNeil and Oldenburg have published on Avadh's courtesan heritage. Adrian McNeil, "Tawa'ifs, Military Musicians and Shia Ideology in Pre-rebellion Lucknow," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2009): 46–62; Veena Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 2 (1990): 259–287; Regula Burckardt Qureshi, "Female Agency and Patrilineal Constraints: Situating Courtesans in Twentieth-Century India," in *The Courtesan's Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 312–32.

[45] Fisher, "Women and the Feminine"; Mukul Kesavan, "Urdu, Awadh, and the Tawaif: The Islamicate Roots of Hindi Cinema," in *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities, and the State*, ed. Zoya Hasan (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994), 244–57; Amelia Maciszewski, "Tawa'if, Tourism, and Tales: The Problematics of Twenty-First-Century Musical Patronage for North India's Courtesans," in *The Courtesan's Arts Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 332–51; Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as Resistance."

[46] Anna L. Dallapiccola, *Princesses et Courtisanes á Travers les Miniatures Indiennes: Galerie Marco Polo Exposition Automne 1978* (Brussels; Paris: Oyez; Galerie Marco Polo, 1978), 13.

Avadhi courtesans and their ability to enact sexual "scandal" are citationally related to eighteenth-century colonial writing.

A colonial discourse of a rigid binary between femininity and masculinity persisted even up to 2002, when critic Simonetta Casci wrote, "Wives, concubines, and courtesans [of Avadh] had an effeminate influence on the [nawabi] male identity, now a far cry from the ideal of the male warrior of the Mughal period."[47] For Casci, the nawabs' masculinity diminished because they were overly engaged with women and female activities. Since the colonial script was gravely concerned with the Avadhi nawabs' sexual practices, many stories circulated about whom they bedded. Courtesans (*tawa'if*), who as a community came from a variety of classes and castes with various degrees of power, were notably earmarked for scrutiny, and were consistently tied to the nawabs as potential sexual partners.

To counter such gendered arguments such as those laid by Tabataba'i and Casci, Michael Fisher in a groundbreaking article details how women were foundational to the nawabs' authority and describes how their various marriage alliances were an extension of their Shī'a culture.[48] Fisher states that British colonial commentators discriminated against the nawabs of Avadh because of their intimate, sexual relations. He goes on to elaborate, "Many of these British assumptions of moral unfitness used the ruler's sexual relations with women—either an 'excess' or a 'deficiency' thereof—as their basis. [For instance,] most English accounts of Shuja' al-Daula [the third nawab of Avadh] stressed his sexual excesses. He allegedly collected 700 wives (through all three types of marriage) plus 2,000 other women in his harem." As Fisher states, to emasculate the nawabs, the colonial discourse focused on the sexual "deficiency" of the nawabs such as Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797), who was earmarked as a homosexual. John Shore, who

[47] Simonetta Casci, *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 36 (2002): 3711.
[48] Michael H. Fisher, "Women and the Feminine in the Court and Culture of Avadh," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety,* ed. Gavin Hambly (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

was governor-general of India in succession to Cornwallis, stated that Āṣaf al-Daula had been "bred up in habits of indolence and pleasure . . . with an unconquerable aversion to business" and that he was "addicted from his youth to some of the most detestable vices (which have left him without progeny)."[49] In the eyes of the British colonial apparatus, homosexuality was reduced to a deficiency because such men were supposedly unable to spawn a legitimate heir. According to such logic, if a nawab had a sexual preference for males, he would be incapable of producing a "true" heir to the throne. For the colonial state, the nawabs' sexual affairs were an important indicator of their ability to carry out proper governance. As a counter to Shore, Fisher argues that the nawabs' sexual practices were essential to their religious and political power.

For early art historians, the abundance of female representations or, in other words, the "excessive" body-centrism of the female in the pictorial composition of Avadhi miniatures continued to produce anxiety. It is true that female bodies feature prominently in a number of Avadhi miniatures, but the beauty of the male form is also visually represented. This aspect has hardly been discussed, in part because British officers in colonial historiography focused more on the role of females in weakening the nawabs' masculinity than on the role of young boys. Although there was a panic over some of the nawabs' possible queer leanings, the female and the excess of heterosexual desire were more disconcerting for colonial officers. This historical panic lives on in the reception of Avadhi painting today.

E. Art, Nationalism, and its Critics

For the late twentieth century, Avadh as a place held great import because it was pivotal for national narratives thanks to a number of historical events. In 1857, the great rebellion spread

[49] Anonymous to Sir John Shore in Calcutta on June 1793. Ashworth, White Collection, Wq091.92 As391, f.13, as quoted in Karen Chancey, "Rethinking the Reign of Asaf ud Daula, Nawab of Awadh, 1775–1797," *Journal of Asian History* 41, no. 1 (2007): 10, footnote 35.

across India in opposition to the British EIC. Locals in Avadh joined the cause with the Bēgums of Avadh who played a decisive role in the struggle. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's failure to join in the rebellion or to physically submit his demands to the British crown rendered him emasculated in later historiography. For early historians and reform critics, the British were given license to establish colonialism and oppress the local population because figures such as Wājid ʻAlī Shāh were too physically, culturally, and politically weak. The nawabs were cast on the wrong side of history. Historians writing in the national period such as ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar, P. C. Mookherji, and Ajit Mookerjee extended this narrative into their discussions of Avadh's visual culture. Art historians in the 1990s such as Partha Mitter and Tapati Guha-Thakurta, in turn, criticized the importation of nationalism into the discipline of art history. The reception of paintings of Avadh has benefited slightly from their efforts.

In national South Asian history, the nawabs and their artistic culture were repeatedly smeared with accusations of failure. The discourse of decadence was carried forward by ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar, who penned the famous manuscript *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* around 1913.[50] ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar lived through the exile of the last nawab, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh (r. 1847–1856), in Calcutta, and his book provides one of last firsthand accounts of the life and culture of the nawabs. ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar had a very low opinion of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh and his sexual escapades. Even though he found some of the nawabs' social practices repugnant, he never attacks the arts and paintings of Avadh. In fact, Sharar never even mentions miniature painting, which is its own kind of dismissal. He was more concerned with calligraphy.

Another nineteenth-century figure, P. C. Mookherji, provides a clearer bridge for the ways in which nationalism infected the study of painting. In 1883, he wrote:

[50] ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Lucknow* (London: Elek, 1975); ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Guzashtah Lakhnaū* (Lahore: Sang-i Mīl Publications, 2006).

> [My] remarks apply to the native painting, when it was in its lowest state of decline, as it presumably was after the sunset of the Delhi dynasty. When it recovered and improved by the aid of European culture, the results were not so happy as could be expected. . . . The present state of local painting is very pitiable, as already stated. The principal requirement of it, the portraiture, has been usurped by photography, which has given it the last stroke of death.[51]

In Mookherji's account, Avadhi miniature paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are dismissed because they were produced during a period of political decline. In this sense, Mookherji conceptualizes history as a linear formation that peaked during the earlier Mughal period and was completely revitalized under British rule. In this progress narrative, the lows of eighteenth century pave the way for the advancement of civilization and artistic culture with the aid of European technologies.

Art historian Ajit Mookerjee in 1942 repeated the colonial and national narrative claiming that the nawabs were emasculated through their sponsorship of feminized representation. Writing just before India was formed as a nation, Ajit Mookerjee had a clear agenda in establishing eighteenth-century visual culture as one in stylistic decline. He states:

> In the eighteenth century, India had reached the depths of political and cultural exhaustion. The Indian aristocracy was in full decay, and the most selfish kind of individualism was rampant. Public life had been reduced to systematic pillage, and the distress of the masses was a direct consequence of the increasing luxury of the court and other centres of power, and of their extravagant expenditure on all kind[s] of luxury and refinement. The characteristic refinement of the time was extremely artificial and had no roots in everyday life. The cult of beauty, "art for art's sake", was practised as a form of escapism. All interest centred round the feminine theme, which was endlessly repeated in both painting and poetry, in erotic sentimental romances, and fictitious portraits of Sultanas, Begams and Ranis. They were dream-figures of idealized feminine beauty and accomplishment, delicately made up, decked out in the finest dresses, and overloaded with jewellery.[52]

Ajit Mookerjee begins with a notion of cultural exhaustion. Similarly to British officials, he states that governance was in decay as a direct result of native rulers' deviant culture, which was

[51] P. C. Mookherji, *The Pictorial Lucknow* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2003), 182.
[52] Ajit Mookerjee, "Kalighat and Folk Painters," *Horizon* (June 1942): 417–8.

preoccupied with femininity. In the latter half of his statement regarding femininity and painting, Ajit Mookerjee states that the decline of Avadh and other eighteenth-century courts is tethered to women: courtesans, bēgums, dancing girls, and bedfellows. To paraphrase Mookerjee, the court's masculinity was challenged visually because of the number of female bodies represented. As Ajit Mookerjee demonstrates, the reception of Avadhi painting and of late Indian miniature painting is suffused with colonial epistemologies such as a concern over masculinity and femininity. To give Ajit Mookerjee some credit, one must not forget that the narrative of progress and decline in South Asia endured because it was a means by which authors could articulate and reconceptualize their places within larger histories.[53]

By the 1900s, divergent schools of thought emerged in India that attempted to move beyond the colonial developmental narrative.[54] The Aligarh school, which was made up of scholars trained at Aligarh Muslim University from the 1940s to the 1980s, utilized a Marxist framework to suggest that the administration of the Mughal Empire was a highly centralized apparatus similar to a modern nation-state. According to this premise, modernism did not arise under the British or even in 1947 under the direction of the first prime minister, Nehru, but was apparent even in the Mughal Empire's administrative, military, and fiscal institutions. Although much rancorous criticism has been leveled at the ways in which the Aligarh school still continued to reproduce a historical teleology, these earlier scholars are notable for ushering in a revisionist approach to Indian courtly economies.

The scholarship of C. A. Bayly was another watershed moment. His seminal works, which became part of the Cambridge school, reconceived of the eighteenth century not as a

[53] Iftikhar Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4.
[54] See Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, introduction to *The Mughal State, 1526–1750*, ed. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

period of decline but as one with a robust mercantile economy. Based on Bayly's work, Avadh for instance, which was part of the Mughal imperial fragmentation, could be studied for the ways in which middling courtiers and mercantile entrepreneurs prospered economically. In literary studies, scholars such as Carla Petievich and Francesca Orisini provided another revisionist approach to Avadhi poetry beyond the decadence model.

Such revisionism had an impact on art historians such as Partha Mitter and Tapati Guha-Thakurta, who have demonstrated the ways in which the foundations of Indian art history were built upon European, national, and colonial hermeneutics. In 1994, Partha Mitter argued that the terminology employed to discuss early medieval Indian art was acquired from a European art historical discourse. Objects from the twelfth-century Polonnaruva period were, for instance, criticized as "florid," "violent," and "decadent," and objects from the Gupta period were eulogized as "classical."[55] According to Mitter, these judgments were derived from scholars mapping the European baroque style onto Indian objects. Since early Indian art catalogues were intended for international audiences, the Indian art market became steeped in European values of taste. Mitter challenges these discursive and intellectual impositions from Europe. He contends that such value judgments were leveled not in one moment but lived on in Indian art history into the twentieth century. Avadh, like the Polonnaruva period, was discursively articulated as "decadent," and the additional qualifiers of "erotic" and "deviant" were attached. Mitter reveals how European criteria were imposed on Indian art history as a discipline and were not merely present in the isolated case of Avadh.

Tapati Guha-Thakurta's work further untangles the reception of Indian art within a colonial and postcolonial context. In one arena, Guha-Thakurta investigates the "unresolved

[55] Partha Mitter, "'Decadence in India': Reflections on a Much-Used Word in Studies of Indian Art," in *Sight and Insight; Essays in Honour of E. H. Gombrich at 85*, ed E. H. Gombrich and John Onians (London: Phaidon Press, 1994), 379–97.

tensions that permeate issues of [Indian] aesthetics" that are demarcated as obscene or as erotic.[56] She cites monuments such as the eleventh-century temple complex of Khajuraho and the "lingering discomfit" its erotic imagery produces for its various audiences. The erotic, nude female sculptures from Khajuraho were first received as abject and then garnered additional meaning as historical antiques and ritual icons.[57] Finally, the erotic sculpture of Khajuraho acquired the label of high art. But in order for Khajuraho to secure this status, art historians during the 1930s and 1950s submerged the erotic sexuality of Khajuraho's representations and swathed it in layers of religious symbolism and aesthetic value.

With Guha-Thakurta's work in mind, Avadhi art is akin to Khajuraho in that the initial reception of its paintings has been dismissive but they are now in the process of being transformed into high art. The luscious exhibition *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow*, held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2010, was the first of its kind to prominently feature and elevate Avadhi paintings into an art form worthy of a solo exhibition. While this is a welcome rejoinder to previous discourses, such exhibitions curate objects to make them more palatable for a general audience. Rather than shying away from the erotic paintings, one must lean into them to understand their religious, aesthetic, and suggestive meanings.

The discursive formations of nationalism and nationalist art history continue to haunt the conceptualization, framing, and exhibition of Avadhi panting. Although colonialism and nationalism as historical and intellectual concepts need further attention than the space of this chapter can provide, my aim has been to show when and why these twin conceptions were first attached to eighteenth-century Indian miniature painting. Another goal has been to explore how the image of the eighteenth century as a fraught and degenerate time period was transferred into

[56] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 247.
[57] Ibid., 253.

the evaluation of Avadhi miniature painting. For Avadh, the idea of excessive sexuality was first sown in a colonial context and subsequently adapted into a national discourse whose language would then be utilized by art historical studies. Although scholars such as Partha Mitter and Tapati Guha-Thakurta have not worked on Avadh directly, their revisionist scholarship provides art historians with the tools to see the connections among colonialism, nationalism, and art.

As time has passed, Avadhi miniature painting began to be demarcated as a lesser school of Mughal painting and, worse still, even as visual proof of British colonialism's inevitability. Negative descriptive qualifiers first deployed in a colonial and national context are still retained in the ongoing reproduction and reception of Avadhi painting in museological settings, art catalogues, and historical surveys—so much so that it has seemed reasonable to deem Avadhi painting eccentric, erotic, decadent, perverse, degenerate, and a visual form of decay.[58]

F. Conclusion

The organizational focus of this chapter presented the historical conditions, discursive and eventive alike, that have shaped how the nawabs are understood and remembered. A brief historiography of sexual deviance associated with the nawabs was provided. Under a negative language and attitude toward sex, the nawabs were smeared as deviant subjects. Today, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh is widely recalled for his deviant behavior, but, as I have shown, such accusations extended beyond his own personage to besmirch his ancestors.

To retell the story of the nawabs, I have had to contend with their colonial, sexual, and geographic history that has stifled an appreciation of their artistic practices. In the succeeding chapters, I trace the discursive transference of the voluptuary signifier onto Avadhi arts. Some chapters deal with deviance in terms of painting style. In others, museological categories such as

[58] Katharine P. Burnett, "Decadence Disrupted: Arguing against a Decadence Model in the Late Ming Painting History," *Ming Studies* 71 (May 2015): 41–42.

pornography and obscenity have deprived Avadhi arts from scholarly analysis. As shown, some colonial officers and Indian nationalists considered the nawabs' sexual history as troubling. It has been easier, therefore, for present day art historians to ignore Avadhi arts because art historical analysis would force this contentious history to rise once more to the surface. Rather, than drive objects that contain explicit sexual imagery into the margins of art history to be forgotten, the rest of these chapters push these objects into the forefront to show that Avadhi aesthetics were about sex but also about Avadhi politics and the nawabs' religious perspectives. Erotica objects from Avadh must be brought to the fore in order to think past colonial categories that persist in contemporary art historical and historical investigations.

CHAPTER TWO

POROUS BORDERS, POROUS STYLE

Fig. 2.1. *Entertainment in a Harem Garden*
Faizullah, signed on the apex of the central archway "amal-i Faizullah"
Avadh, Faizabad, c. 1765
47.8 x 62.5 cm (18.8 x 24.6 in.)
The Stuart Cary Welch Collection, sold in Sotheby on May 31, 2011

The primary diagnostic tool used in the discipline of South Asian art history is style, asking, what are the defining visual traits of a painting, from its color palette to its iconography, composition, and motifs? For Avadhi painting, some defining characteristics include the dizzying use of perspective, a focus on light and shadow, the representation of natural human mannerisms, and composite compositions drawing on Mughal, Rajput, and Persianate motifs. When analyzing visual cues, an art historian must also ask where and when a painting was produced. In the case of *Entertainment in a Harem Garden* (fig. 1), because it contains the defining stylistic feature of multiple vanishing points and perspectival dexterity, art historians have surmised that the painting was produced in the geographic space of Avadh during the latter half of the eighteenth century.[1]

In this manner, place and time are central components in the investigation of style. With

[1] This painting was reproduced in Stuart Cary Welch, *Room for Wonder: Indian Painting During the British Period 1760–1880* (New York: The American Federation of Arts, 1978), 82–83, figure 33. Naveen Patnaik, *A Second Paradise: Indian Courtly Life, 1590–1947* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 69–71. Four other copies exist of this painting, which attests to its popularity among patrons. The four other versions are as follow: (1) David Collection, Copenhagen Inv. no. 46/1980. Reproduced in Kjeld von Folsach, *Art from the World of Islam in the David Collection* (Copenhagen: The David Collection, 2001), 107, figure 82. Stuart Cary Welch, *India: Art and Culture*, *1300–1900* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 278, figure 186. (2) CBL Dublin Ln 69.6. Reproduced in Linda York Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library, Vol. II* (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995), 695, figure 6.334. Stephen Markel, Tushara Bindu Gude, and Muzaffar Alam, *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2010), 76. (3) From the private collection of Earnest C. and Jane Werner Watson. Reproduced in Pramod Chandra, *Indian Miniature Painting: The Collection of Earnest C. and Jane Werner Watson* (Madison: Elvehjem Art Center, University of Wisconsin, 1971), 36–37, figure 42. (4) Malini Roy, "Idiosyncrasies in the Late Mughal Painting Tradition: The Artist Mihr Chand Son of Ganga Ram (fl. 1759–86)" (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, 2009), figure 67.

the former, style points to provenance. For instance, Rajput painting is tied to the region of Rajasthan (Rajputana). Under the conceptual apparatus of style, an artist must operate within a concretized space of, say, a workshop and work within a clear geopolitical border of, say, the Mughal seat of power, Delhi. The names of Indian painting styles reveal as much. "Mughal art" suggests production in the geographical terrain of the Mughal Empire, mostly in the cities of Delhi and Shahjahanabad. The term "Pahari painting" stems from the Hindi root *pahar* (mountain), and the form is connected to the region of the Himalayan foothills. To constitute Avadhi art, a painting must have been produced in one of Avadh's capital cities, Lucknow and Faizabad.

But when we say Avadhi art, do we really mean only art produced in Lucknow or Faizabad? And if so, how we do know whether an artist created the work in Lucknow and not, say, Allahabad—a city that was once under the Avadhi nawabs' control and then quickly fell into the hands of rival powers in 1801? If an artist who was originally trained in Murshidabad (Bengal) produces a work of art in the city of Lucknow, how should we categorize that painting? Would it be labeled a Murshidabad or an Avadhi painting? Through posing such questions, I contest the conflation of place and style, showing how style is instrumental in establishing political borders, limiting artists to certain cities, and positing an authentic style for individual courts.

When viewed through the prism of style in the discipline of Indian painting, artists must become carriers of a unique style. A patron and a workshop, a space in which artists worked, might affect an artist's individual aesthetic, but his paintings must exhibit differentiation. A Mughal painter must differ from Avadh, Avadh from Bengal, and Mughal from Rajput. This is done so that stylistic schools can be secured and the concept of an artistic genius can be asserted.

In the case of Avadh, it historically possessed less stable borders than the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century. With the shifting of political boundaries and a continual reconfiguration of power, artists fled their workshops seeking new patronage and were forced into itinerancy. These artists shifted styles as they moved from court to court and patron to patron. Faizullah is the attributed artist of *Entertainment in a Harem Garden* (fig. 1). He, too, fled from Delhi to Avadh. He did not leave behind a paper trail as to whom he worked for and why he shifted his aesthetic.[2] We are left only with his paintings, which might be used to argue for his aesthetic genius but also at the same time show how he was physically and stylistically mobile. Thus, Avadhi paintings suggest that to be in the interstices of empire is to be at the intersection of place and style.

Style in this chapter is displaced by tracking how artists and their stylistic features traveled from to court to court. On a practical level, I undertake such an endeavor by using prestigious archetypal artists who are emblematic of their stylistic schools, and analyze how and when their unique styles unravel at their very seams. As case studies, I track artists such as Chitarman II and Bahadur Singh, who moved across northern India among Delhi, Avadh, and Murshidabad during the growth and decline of the Avadhi nawabs' reign. They carried with them their distinctive stylistic idioms that are indicative of their painting schools—the late Mughal and Avadhi styles, respectively. During their continual movement from court to court, however, their styles shifted to encompass a hybridity that draws on Avadhi, late Mughal, and Murshidabad painting techniques. This chapter is divided into the following sections: A is an overview of late Mughal painting through the lens of an examination of two artists, Chitarman II and Nidhāmal, who art historians have argued provide a visual precedent for the emergence of an Avadhi aesthetic. B is centered on the artists Mīr Kalān Khān and Bahadur Singh, who received

[2] Terence McInerney, "Mir Kalan Khan," in *Masters of Indian Painting*, eds. Milo Cleveland Beach, Eberhard Fischer, B. N. Goswamy, and Jorrit Britschgi (Zurich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 2011), 2:618.

patronage from the nawabs of Avadh in the cities of Lucknow and Faizabad. C is on Murshidabad painting since Avadhi artists such as Bahadur Singh moved back and forth between Avadh and Bengal. Here, I look at why Bahadur Singh's compositions are considered either Murshidabad or Avadhi. Why must he be relegated to *either/or* when he is a practitioner of *both/and*? Because of art historians' inability to concretize Avadh and its painting style, I instead posit style as a heuristic device that showcases artistic and social exchanges in and around the Avadhi court. Style and place are set adrift to arrive at social interconnections and encounters.

There are larger stakes, too, in unmooring style from place. Paintings from Avadh have been stylistically considered a lesser form of Mughal painting, "unsuccessful" visual experiments.[3] They are labeled stylistically "bad," "poor," or "weak." Moreover, art historians have evaluated the iconography of pleasure within Avadhi painting as proof of the nawabs' weakness and degeneracy. For instance, Welch, who once owned Faizullah's *Entertainment in a Harem Garden* (fig. 1) wrote in 1978 that "[t]his large and pleasingly vulgar picture" of "Oudh and Bengal" portrayed "fools' paradises, comparable to lusciously ripened mangoes, about to topple from the tree. Hungry and eager, the British waited, hands outstretched."[4] According to Welch, the visual elements of the painting are "vulgar" and represent a "fool's paradise." Through the premise of painting style, art historians like Welch conscripted Avadhi painting into sensual commodities that reinforced the notion of the nawabs' despotism. In many instances, from nineteenth-century collectors to even contemporary catalogues, Avadhi paintings are read as historical documents. In other words, their naturalistic painting style is put forth as evidence of historical realities of the nawabs' interior life. In this vein, the natural rendering of human

[3] Patricia Bahree Barylski, "Painting in Avadh in the 18th Century" in *Islam and Indian Regions*, eds. A. L. Dallapiccola and S. Zingel-Avé Lallemant (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1993), 364.
[4] Welch, *Room for Wonder*, 83.

form, for example of female figures, is read as a by-product of the nawabs' hedonism.

The discipline of Indian art history has actively pursued style in the study of Indian painting. Through the premise of style, art historians imposed a binary of good/bad or high/low. Again, *Entertainment in a Harem Garden* brings this dilemma into sharp relief. In 2011, *Entertainment in a Harem Garden* had undergone a new evaluation and was deemed one of the "greatest late Mughal paintings."[5] Based on style, the formal qualities of the painting were reassessed and now qualified as "good." It was no longer vulgar or bad. In both cases, through style, art historians created a hierarchy of beauty with its inverse obscured but never gone. We might praise art historians for revaluating Faizullah's painting. The new assessment is still a re-inscription of the binary of good/bad, however. Bad paintings will always accompany the shadow of a good painting. The qualifiers of a good painting will always accompany bad. To unsettle the conventional way of evaluating these images as beautiful/ugly or failed/successful aesthetic acts, we need to ask a different set of questions.

What are other ways of studying style that are not merely an attempt to secure a definition of place, artist, and/or patron? By leaning into the slipperiness of Avadhi style, can we question the need to stabilize it? Who gains from this practice of having an ossified style and universally recognized artistic geniuses? What are the uses of these conceits in the fields of Islamic and South Asian art history? Through these questions, I reformulate Avadhi painting as a migratory aesthetic that disrupts both place and style and illuminates instead artistic and social

[5] "Sotheby's," last modified in 2011, http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2011/c-welch-part-ii-l11228/lot.111.html#. Faizullah's other paintings have garnered less attention and praise. These include *Bhils on a Night Hunt,* which is in the CBL Dublin Ln. 42.5, reproduced in Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, 2:692, figure 6.331; and an illustration for the *Gita Govinda*, which is reproduced in Daniel J. Ehnbom, Robert Skelton, Pramod Chandra, and William K. Ehrenfeld, *Indian Miniatures: The Ehrenfeld Collection* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the American Federation of Arts, 1985), 82–83, figure 33. A composite of scenes from Persian literature titled "Lovers and Beloved" is attributed to Faizullah and reproduced in Markel, *India's Fabled City*, 28.

exchanges across North India. To return once more to *Entertainment in a Harem Garden*, I will note that while art historians have judged Faizullah's painting based on its formal qualities, nor have they evaluated how it operated socially or historically for its patron. I suspect that Faizullah's composition provides a spatial survey of the nawab's dominion. Through the presence of multiple vanishing points that do not operate in a logical manner, the viewer can see the vast territories within the nawabs' sphere of power, including their zenana, gardens, agricultural crops, shrines, and waterways. Through foregrounding such possible meanings and new interpretations, I want to introduce style in the field of South Asian miniature painting as a means to staging encounters between paintings, one that is not dependent on resolving the tensions of having a singular style, artist, or place.

A. Late Mughal Style: Chitarman II and Nidhāmal

Late Mughal art is identified by three key stylistic features: the use of cool whites, symmetrical compositions, and the large-scale dimensions of painting folios. Chitarman II and Nidhāmal are two painters who are heralded as exemplary practitioners of the late Mughal style. They are associated with the atelier of late Mughal rulers Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748) and Ahmad Shāh Bahadur (r. 1748–1754). In these two artists' compositions and imagery, many of the features that define their late Mughal style are infused with what could be deemed their Avadhi style. By comparing their two periods of work, I track which stylistic idioms are connected to late Mughal and Avadh and when they overlap. First, I provide an overview of the late Mughal style. Afterward, I turn to the individual artists. I begin with Chitarman II and end with Nidhāmal, following the ways in which they both abide by the stylistic premise of a singular place and style of late Mughal/Delhi, and later explore how both artists collapse such distinctions, making it difficult to assert provenance for their paintings or place them into one

stylistic school.

Renarrativizing the style of late Mughal painting and comparing it with Avadhi painting is born out of the historical particularities of the eighteenth century. Avadhi miniatures are frequently compared to late Mughal miniature painting produced in the *kitāb-ḵẖāna* (workshop) of the Mughal ruler Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748) because many artists fled Muḥammad Shāh's court to the court of Avadh in 1739 after Nadir Shāh sacked Delhi, and in 1748 after Ahmad Shāh Durrani "Abdali" of Afghanistan invaded the seat of the Mughal Empire. The remaining artists in Delhi moved after the reign of the Mughal ruler Ahmad Shāh Bahadur (r. 1748–1754) came to a close. Shujā' al-Daula, the third nawab of Avadh (r. 1754–1775), began his reign that same year and invited artists to his court. The artists who migrated to Avadh from 1730 to the 1750s brought with them many of the skills and painterly techniques that they'd learned in the Mughal atelier. Artists from Avadh diverged from and also harkened back to their earlier Mughal training.

Fig. 2.2. *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin*
Attributed to Chitarman II
Mughal, c. 1730
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, acc. no. 26.283
Overall: 38.6 x 43.4 cm (15 3/16 x 17 1/16 in)

Defying the disciplinary need for a single coherent style, artists and their products interacted more frequently in the eighteenth century than in any previous epoch. As in earlier periods in North India, *charbas*, or draft copies, were circulated in the eighteenth century so that artisans could prick the sheets and transfer their iconography onto new compositions. As a result, paintings with the exact same compositions are found across India from Delhi to Avadh to Hyderabad. What differs between them is the artist's hand, which can supposedly be used to decipher and pinpoint a painting's exact site of production. While the element of style can be noteworthy in indicating provenance, in the meantime, other questions remain unanswered. For

instance, why were certain subjects continually copied across courts and across time?[6] What social meaning did they carry that rendered them popular?[7] Such questions allow for artists and their material production that are on the move to guide our investigations instead of trying to fix paintings and texts in rigid categories.

There are a number of key visual traits that suggest a painting was produced in the artistic workshop of Muḥammad Shāh and is therefore was completed in the late Mughal style. *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* is a prime example (fig. 2).[8] The image, like many late Mughal paintings, is compositionally "empty," containing few figures. In contrast, works produced under Akbar (r. 1556–1605) have more intricate and complicated scenes. Besides depopulated compositions, there are six key traits of late Mughal paintings. First, many of the paintings contain the portrait of Muḥammad Shāh. In *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin*, Muḥammad Shāh sits with a falcon perched on his arm as his servants carry him on a palanquin. Second, they have "camera eye" compositions that are cropped and zoomed in on a particular historical personage.[9] The "zoomed" composition means that the viewer looks directly at Muḥammad Shāh, and not through a high-angle or low-angle shot. This format is reinforced though the device of the white palace wall. It focuses the viewer's eye on Muḥammad Shāh by

[6] For well-articulated response to this question, see Keelan Overton, "'Maid Killing a Snake' and 'Dervish Receiving a Visitor': A Re-examination of Bijapuri Masterpieces through the Lens of the Lucknow Copy," in *Indo-Muslim Cultures in Transition*, eds. Alka Patel and Karen Leonard (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 37–60.
[7] Vishakha N. Desai, "Reflections of the Past in the Present: Copying Processes in Indian Painting," in *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past*, eds. Catherine B. Asher and Thomas R. Metcalf (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, Swadharma Swarajya Sangha, Madras, 1994), 135–148. Molly Aitken, "Parataxis and the Practice of Reuse, from Mughal Margins to Mir Kalan Khan," *Archives of Asian Art* 59 (2009): 81–103.
[8] "Artwork," Museum of Fine Arts, Boston," accessed March 10, 2016. http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/muhammad-shah-in-a-palanquin-148527.
[9] Terence McInerney, "Mughal Painting during the Reign of Muhammad Shah," in *After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, ed. Barbara Schmitz (Mumbai: Marg Publications on behalf of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, 2002), 12–33.

preventing the inclusion of any extraneous background details. Third, "cool" whites and grays are the preferred color palette. In *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin*, the whites are present throughout the composition in the figure's clothes, the architectural pillars, and the clouds. The continual use of the color allows the viewer's eye to travel from the foreground to the background. Fourth, late Mughal miniature painting, unlike what the name suggests, are quite large, with the paper being roughly "twice the size" of their seventeenth-century counterparts. *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* is 38.6 cm x 43.4 cm, when paintings are commonly 26.67 x 16.99 cm. Fifth, the compositions have a preoccupation with symmetry, as both landscape and people are assembled to create a balanced composition. This is most evident in the grouping of the servants who carry Muḥammad Shāh. They are in sets of two and four. Lastly, the visual spaces in Muḥammad Shāh's compositions appear flat. There is a lack of volume because few shading techniques or perspectival devices are utilized. In *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin*, neither Muḥammad Shāh nor his servant casts a shadow.

Fig. 2.3. *Muhammad Shah Making Love*
Inscribed: "work of the house-born Chitarman"
Mughal, Delhi, c. 1735
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
39 x 30.8 cm
BL J.66.1

Kalyan Das, whose sobriquet was Chitarman II, or "the one who colors," is the attributed artist of *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* and *Muhammad Shah Making Love* (fig. 3). His visual trademarks include the strong use of white and the appearance of orange and gold skies. Chitarman II's signature does not appear anywhere in *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a*

Palanquin. He is the "attributed" artist based on the work's stylistic similarities to paintings that have his signature, such as *Muhammad Shah Making Love*. In the painting *Muhammad Shah Making Love*, his inscription appears in the red band underneath the fountain. Following the protocols of late Mughal style, prominent architecture devices are used such as pillars, which appear on both the right- and left-hand sides of the composition. The two women on either side of the pillars provide further visual balance. *Muhammad Shah Making Love* reads flat, much like *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin*, since there is a lack of shadows. In the vein of removing extraneous details, Chitarman II hid Muḥammad Shāh's back leg so the act of penetration was more clearly visible to the viewer. Because *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* and *Muhammad Shah Making Love* are compositionally similar in terms of the use of whites, camera eye compositions, concern with symmetry, prominence of architecture, and lack of shadow, art historians have concluded that they were completed by the same artist.

Fig. 2.4. *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana*
Inscribed "Chitarman"
Avadh, c. 1730–1760
B.N. Estampes Rés. Od 44 fol. 49 (Collection of Gentil)

In general, Chitarman II's works are similar to many paintings completed by other artists such as Bhupal Singh and Hunhār II who worked in the same workshop as Chitarman II. While Chitarman II may have prepared *Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin*, stylistically it is also possible that Bhupal Singh or Hunhār II had a hand in completing the painting. While signatures are useful in identifying a singular master artist, one must also remember that paintings were completed in *kitāb-ḵẖāna* (workshops) and *taṣvīr-ḵẖāna* (picture houses). These workshops and studios involved many artists completing one painting.

Based on formal analysis of the painting *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* and the appearance

of an inscription, art historians have concluded that Chitarman II traveled to Avadh (fig. 4).[10] The approximate date of this painting is 1730 to 1760, an estimate based on the three migrational waves of artists fleeing Delhi to Avadh in 1739, 1748, and 1754. Chitarman II must have moved to Avadh during one of these moments. Outside of *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana*, there is no documentary proof that Chitarman II was in Avadh. The painting contains his signature located on the lower right hand side of the composition. There is a receding vista in the background dotted with trees, which is a feature not found in the aesthetic of Muḥammad Shāh's workshop. For instance, both *Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* and *Muhammad Shah Making Love* contain architectural walls that impede the viewer from seeing a grand vista. While *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* does retain the use of white architecture, the buildings such as the columns are not visually dominant as they are in *Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* and *Muhammad Shah Making Love*. They are rail-thin as opposed to thick and bulky. Moreover, *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* has a plethora of women. They are symmetrically coupled together like the servants in *Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin*, but they are also clustered together asymmetrically, with a large group placed on the left-hand side of the composition. As a result, *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* is not balanced in the same manner as *Muhammad Shah Making Love*. In addition, the figures converse and relax, and their bodies are rendered less stiffly than those in *Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* and *Muhammad Shah Making Love*. All of these visual traits point to a change in patron and perhaps a change in locale. So far, Chitarman II's *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* reinforces the argument that Avadhi style is distinctive from the visual idiom of the late Mughal

[10] Reproduced in M. Cohen, A. Okada, and F. Richard, *A la Cour du Grand Moghol: Galerie Mansart, 6 Mars–16 Juin 1986* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1986), 93, figure 65.

in the progression from formality to naturalism.

In his entire oeuvre, *Muhammad Shah Making Love* and *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* are the only paintings that have Chitarman II's signature. Stylistically these two paintings are worlds apart. It is clear that Chitarman II was adaptive and able to change his style to suit his patrons' tastes. If we follow contemporary notions of an artist's free will, we might assume the primacy of the artist in undertaking this shift. When Chitarman II moved to Avadh and changed patrons, his style, previously constrained by Muḥammad Shāh's precepts, was now dictated by the tastes of his new patron and by other artists in the new workshop in which he operated. The question then becomes: should Chitarman II be considered a genius or master artist when his patron was also dictating the pictorial terms?

Fig. 2.5. *A Princess and Ladies Celebrating Diwali*
Inscribed "Hunhār"
Lucknow, Avadh, India, c. 1760
V&A D.1203–1903

The artist Hunhār II completed figure 5, *A Princess and Ladies Celebrating Diwali*, which bears a striking resemblance to Chitarman II's *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* (fig. 4). In both compositions, there is the same principal female smoking a huqqa. She is depicted with a pudgy nose whose bridge has a prominent bump. Commonly in eighteenth-century miniature paintings, elite women were represented as idealized forms. When distinctive attributes such as a unique nose were introduced, it usually meant the image was a commissioned portrait and individual features were needed. Taking this into account, these two paintings can be read as portrait scenes. The most high-ranking elite woman in north India during the 1750s was Shujā' al-Daula's spouse, Bahu Begum.[11] Since *A Princess and Ladies Celebrating Diwali* has been dated to 1760s and attributed to Avadh, Bahu Begam was most likely the patron of this image.

[11] For a visual comparison, see Bahu Begum's portrait in the Lucknow State Museum, accession number 14.84. Cornell's Johnson Museum has recently purchased another possible portrait.

With these two paintings in mind, it is evident that high-ranking females in Avadh sponsored miniature paintings. So far, only the male nawabs have been the proposed investors in paintings and aesthetics. The inclusion of females in Avadh's patronage history might explain the abundance of terrace scenes and a shift to naturalism. Elites females such as Bahu Begam may have instructed artists to paint the places and spaces they inhabited most frequently.

Complicating the dating of Chitarman II's *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* (fig. 4) and Hunhār II's *A Princess and Ladies Celebrating Diwali* (fig. 5) is the painting *Queen Udham Bai Entertained* (fig. 6). *Queen Udham Bai Entertained* is dated to 1742 through the inscription that states the "23rd regnal year of Emperor Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748)."[12] The painting illustrates a woman smoking a huqqa on an open white terrace. Moreover, both the female figures and the vista in the background are rendered naturally. It is entirely possible that Chitarman II and Hunhār II completed their paintings at a much earlier date while residing in Delhi. As such, *Queen Udham Bai Entertained* undoes much of my reading of *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* and *A Princess and Ladies Celebrating Diwali*, which can be identified as having been produced in Avadh through their distinctive styles. Avadhi paintings are supposed to diverge from Muḥammad Shāh's paintings through the inclusion of terrace scenes, natural depictions of form, and a less strict concern with balanced compositions. Figure 6 disrupts this distinction since it has all the characteristics of Avadhi style but was completed in the late Mughal court of Muḥammad Shāh.

Fig. 2.6. *Queen Udham Bai Entertained*
Mughal, c. 1742
Inscribed "Mir Miran" on the lower border
27.5 x 32.7 cm (10 13/16 x 12 7/8 in)
SDMA 1990.383

[12] Edwin Binney, *Indian Miniature Painting from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd: An Exhibition at the Portland Art Museum, Dec. 2, 1973–Jan. 20, 1974* (Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 1974), 104, figure 79.

Nidhāmal, like Chitarman II, was trained in Delhi. Unlike Chitarman II, Nidhāmal's migration to Avadh is both pictorially and textually documented. Around September 18, 1782, Marathi minister Nānā Fadnavīs (b. 1742–d. 1800) asked his servant Sankarājā Satyadeva, who was based in Delhi, for paintings by the artist Nidhāmal.[13] Satyadeva replied that Nidhāmal, who was once employed by the Mughal ruler Ahmad Shāh (r. 1748–1754) and had completed paintings for "Kayasthas, kshatriyas, ambassadors, zamindars, diplomats, and vakils" in Delhi, had moved to Lucknow following the raids of Ahmad Shāh Durrani "Abdali" of Afghanistan (1748). After his move, Nidhāmal's paintings were hard to locate. Strikingly, Sankarājā Satyadeva indicates that Nidhāmal was skilled in "Krishna paintings" because he had an innate sensitivity to the art form as a devotee. According to Satyadeva, there was a scarcity of quality "Hindu artists" at the end of the eighteenth century in North India.[14] So far, no Krishna paintings have been unearthed that are directly tied to Nidhāmal. Art historians generally look for consistency in an artist's hand across paintings. In actuality, Nidhāmal probably changed his style when he composed his Krishna paintings since they were a different genre of painting and for a different patron. Therefore, the lack of Krishna painting attached to Nidhāmal may be a direct result of art historical parameters that desire consistency in an artist. I return to this conundrum throughout this chapter in order to interrogate the quest to identify a singular school of painting and a singular master artist when style was manipulated and fluctuated according to genre, patron, and workshop setting. Finally, Sankarājā Satyadeva mentions that Nidhāmal had two sons who were practicing artists. However, Satyadeva deems their compositions inferior to

[13] There is an inconsistency in the dating of this letter and the name of its author. O. C. Gangoly, "Niddha Mal, the Last Representative of the Mughal School," in *Bharata-Kaumudi: Studies in Indology in Honour of Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji Vol. 1* (Allahabad: India Press, 1945), 243–251; Patricia B. Baryiski, "Painting in Avadh in the 18th century," 354. Barbara Schmitz, ed., *After the Great Mughals*, 4, 10n11; Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1981), 121–122; Dattātraya Baḷavanta Pārasanīsa, ed., "Aitihasik Tipane," in *Itihāsa-saṅgraha*, vol. 1, no. 11 (Puna: Satara, 1908).
[14] O. C. Gangoly, "Niddha Mal, the Last Representative of the Mughal School," 248.

their father's work.

While Nidhāmal's migration from Delhi to Lucknow has been documented, his paintings remain undated. As a consequence, art historians have had to rely once again on the concept of stylistic progression to date his paintings and identify whether they were composed in Delhi, which is deemed the early part of his career, or Lucknow, the later stage. Art historians consider Nidhāmal's work from Delhi to be more symmetrically balanced while at the same time heavily relying on the color white. On the other hand, his paintings produced in Lucknow present a more naturalistic rendering of the background and of figural gestures. It is also interesting to note that Sankarājā Satyadeva's letter pinpoints Lucknow, not Faizabad, as Nidhāmal's destination even though Faizabad was the capital of Avadh at the time.

Fig. 2.7. *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers*
Inscribed "work of Nidhāmal"
Mughal, Delhi, c. 1735
32.8 x 42.3 cm
SDMA Edwin Binney, 3rd Collection, acc. no. 1990.378

Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers (fig. 7) and *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* (fig. 8) are considered part of Nidhāmal's Muḥammad Shāh period.[15] In *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers*, Muḥammad Shāh smokes a huqqa while he receives his courtiers, who are grouped in neat perpendicular rows on the right side of composition. The courtiers' gazes are directed to Muḥammad Shāh, which forces the viewer's eye toward him as well. *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers* is typical of the late Mughal painting style, with its symmetry and prominent portrait of Muḥammad Shāh. Less typical is *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow*, which does not depict a well-known historical figure. It illustrates a prince or courtier practicing archery while two other figures await their turn. In analyzing this painting, Gangoly suggests that

[15] Reproduced in Edwin Binney, *Indian Miniature Painting from the Collection of Edwin Binney 3rd* (Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 1974), 103, figure 77.

the three figures toward the back of the composition are judging the contest. The final four figures are retainers who carry *mōrchāls* (fly whisks) and the tobacco for the huqqas. Both *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers* and *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* use the device of a palace wall like in Chitarman II's *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* composition as a boundary to flatten the pictorial space. Nidhāmal in both paintings also provides the same layout of an open marbled terrace that is enshrouded by a garden and treetops, which are arranged to balance the compositions. The figures, too, are arranged to create equilibrium. In another move born out of a concern for balance, in *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* the courtiers line up in small groups behind the main courtier, who is shooting his bow, much like in *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers*, where the courtiers are lined up behind Muḥammad Shāh.

Fig. 2.8. *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow*
Inscribed on the right "Nidhāmal"
Providence: Unknown. Placed to either Delhi or Lucknow
Indian Museum, Calcutta, acc. no. 340/ 286[16]

Both compositions of *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers* and *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* bear Nidhāmal's signature, "Amal-i Nidhāmal" (work of Nidhāmal). In *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers*, his signature appears underneath Muḥammad Shāh's rug, and in *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* it is placed at the end of the palace railing next to the wooden archery target.[17] In all of the paintings that include his signature, Nidhāmal's name appears underneath a sharp line.[18] This holds true for his paintings produced in Lucknow.

[16] Reproduced in Gangoly, "Niddha Mal," 28; B. N. Goswamy and Jean Louis Nou, *Essence of Indian Art* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1986), 171.
[17] Nidhāmal's signature appears in the following paintings: *Prince Receiving an Emissary* in the San Diego Museum of Art, Inv. nr. 38/1980; *Equestrian Portrait*, Prince of Wales Museum Bombay, Inv. no. 15–258; *Lovers in a Terrace* in the Bharat Kala Bhavan Benares, Inv. no. 684; *A Princess, identified as Nur Jahan,* held at auction in Sotheby, April 22, 2015, lot 147.
[18] "Sotheby's London," accessed March 25, 2017, last modified April 22, 2015, http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/arts-islamic-world-l15220/lot.147.html#

While *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* has been grouped recently as a work produced in Lucknow, art historian Gangoly in 1945 noted that "it is impossible to say if the picture was drawn by the artist before or after his sojourn to Lucknow."[19] Bearing in mind that Nidhāmal worked for "Kayasthas, kshatriyas, ambassadors, zamindars, diplomats, and vakils" in Delhi, the main figure taking aim could have been a member of one of these social groups. While dress is a good indicator of time and place, in this case the robes of the compositional figures provide little clarity. The long, high-waisted *jama* (robe) that brushed the ankles and that was slightly transparent was popular across social-religious groups in both Delhi and Avadh throughout the eighteenth century.

Fig. 2.9. *A Busy Household*
Signed "Nidhāmal"
Avadh, Lucknow, c. 1760
Overall: 24.13 x 36.195 cm (9 1/2 x 14 1/4 in)
LACMA, acc. no. M.71.1.34

Nidhāmal's compositions that have been identified as Avadhi contain "experiments with light, spatial depth, and volume" that were popular in "provincial courts of Murshidabad, Patna, and Awadh."[20] Besides the devices of volume and depth, Nidhāmal's paintings that have a more relaxed appearance and/or natural compositions are labeled as being Avadhi. In *A Busy Household* (fig. 9), Nidhāmal's signature appears underneath a sharp line of the foundation of the house. His composition does not follow the constraints of symmetry as in *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers* and *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow*. For instance, the man in the lower right-hand corner walks with three children. One is on his shoulder, the other on the crook of his

[19] Gangoly, "Niddha Mal," 250. Schmitz believes the painting is a portrait of the nawab of Avadh Shujā' al-Daula at age fourteen. Schmitz, *After the Great Mughals*, 4. Goswamy, on the other hand, mentions "Late Mughal" as the site of production and also offers the possibility that it could have been produced in Avadh. Goswamy, *Essence of Indian Art*, 171.
[20] Yukhita Sharma, "Art in between Empires: Visual Culture and Artistic Knowledge in Late Mughal: 1748–1857" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 19. Besides portrait paintings, Sharma notes that Nidhāmal undertook cartographic commissions (10, 16–19). For an overview of Nidhāmal's repertoire, see Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, 121, figure 190. BL Add. Or. 1790.

arm, and the third he walks side by side with. He is alone and not grouped with another servant. The children are playfully rendered. Their bodies do not seem to be modeled after any well-known charbas. The man's legs are also painted naturally. They are slightly bent in contrast to the stiff figural anatomy in *Muhammad Shah and His Courtiers* and *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow*. In *A Busy Household*, Nidhāmal, like Chitarman II, still retains his "partiality to the color white," as seen in the coloring of the male dress.[21]

While *A Busy Household*'s formal qualities differ from what has been deemed his Muḥammad Shāh period, the natural appearance could be explained by a change in patronage while in Delhi. In Nānā Fadnavīs's letter, it is clear that Nidhāmal worked for Hindu courtiers and other members of the court besides the emperor. They may have asked Nidhāmal to change his style while he resided in Delhi. Thus, while *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* does abide by the premise of stylistic progression from stiffness to naturalism, nevertheless the painting cannot definitely be placed to Avadh. Rather, *A Busy Household* suggests that Hindu and other middling courtiers in Delhi and Avadh influenced stylistic changes in miniature painting. As a result, because of the political vacuum during the eighteenth century, other social groups had a higher influence in attracting elite artists than in previous epochs. No longer was the court of the emperor the only space from which style was disseminated.[22]

In the need to differentiate late Mughal from Avadhi, art historians have called for an internal investigation of Indian painting's microscopic details. As Goetz outlines, with paintings that "have no inscription, seals or other literary documentation of their origin," there might be

[21] McInerney, "Mughal Painting during the Reign of Muhammad Shah," 25.
[22] For a brilliant description of miniature painting produced not in the imperial center, see John William Seyller, "The Freer Rāmāyaṇa and the Atelier of 'Abd al-Raḥīm" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1986).

"sufficient internal evidence."[23] Astutely, Karl Khandalavala discusses how the delicate brush strokes of a man's beard can indicate whether a painting is from "the Akbar, Jehangir and Shahjahan period."[24] In Avadhi paintings, he points out, the face is stippled and the throat is marked "with blackish dots, giving an appearance of down on the face. Another characteristic of this period is the pinkish tint given to cheeks and sometimes even to the whole face." Using this premise, Goetz notes that in the Muḥammad Shāh period, "subsidiary figures such as those of attendants" are "short and squat."[25] J. P. Losty has employed this method to great effect, remarking that in compositions from Avadh, such as Nidhāmal's, faces are heavily modeled and shadows marked. These details are useful as they aid art historians in differentiating styles. It takes a highly skilled and trained eye to master differentiation between artists and schools. Such an approach assumes, however, the stability of a court workshop in a capital city that had the ability to disseminate a coherent and consistent stylistic idiom. I am proposing that shifts in patronage occurred within the same city and territory that are also apparent in minute details of a painting; and even within such details, provenance can never fully be resolved. Thus, late Mughal style is akin to Avadhi and Avadhi to late Mughal on the miniscule level even though such details are supposed to operate as "internal evidence" and provide art historians with stylistic closure.

In the eighteenth century, highly regarded artists such as Chitarman II and Nidhāmal worked in the late Mughal style under Muḥammad Shāh's patronage. While in Avadh, they both carried their stylistic techniques with them. While some notable differences exist between their

[23] Hermann Goetz, "The Early Oudh School of Mughal Painting: Albums in the Baroda Museum," in *Bulletin of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery* 9, pt. 1–2, ed. V. L. Devkar (Baroda: Chetana Press Ltd, 1955), 12.
[24] Karl Khandalavala, "Eighteenth Century Mughal Painting (Some Characteristics and Some Misconceptions)," *Marg* XI, no. 4 (September 1958): 58.
[25] Ibid.

Avadhi and late Mughal paintings, mostly in terms of landscape and shading, it is not possible to say whether these changes arose because these artists moved to Avadh or because they sought patronage from other courtiers while in Delhi. In addition, there is inconsistency in when Chitarman II and Nidhāmal signed their works. Instead of attributing hands and individual artists to paintings, can we perhaps assume that their works were done as collaborations with other artists and patrons, and were not a product of a singular artistic genius?

B. Avadh: Mīr Kalān Khān and Bahadur Singh

Court artists in Avadh in the eighteenth century moved from formal compositions as seen in *Entertainment in a Harem Garden* (fig. 1) and *Emperor Muhammad Shah with Falcon Viewing His Garden at Sunset from a Palanquin* (fig. 2) to an engagement with naturalistic representations of volume and space.[26] Trenchant divisions between Avadhi and Mughal paintings include the degree of naturalism with which they render landscapes, figural comportment, and diverse choices in compositional subject matter. With regard to the vegetation in Avadhi paintings, Losty remarks that a "fully developed landscape" that recedes into a vanishing point as well as a concern for the fall of light and shadow were identifiable markers.[27] Goetz in 1953 earlier noted that "naturalistically treated flowers" were common in Avadhi paintings.[28] In the rest of this section, I explore these visual traits that are attributed to Avadhi style in the work of artists Mīr Kalān Khān and Bahadur Singh. By providing alternate readings of their artistic styles, I debunk past and present art historical assertions that equate a natural style in Avadhi paintings with a frivolity in Avadhi politics. As stated in my introduction, because of the legacy of colonialism, Avadhi painting has been presented as evidence of the

[26] J. P. Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism: Portraiture in Murshidabad and Avadh, 1750–80," in *After the Great Mughals*, 38.
[27] J. P. Losty, "Indian Painting from 1730 to 1825," in *Masters of Indian Painting,* 2:580.
[28] Goetz, "The Early Oudh School of Mughal Painting," 12.

Avadhi nawabs' erotic debauchery. Through Mīr Kalān Khān and Bahadur Singh, I undermine the relation between decadency and Avadhi style by showing the ways in which style hinges on a perceived notion of an insulated category of style. If Avadhi style is dialogical, meaning that it is connected to other courts and patrons, then it cannot be mobilized as a rhetorical strategy against the native elites of Avadh. I ask: why is only Avadh accused of oriental despotism when the same visual traits are present across courts?

Nawāb Shujā' al-Daula (r. 1754–75) and his successor Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–97) were the first rulers of Avadh to heavily sponsor architecture, miniature painting, and oil paintings. Nidhāmal, Muḥammad Faqirullāh Khān, Mīr Kalān Khān, Mihr Chand, Faizullah, and Bahadur Singh are the most widely known artists who worked in Faizabad and Lucknow, and they brought these various media into active conversation.[29] Many of them migrated from Delhi. The shifts in their styles from stiffness to naturalism is said to derive in part from the influx of European prints into North Indian markets. J. P. Losty remarks that Avadhi paintings were similar to "late Mughal style under Muḥammad Shāh" but with "obvious extraneous European influence."[30] Losty and Leach have shown that Avadhi paintings reflect an interest in shadow and perspective stemming from "European prints, illustrated catalogues of European decorative arts and other European items [that] reached Oudh and were seen by artists who used them as a ready source of motifs."[31] Patricia Baryslshki remarks that Avadhi style worked "in a rich decorative manner but . . . also familiar with the Western tradition where nature and people were

[29] Losty, "Indian Painting from 1730–1825," in *Masters of Indian Painting* lists many of these artists as the finest in Avadh (2:579–94). The rest of the edited volume focuses only on two artists from Avadh, Mīr Kalān Khān and Mihr Chand. In another edited volume, only the Avadhi artist Mīr Kalān Khān is included as a "master artist." See John Guy and Jorrit Britschgi, *Wonder of the Age: Master Painters of India, 1100–1900* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 150–52.
[30] Losty, "Painting at Lucknow 1775–1850," in *Lucknow: Then and Now*, eds. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones and Ravi Kapoor (Mumbai: Marg Publications on behalf of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, 2003), 119.
[31] Linda York Leach, *Paintings from India,* 166; Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism," 45–51.

recorded more descriptively." From there, "chiaroscuro, vanishing point perspective and diminution of scale"[32] were used in pastiche compositions. Concurrently, while European prints were circulating in Avadh, European painters emigrated to Avadh at the behest of the EIC and later at the encouragement of the nawabs. One successful painter in Avadh was Tilly Kettle (w. 1769–76), who painted a number of oil paintings for Nawab Shujā' al-Daula.

Naturalism in Avadhi painting was also a product of the demands of European patrons. As was evident in the case of Nidhāmal's career in Delhi and Lucknow, he had a range of patrons from a variety of classes. Besides the nawabs, talukdars and zamindars were patrons in Avadh, as were female elites. Patricia Barylski writes, "Sulayman Shukūh, brother of the Mughal emperor, lived in Lucknow on a pension provided by the Nawāb Āṣaf al-Daula,"[33] and concludes that part of his funds went into the arts. Interregional connections such as Sulayman Shukūh's patronage further undermine the distinctiveness of Avadhi style since Delhi tastes were present in Avadh and vice versa. Unlike in the early Mughal period, there was an influx of European patrons in Avadh, Delhi, and Murshidabad. Colonel Polier, a Swiss entrepreneur, and Jean Baptiste Joseph Gentil, who was in the French military army, were two such patrons. Scholars have recently examined their patronage histories. Robert Clive and Richard Johnson, members of the EIC who will be discussed more in depth in succeeding chapters of this dissertation, were less notable patrons of Indian painting.

Native artists in Avadh witnessed visual changes wrought by the importation of prints and oil paintings as well as by patronage demands. As a consequence, they adapted European techniques to the vernacular format of miniature painting, as evinced in the painting above, *Portrait of Nawāb Shujā' al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty* (fig. 10). It is a miniature

[32] Patricia Bahree Barylski, "Painting in Avadh in the 18th Century," 352.
[33] Ibid.

painting completed by an anonymous Indian artist (or artists) from Avadh. The center portrait is a somewhat faithful rendering of a Tilly Kettle portrait of Shujā‘ al-Daula.[34] The play of light and shadow is recorded in the graduation of color in the smoky cumulus clouds and in Shujā‘ al-Daula's clothes. The bottom half of his robe is demarcated with a sharp line caused by the fall of light. Besides these details, the anonymous artist(s) reinterpreted Tilly Kettle's paintings into a vernacular idiom by inserting two female "beauties" on either side of Shujā‘ al-Daula's portrait. As the title of this piece suggests, these women are beauties and are included as aesthetically appealing representations. In another line of interpretation, they invoke the landscape through their body language. They gesture to pastoral and agrarian lands behind them. One of the landscapes is represented as tamed, farmed plots while the other is an open, rural stand of trees.[35] Both women point to a vital component of the nawabs' power: the countryside. Beyond invoking an aesthetic that is categorizable as good/bad or high/low art, *Portrait of Nawab Shujā‘ al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty* has historical weight.

Fig. 2.10. *Portrait of Nawab Shujā‘ al-Daula* after a portrait by Tilly Kettle
Two Pictures of Beauty, a page from the Lady Coote Album
India, c. 1780
De Young Museum, acc. no. 1982.2.70.1
45 x 61.3 cm (album page); 38.5 x 41.1 cm (sheets (three))

The central court of Avadh was always tied to the surrounding countryside.[36] To establish the nawabate of Avadh, the first nawabs had to successfully tame the zamindars and taluqdars (landowners). These lands that the nawabs seized from local landowners generated revenue in harvest years and promoted trade throughout the seasons. As in many other Indian courts, the

[34] Another miniature copy of Shujā‘'s portrait exists. See Victoria and Albert Museum: IS.287–1951. Reproduced in Deborah Swallow and John Guy, eds., *Arts of India: 1550–1900* (London: V&A Publications, 1990), 181, plate 153. Tilly Kettle's original painting is in the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection B1976.7.48.
[35] I would like to thank Dr. Durba Ghosh for suggesting this alternate reading.
[36] Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707–48* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 92–133; Richard B. Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 166–91; Michael Herbert Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*, 31–49.

agrarian countryside of Avadh generated income and increased the nawabs' treasury. In conjunction, *Portrait of Nawab Shujā' al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty* could have been issued as a commemorative symbol of Shujā' al-Daula's victory in obtaining new farm and urban territories of Rohilkhand and the Doab in 1774–1775, an event that was contemporaneous with the production of this miniature painting. In the original Tilly Kettle oil painting, the composition is cropped around Shujā' al-Daula's body. As a result, the landscape is barely visible. Moreover, in Tilly Kettle's original portrait, Shujā' al-Daula's left arm is limp and dangles by his side. He does not gesture to any object. Here in *Portrait of Nawab Shujā' al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty*, the landscape is as important as in Shujā' al-Daula's portrait. By extending his left arm and pointing to the landscape, Shujā' indicates that his governmental territory is vast, encompassing both rural and domesticated spaces. By emphasizing the landscape in *Portrait of Nawab Shujā' al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty*, the native artist adds a new visual dimension that augments Shujā''s sovereignty in defiance of Tilly Kettle's format. The "naturalness" of this painting, with its portrayal of a sophisticated landscape, was meant to delineate the political geography of the nawabate.

In contrast to my reading of naturalistic style as enhancing the nawabs' political power, in 1998 Linda Leach proposed that the naturalistic formal qualities of Avadhi painting are directly related to how the nawabs weakened their court. In this line of thinking, the natural style of painting is brandished as visual evidence of the nawab's social depravity. She notes that the cities of Avadh were "known for" their "endless social gatherings, which were a natural release from the strict protocol that had been imposed in Delhi."[37] Leach, like other art historians, presents equivalence between "naturalness" in painting style and natural depravity in a frivolous court of

[37] Linda York Leach, *Paintings from India* (London: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1998), 166.

Avadh. *Portrait of Nawab Shujā' al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty* could be read in this vein. The nawabs were so preoccupied with sex and feminine activities that they needed to include female figures in every painting. Hence, the two beauties on either side of Shujā' al-Daula's portrait were added. However, such a reductionist viewpoint forecloses any possible that the females were symbolic of territorial gains.

Mīr Kalān Khān is heralded as a master painter who, like Nidhāmal, migrated from Delhi to Avadh. He studied Mughal painting along with the "earlier masters of Deccani painting."[38] The only documentation relating to Mīr Kalān Khān consists of inscriptions on his paintings as well as a signed *'insha* (letter).[39] It is speculated that Mīr Kalān Khān was born c. 1710–15 and died c. 1770–75.[40] He signed and dated the painting *Hunting Antelopes at Night*, labeling it a "work of Mīr Kalān 1147" (c. 1734–35).[41] Therefore, it is presumed that Mīr Kalān Khān worked in Delhi around 1734. Although Mīr Kalān Khān signed his work "Mīr Kalān" or "Mīr Kalān Khān," two paintings with the signature of "Mir Miran" are also said to be his.[42] No reason is given as to why he would change his signature or whether the two names could possibly refer to two separate men, Mīr Kalān Khān and Mir Miran. As the two signatures show, the analytical premise of stylistic progression continues to inform art historical investigations in order to date, place, and locate Mīr Kalān Khān's hand even when his signature does not appear.

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[38] Terence McInerney, "Mir Kalan Khan," in *Masters of Indian Painting*, eds. Milo Cleveland Beach, Eberhard Fischer, B. N. Goswamy, and Jorrit Britschgi (Zurich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 2011), 2:614.
[39] Library of Congress 1-84-154.49.
[40] McInerney, "Mir Kalan Khan," 607.
[41] Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg, Ms. E-14, folio 56r. Reproduced in Francesca von Habsburg, *The St. Petersburg Muraqqa: Album of Indian and Persian Miniatures from the 16th through the 18th Century and Specimens of Persian Calligraphy by Imād al-Asanī* (Milano: Leonardo Arte, 1996), plate 214; McInerney, "Mir Kalan Khan," 610.
[42] The two paintings are as follow: (1) McInerney, "Mir Kalan Khan," 608–9; Reproduced in Binney, *Indian Miniature Painting from the Collection of Edwin Binney 3rd*, 104, figure 79. Vishakha N. Desai, B. N. Goswamy, and Ainslie Thomas Embree, *Life at Court: Art for India's Rulers, 16th–19th Centuries* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1985), figure 83. (2) The second painting is held at the Metropolitan Museum, accession number 2009.318.

Mīr Kalān Khān's preoccupation with light, shadow, and chiaroscuro has been considered a unique innovation in Indian miniature painting. Adding to his individualistic style, his paintings have "doll-like figures with" moon faces and "small rounded features."[43] In *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors* (fig. 11), the representations of females are rendered with rounded faces and soft, moldable bodies. As the title suggests, the painting shows Shujā' al-Daula passively smoking a huqqa while a group of women approach him. Based on this painting, art historians have assumed that Mīr Kalān Khān worked for Shujā' al-Daula (r. 1754–1775) starting in the 1750s. Moreover, this painting has been envisioned as a product of Shujā' al-Daula's sensuality.[44] An art historian described the painting in the following manner: "The young Shuja ud daula was a noted sensualist . . . spending entire days with the dancing girls and ladies of his harem. Perhaps to placate this taste, [the artist] Mīr Kalān Khān also depicted . . . a fairy-tale palace and garden . . . an apt setting in which to spend endless nights of love."[45] A connection is made between female representations, sensuality, and sex. The females are included so that "endless nights of love" can ensue. Such descriptions often accompany Avadhi paintings.

Fig. 2.11. *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors*
Attributed to Mīr Kalān Khān
Mughal/Avadh, c. 1760–1765
Painting: 34.3 x 43.8 cm
SDMA Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, acc no. 1990:410[46]

The composition of *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors* reinforces the notion that Mīr Kalān Khān was stylistically innovative. Though his signature does not appear on the folio, art historians believe that, based on style, it is by his hand. For one, the female bodies are posed

[43] McInerney, "Mir Kalan Khan," 613, 614, 616.
[44] Ibid., 619.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Edwin Binney, *Indian Miniature Painting from the Collection of Edwin Binney 3rd* (Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum: 1974), 117, 122, figure 96; McInerney, "Mir Kalan Khan," 619.

naturally. A woman on the left-hand side of the terrace droops as she falls asleep on the crook of her arm. Further along this line of sight, a woman cools off by splashing her feet in a fountain as she engages in conversation with an older woman. In the center, a group of women approach Shujā‘ al-Daula as they pull and tug a woman toward him. All of these body postures are considered “naturalistic” since they appear to be studied from real life.

Besides its naturalism, the composition is tied to Mīr Kalān Khān because of the use of light and shadow and the complex rendering of architectural spaces. The painting has a dark palette. There is no clear light source. In this case, the white marble of the terrace provides luminance in conjunction with the light emanating from the candles. In the lower half of the painting, the viewer looks slightly down toward Shujā‘ al-Daula and his female companions. The middle section of the painting is divided by an architectural structure with three archways. The perspective then changes once more in the upper half. The viewer is given a bird’s-eye view of a surrounding enclosure. To reconcile these multiple vanishing points, symmetry is used in the architecture, vegetation, and fountain fixtures on the right- and left-hand sides of the composition.

The soft charge of oriental despotism lobbied against Mīr Kalān Khān’s style in *Shujā‘ al-Daula Entertained by Actors* lends itself well to a deconstruction. Thus far, I have been actively questioning the premise of style for the way it is deployed to shore up the oriental despot argument and also for the inadequacy of style to be marshaled as such. To explain, Avadhi style must be unique and distinctive to elucidate historical truths about the Avadhi court and its patrons. If Avadhi painting is similar to the material culture of other courts, then the Avadhi court cannot be the only political power to have engaged in “frivolity.” As a result, it would be more difficult for scholars and viewers to cast all of eighteenth-century North India as debauched

since such an analytical move is rife with colonial prejudice. A Mughal painting that provides visual precedent for Avadhi paintings' focus on sensuality is *Jahangir Celebrates the Hindu Festival of Holi*, completed in 1635.[47] Part of the Minto Album, this painting illustrates intoxicated females dragging the Mughal ruler Jahangir to bed. This painting has never been an object of derision or been used to charge Jahangir of depravity. Similar to *Jahangir Celebrates the Hindu Festival of Holi*, the composition of *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors* (fig. 11) portrays more than sensuality. By focusing on naturalism, art historians are erasing more than half of the painting, which is centered on architecture and space. Using the same paradigm of style, can we say that instead of focusing on naturalism, the distinguishing trait of Avadhi painting is to enclose multiple spaces and places in a single composition?

Working at the same time as Mīr Kalān Khān was the artist Bahadur Singh, who was patronized by Europeans such as Richard Johnson as well as native elites. Through formal analysis of his paintings, Bahadur Singh has been located as a practicing artist in the regions of Delhi, Avadh, and Murshidabad. Few paintings from Avadh have his signature; most are attributions.[48] Though Bahadur Singh's paintings from Murshidabad are more easily contextualized, his supposed Avadhi paintings have generated more attention since they illustrate a variety of genres including *masnavī* (short story) and *rāgamālā* (musical modes).

Bahadur Singh's signature is found on a few rāgamālā paintings in the British Museum and British Library collections. In the British Library, there is a rāgamālā album (Add. Or. 21934) that contains excerpts of Piyari Ranglal's *brajbhasa* text.[49] Two folios of album Add. Or.

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[47] CBL In 07A.4a.

[48] His signature is located on two paintings: *The Rite of Sati* from the BL Add. Or. 24 J.44 and Johnson Album 45, folio 4. Other paintings are attributions, including BL J.1.25, J 10.2, J.1, 19, and J.1, 20. V&A D.1205–1903. See Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures*, 140–1, figures 255: i-vii; Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, 2:661.

[49] The text is embedded above the images. Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London: British Library, 1982), 135; H. N. Randle, "A Note on the India Office Ragamala Collection," *New Indian Antiquary* 4, no. 5 (1941):

21934, with compositions of *Sri Rāga* and *Hindola Rāga*, have Bahadur Singh's signature. Figure 12 is the *Sri Rāga* folio and contains the late Mughal style of balanced edifices and the gold-orange-streaked sky. It is considered Avadhi because of its portrayal of two women in the foreground farming the plots, which is more "natural" or closer to real-life activities than how women were portrayed in the late Mughal style. Overall, Bahadur Singh's compositions portray "shorter, more robust figures"[50] and are drawn with a heavy eyelid and arched eyebrow. While the eyelid is present in figure 12, the figures are not terribly short and are very similar physically to those in Mīr Kalān Khān's compositions.

Fig. 2.12. *Sri Rāga*
Signed "Bahadur Singh"
BL Add. Or. Ms. 21934, folio 4

Fig. 2.13 *Sri Rāga*
Artist unknown
Lucknow, c. 1780–82
BL J.44, folio 15

Figure 12 is visually related to a folio from British Library's J.44 rāgamālā album, completed for Richard Johnson while he was in Lucknow.[51] Figure 13 appears to be a direct copy of figure 12, except that it is completed in a light wash instead of figure 12's bright color palette. Possibly, Bahadur Singh worked for a patron who commissioned the Add. Or. 21934 album and then afterward worked for Richard Johnson, bringing with him the same charbas of Add. Or. 21934 to complete J.44. Supporting this notion, Bahadur Singh previously worked with

171; O. C. Gangoly, *Rāgas & Rāginīs, a Pictorial & Iconographic Study of Indian Musical Modes Based on Original Sources*, *vol. II* (Bombay: Nalanda Publications, 1948), plate 31, fig. A; O. C. Gangoly, *Rāgas & Rāginīs vol. I*, 129; James Fuller Blumhardt, *Catalogue of the Hindi, Panjabi and Hindustani Manuscripts in the Library of the British Museum* (London: Gilbert and Rivington, 1899), 62, figure 95; Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures*, 173.

[50] Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library, Vol. II*, 661.

[51] Also related to figure 11 are two paintings in the Bodleian Library (MS. Douce Or. b.2, ff.44–45), which are thought to have been originally part of the same album, and two paintings recently held at auction. H. N. Randle, "Ragamala Drawings in Bodleian Ms. Douce, or.b.2," *Indian Arts and Letters* 20 (1946): 68–70; Robert J. Del Bontà and Shawn Ghassemi, *Painting from the Courts of India and Persia* (San Francisco: Art Passages, 2014), 24–27, figures 11–2.

Johnson on another album.[52] According to another line of interpretation, another artist could have copied Bahadur Singh's style in J.44. In either case, Bahadur Singh's aesthetic had a far-reaching visual base. He was able to cull work for a number of sponsors, and his defining style traveled beyond his person through the circulation of his charbas.

Fig. 2.14. *Emperor Aurangzeb on a Terrace*
Bahadur Singh, signature on bottom right-hand side
V&A D.1205–1903

Bahadur Singh's signature is present on a portrait of the Mughal emperor Āūrangzēb (r. 1658–1707), *Emperor Aurangzeb on a Terrace* (fig. 14). In the painting, Āūrangzēb is not depicted with a squat physique like most representations connected to Bahadur Singh's oeuvre. His head is proportional to the rest of his body. In alignment with Bahadur Singh's singular aesthetic, Āūrangzēb is shown with a sizeable upper eyelid that appears in mid-blink. The painting on the back has the stamp "WF 1764," which was short for William Fullerton, a surgeon in Bengal and Bihar from 1744 to 1766.[53] Fullerton commissioned a painting album from a number of Murshidabad painters while he was stationed in Patna in 1764, and *Emperor Aurangzeb* was one of its folios. For his album, Fullerton oversaw and directed artists to paint his friends and historical figures as compositional subjects. To carry out Fullerton's wishes, Bahadur Singh must have been in Murshidabad or Patna.[54] Taking art historical notice of Fullerton's album, Bahadur Singh, like many Avadhi artists, was not merely "Avadhi." He also participated in creating other aesthetics that were tied to certain geographies and courts. As Bahadur Singh's *Emperor Aurangzeb on a Terrace* illustrates, the fundamental markers for Avadhi painting carried over to the neighboring court of Murshidabad painting. Without the stamp of "WF 1764,"

[52] Bahadur Singh's signature appears in J.45, folio 4, which is a painting of the raga Bhairava.
[53] Robert Skelton, "Murshidabad Painting," *Marg* 10 (1956): 17.
[54] Losty, "Murshidabad Painting 1750–1820" in *Murshidabad: Forgotten Capital of Bengal*, eds. Neeta Das and Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2013), 86–87.

this painting could easily be categorized as Avadhi.

The thinking on style in the case of Avadh has presumed that the either the nawabs or the Europeans were the active patrons in sponsoring paintings. By weaving in images such as *Nocturnal Scene in a Zenana* (fig. 4), Bahu Begum and other members of the court were reinserted into the patronage history of Avadh as their tastes affected artists' stylistic moves deciding to focus on representations of internal court spaces. Likewise, representations such as *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors* (fig. 11) have been interpreted as expressions of the nawab's sensuality because the representations showcase a "natural" setting with "natural" figures in a courtly space.

Regarding images such as *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors* (fig. 11) and *Portrait of Nawab Shujā' al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty* (fig. 10), I presented a counternarrative to the relationship between a natural style and political degeneracy by illuminating how these images activate other potential readings such as the aggrandizement of the nawabs' political power. In returning to *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors*, we might rethink such images beyond frivolity and ask ourselves the social and historical value of representing social intimacy and intimate court spaces.

The concern with chiaroscuro, an aerial perspective with multiple vanishing points, and the depiction of shadow in faces and trees are common motifs in Avadhi painting. If a painting has all of these visual traits, a viewer would not be amiss to assume that it was produced in Faizabad or Lucknow. As seen in *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors* (fig. 11) and in *Portrait of Nawab Shujā' al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty* (fig. 10), Avadhi paintings do diverge from Muḥammad Shāh's paintings in a number of ways. However, the stability of this assumption appears to come undone on closer inspection. Artists such as Bahadur Singh

challenge these divisions, as his paintings straddle stylistic categories and genres. He continues to be on the move as he shifts to the Murshidabad painting style.

C. Murshidabad: Hunhār II, Dip Chand, and Bahadur Singh

The most distinctive features of Murshidabad painting are a gray palette accentuated by the use of silver (mica), a heavy eyelid and arched eyebrow in facial features, the lack of shadows, and a starry night in the background and/or a curved hill in the landscape dotted by palm trees. *Princess and Maids Listening to Music on Terrace* (fig. 15) employs many of these standard tropes. In *Princess and Maids Listening to Music on Terrace*, a woman on a white carpet smokes a huqqa while she holds a flower in her left land. The anonymous artist(s) placed three females behind the principal figure while two females in the foreground play musical instruments. None of the figures cast a shadow. Moreover, the figures have a heavy eyelid and a high, arched eyebrow, as seen in Bahadur Singh's compositions. In the background, the palace architecture is symmetrically rendered. At the top of the page, a moon and a sprinkle of stars pepper the sky.[55] With the distinctiveness of Murshidabad painting in mind, only a handful of paintings abide by these strict stylistic protocols. Artists such as Hunhār II and Nidhāmal, who are slated as late Mughal, also moved to Murshidabad. In the reverse direction, Dip Chand, who is from Murshidabad, went to Avadh and may have influenced painters there. Bahadur Singh crosses all three terrains, having worked in Delhi, Avadh, and Murshidabad. In walking through Murshidabad paintings, which are on the borderlands of various styles, I argue that art historians should no longer force Murshidabad's separation from other courts.

[55] Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*, *Vol. II*, 673, 679.

Fig. 2.15. *Princess and Maids Listening to Music on Terrace*
Artist: Unknown
Murshidabad, c. 1760
Height: 10 3/4 in, width: 7 3/4 in
V&A IM.99–1922[56]

Fig. 2.16. *Mir Ja'far and Son Miran on Hunting Expedition*
Signed by Purannath (Hunhār II)
Mughal style at Patna, c. 1760
V&A, under copyright. IM.13–1911

Under Murshid Quli Khan's tenure (r. 1717–1727), Murshidabad, formerly known as Mukshusabad, became the capital of the province of Bengal. The earliest Murshidabad painting is dated to 1720 and shows Murshid Quli Khan holding court.[57] It is unclear who the artist was or where it was completed. Artists, as in the case of Avadh, fled Delhi to Murshidabad following the unrest in the imperial center. Hunhār II, known as Purnnath (fl. 1740–80), traveled from Delhi to Lucknow[58] and Murshidabad.[59] He painted *Mir Ja'far and Son Miran on Hunting Expedition* (fig. 16) while he was in Patna in the 1760s using similar painting techniques to those he used during his tenure in Delhi.[60] *Mir Ja'far and Son Miran on Hunting Expedition* is dated to the same year that Hunhār II completed *A Princess and Ladies Celebrating Diwali* (fig. 5), which was done in the "Avadhi style." Given this, Hunhār II must have been regularly traveling back and forth between Murshidabad and Avadh during the 1760s. Hunhār II's Murshidabad painting of *Mir Ja'far and Son Miran on Hunting Expedition* closely resembles a painting completed in 1740 for the Mughal ruler Ahmad Shāh (r. 1748–54).[61] *Mir Ja'far and Son Miran*

[56] Cited in Robert Skelton and Mark Francis, *Arts of Bengal: The Heritage of Bangladesh and Eastern India: An Exhibition* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1979), 46, figure 79.
[57] Robert Skelton, "Murshidabad Painting," *Marg* 10, no. 1 (December 1956), 19 and plate 1. V&A IS.133:65/A–1964. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O433465/page-unknown/
[58] Terence McInerney, "Mughal Painting during the Reign of Muhammad Shah," 29, 33.
[59] Losty, "Murshidabad Painting, 1750–1820," 87.
[60] "Victoria and Albert Museum," last modified Aug. 1, 2017, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O403982/mir-jafar-and-miran-painting-purannath/
[61] Stuart Cary Welch and Mark Zebrowski, *A Flower from Every Meadow: Indian Paintings from American Collections* (New York: Asia Society, distributed by New York Graphic Society, 1973), 114–115, figure 68; McInerney, "Mughal Painting during the Reign of Muhammad Shah," 30.

on Hunting Expedition differs from the Ahmad Shāh painting in its use of gray streaks in the water and in the sky. Both retain the same pea-green coloring and a similar composition with the principal ruler on horseback marching forward with a retinue and soldiers en route to a hunting expedition. Strikingly, Hunhār II used a similar gray palette to that of *Mir Ja'far and Son Miran on Hunting Expedition* for his earlier Mughal paintings completed for Ahmad Shāh, which are currently in the Kasturbhai Lalbhai Collection.[62] For Hunhār II, a gray palette was not reserved for Murshidabad painting but was also used for late Mughal Ahmad Shāh's compositions.

When Nawab Ālivardī Khān (r. 1740–1756) took control of Murshidabad, he heavily patronized artists. Besides Ālivardī Khān, courtiers sponsored paintings such as Husain Quli Khān, who was naib nazim of Dhaka, and Zain ud-din Ahmad Khān, who was the nephew and son-in-law of Ālivardī Khān.[63] Siraj ud-Daula (r. April 1756–June 1757), who was Ālivardī Khān's successor, continued to support the arts. However, political complications intervened. Siraj was deposed after he held some British soldiers as prisoners in the now infamous incident of the Black Hole of Calcutta in 1756. His successors had their own complicated history with the EIC. Mir Jafar, who ruled from 1757 through October 1760, was replaced by his son-in-law Mir Qasim (r. 1760–1763). Shortly thereafter, Mir Jafar was reinserted as ruler from 1763 to 1765. In 1765, Robert Clive and the EIC secured the territory of Bengal from Mughal emperor Shāh 'Ālam II, which officially ended the independent Bengal nawabate and in turn ended their artistic patronage. Arguably, the last painting that retains the Murshidabad aesthetic is dated to 1775.[64] Unlike the Avadhi nawabate, which lasted until 1856, Murshidabad's patronage history was as

[62] S. C. Welch, *India: Art and Culture, 1300–1900* (New York, 1985), 275, figure 182; Sven Gahlin, *The Courts of India: Indian Miniatures from the Collection of the Fondation Custodia, Paris* (Paris: Fondation Custodia, 1991), plate 38.
[63] For a primary visual source, see V&A D.1202–1903. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Smith-Lesouëf 245. For a secondary source, see Roselyne Hurel, "A Ragamala Painted at Patna for Zain Ud-Din Ahmad Khan, Nephew and Son-in-Law of Alivardi Khan," *Artibus Asiae* 74, no. 2 (2014): 303.
[64] V&A IM. 80–1922.

short-lived as its court, which lasted approximately from 1717 to 1765.

Fig. 2.17. *Nobleman Reclining on a Couch by Moonlight*
India, Uttar Pradesh, Awadh, c. 1755–65
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
Page: 10 3/8 x 14 ½ in (26.4 x 36.83 cm)
Image: 8 x 13 1/8 in (22.9 x 33.34 cm)
Signed "Nidhāmal"
Private collection of Cynthia Hazen Polsky

Although the colors of silver and gray are a prominent feature in Murshidabad paintings, artists in Avadh also utilized this palette. As a result, it is difficult to say whether Murshidabad can really be seen as separate from Avadhi and Avadhi from Murshidabad. The Avadhi and late Mughal artist Nidhāmal painted *Nobleman Reclining on a Couch by Moonlight* (fig. 17), which is visually similar to *Princess and Maids Listening to Music on Terrace* (fig. 15) in terms of color palette and the inclusion of an iridescent moon.[65] In figure 17, a man smokes huqqa while reclining on a white platform on top of a white terrace. As he did *Busy Household* (fig. 8), Nidhāmal signed *Nobleman Reclining on a Couch by Moonlight*. His signature is in the middle of the lower balcony in one of the horizontal oval niches.

The facial features of the man smoking the huqqa are very similar to the portrait of the male figure shooting an arrow in Nidhāmal's *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* (fig. 8), to the portrait in *An Avadhi Nobleman with Five Ladies on the Harem Watching Entertainers in a Water Garden*, and to the portrait *A Prince Receiving an Emissary*.[66] Barbara Schmitz argues that in all four paintings the figure is a young Shujā' al-Daula (r. 1754–1775).[67] According to Schmitz's proposition, Nidhāmal composed Avadhi-like paintings for the Avadhi ruler Shujā' al-Daula while he was in Delhi. Are these paintings then late Mughal or Avadhi? Do we need to

[65] Reproduced in Markel, *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow*, 171.
[66] Nidhāmal's *An Avadhi Nobleman with Five Ladies in the Harem Watching Entertainers in a Water Garden*, Lucknow, c. 1755–86, is in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts as a promised gift of Mr. and Mrs Bensky H. Field. Reproduced in Markel, *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow*, 172. Nidhāmal's *A Prince Receiving an Emissary* is in the SDMA inv. nr. 38/1980.
[67] Schmitz, *After the Mughals*, 5.

label them as one or the other? To pivot slightly, *Nobleman Reclining on a Couch by Moonlight* (fig. 17) differs the most stylistically from these other three paintings even though all were completed by the same artist, Nidhāmal, and in all probability for the same patron. How, then, do we reconcile this?

Nobleman Reclining on a Couch by Moonlight complicates the proposition that I have espoused: that painting styles change because of patrons' tastes. A rejoinder is needed. Painting styles shift not because of a change in locale or patronage alone, but also because an artist engages with different genres of painting. *Nobleman Reclining on a Couch by Moonlight* could have once been part of a series of paintings known as rāgamālā paintings (Chapter 3) and *A Ruler Practices with a Bow and Arrow* (Fig. 8) may have been part of the muraqqa' genre (Chapter 4). Thus, Nidhāmal adapted his style not only for his patrons but also for the visual genre in which a painting would have been included. It is hard to decipher why Nidhāmal shifted his style since the paintings are considered to be stand-alone folios without any textual or genre histories. It is also entirely possible that Nidhāmal went to Murshidabad from Avadh and completed *Nobleman Reclining on a Couch by Moonlight* by coming into contact with the color palette of works such as *Princess and Maids Listening to Music on Terrace* (fig. 15).

Fig. 2.18. *Shah Alam II Seated on a Throne*
Attributed to the style of Dip Chand
Murshidabad, 1764[68]
Image: h. 7 11/l6 x w. 5 13/16 in (19.5 x 14.7 cm)
BL Add. Or. 5694

Dip Chand is another well-known artist who worked in Murshidabad and Patna, and he was patronized by local elites as well by Europeans such as William Fullerton.[69] Two of his

[68] Reproduced in William Dalrymple and Yuthika Sharma, *Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi, 1707–1857* (New York: Asia Society Museum, 2012), 95.
[69] Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism," 37–43. Dip Chand signed the portrait of Fullerton in the Victoria and Albert Museum, I.M. 33–1912.

signed paintings were part of William Fullerton's album, completed in 1763–64. Fullerton patronized and directed the subject of his compositions for his native artists, and the paintings, according to Veronica Murphy, "differed from standard Murshidabad court work of the period only in the choice of subject matter."[70] Based on formal analysis, Losty surmises that Dip Chand "followed his master Mir Qasim," nawab of Murshidbad, to Patna and later into "exile in Avadh" in 1763.[71] In 1764, Mir Qasim fled Lucknow and led a life of poverty after he and his allies were defeated in the Battle of Buxsar. In following Mir Qasim from Patna to Lucknow, Dip Chand, like many of his contemporaries, traveled across northern India in search of work.

Most paintings attributed to Dip Chand have a sharp curve in the landscape positioned above the horizon line.[72] In *Shah Alam II Seated on a Throne* (fig. 18), Shāh ʿĀlam II sits on a throne with two retainers standing neatly behind him. The background dominates more than half of the painting, with the river consuming one third of the composition. The sloping hill is populated with trees and a sweeping view of lowlands plains. Unlike in some Murshidabad paintings, the trees have shadows that recede onto the horizon as in many other Avadhi painting. Avadhi and Murshidabad landscapes thus diverge in terms of spatiality and the use of shadows. They also differ in the curvature of the hill and also in the kinds of trees represented. Murshidabad paintings tend to favor palm trees or palymra trees in the landscapes such as those visible in *Shah Alam II Seated on a Throne*.[73]

These visual dichotomies between Avadhi and Murshidabad do fall apart. In Avadhi

[70] V&A D.1180–1903 and V&A D.1209–1903. Murphy, "The Later Provincial Courts and British Expansion" in *Arts of India: 1550–1900*, 197.
[71] Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism," 42.
[72] For Murshidabad images with a rounded hill in the background, see *Gauri Ragini* from the *Impey Ragamala*, Murshidabad, c. 1760, in the British Library, London, Add.Or.4; *Nawab Mir Qasim Ali Khan with a Banker* in V&A D.1178-1903; *Sri Raga* in BL Johnson Album 36, 12.
[73] Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office*, figure 374ii. Losty, "Murshidabad Painting 1750–1820," 88. Losty and Leach, *Mughal Paintings from the British Library* (Indar Pasricha Fine Arts), figure 24.

painting, palm trees are less frequently associated with the style, but Avadhi artists have depicted them.[74] The Murshidabad painting *Alivardi Khan and a Courtier*, c. 1745, has the same curved background, palm trees, and trees with shadows as *Shah Alam II Seated on a Throne* (fig. 18).[75] These two paintings differ in color palette. *Alivardi Khan and a Courtier* is awash in pink pastels, and *Shah Alam II Seated on a Throne* has an overall gray sheen.

Fig. 2.19. *Mir Qasim Ali Khan*
Attributed to Dip Chand
India, c. 1763–64
34.7 x 24.7 cm
Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin, Polier Album, 1.4596, fol. 1r[76]

Dip Chand is the attributed painter of figure 19, *Mir Qasim Ali Khan*, which straddles the visual registers of the Avadhi and Murshidabad painting styles. Losty suggests that Dip Chand painted the portrait after the Murshidabad ruler Qasim fled to Avadh in 1763 after failing in his insurrection against the British. Dip Chand, as a result of these upheavals, could have followed Qasim from Murshidabad to Avadh, where he would have had a chance to study from other artists. The composition of *Mir Qasim Ali Khan* is very similar to that of *Shah Alam II Seated on a Throne* except the terrace has a white marbling, a prominent feature in Avadhi and late Mughal painting. The color palette further resembles Avadhi paintings, with its brighter tones of oranges and reds as seen in Faizullah's work (fig. 1). The orange-streaked sky above Qasim's canopy is similar to Chitarman II's orange-kissed skies that were a device adopted by many Avadhi artists (fig. 2). Each small tree in *Mir Qasim* has a shadow, which is again considered a referent to

[74] One such painting is from the *Iyar-i Danish* manuscript completed in Faizabad by Mohan Singh. It is currently in the BL J.54 album, folio 26. Reproduced in Markel, *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow*, 62, figure 137. Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office*, 176.
[75] "Alivardi Khan and a Courtier," last modified April 26, 2005, http://www.christies.com/Lotfinder/lot_details.aspx?sid=&intObjectID=4483532&SE=CMWCAT04+867888+-1703759171+&QR=M+1+0+Aqc0000900+841546++Aqc0000900+&entry=india&SU=1&SN=7038&RQ=True&AN=174.
[76] Regina Hickmann and Volkmar Enderlein, *Indische Albumblätter: Miniaturen u. Kalligraphien aus d. Zeit d. Moghul-Kaiser* (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer 1979), 168, figure 57. Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism," 43.

Avadhi painting. The defining trait that lends this painting to a Murshidabad idiom is the sloping hill behind Mir Qasim and the use of palm trees in the far back of the landscape.

Mir Qasim Ali Khan opens up a host of questions about dating, provenance, and stylistic schools. It has no signature, though it has been assumed that Dip Chand was the artist based on its stylistic traits and its subject matter as a portrait of Mir Qasim. While the painting has been attributed to the artist Dip Chand, what about its stylistic school? *Mir Qasim Ali Khan* clearly shows that these two separate schools, Murshidabad and Avadh, were not separate.[77] They were in a contestatory dialogue. *Princess and Maids Listening to Music on Terrace* (fig. 15) presents a stable model for Murshidabad paintings in its stylistic purity. Rather than images such as *Mir Qasim Ali Khan* being outliers that defy Murshidabad stylistic core principles, such images are actually more representative of eighteenth-century aesthetics. In *Mir Qasim Ali Khan*, styles bleed into one another as a result of artistic networks that trafficked artists across northern India.[78]

Fig. 2.20. *Portrait of a Mufti*
Signature of Bahadur Singh
Lucknow, c. 1775
Painting: 212 by 135 mm
Page: 505 by 350 mm
BL Johnson Album 1, folio 20

The question of landscape, style, and artist culminates in the painting *Portrait of a Mufti* (fig. 20). There are two copies of *Portrait of a Mufti*: one at the British Library, which has Bahadur Singh's signature, and another in the Chester Beatty Library, which is unsigned.[79] The figure in *Portrait of a Mufti* has Bahadur Singh's distinctive heavy, large eyelid. Another feature,

[77] For another painting that has this sloping hill that is tied to an Avadhi artist, see BL Johnson Album 12, folio 4. Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office*, 138.
[78] To complicate matters, Colonel Polier, who was a Swiss entrepreneur, collected the image. If he commissioned the painting, was style on Polier's mind or was the act of collecting his only concern?
[79] BL Johnson Album 1, folio 20. Reproduced in Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism," 48; and Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office*, 140, figure 251; CBL Ln. 34.10. Reproduced in Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library Vol. II*, 621.

which was associated with Bahadur Singh's hand, was plump figures. In this case, rotundness is applied to the mullah's oversized turban. The landscapes of both *Portrait of a Mufti* paintings are of interest. They have the trees and plains setting, which was popular in both Avadh and Murshidabad.[80] Unlike in Dip Chand's *Shah Alam II Seated on a Throne* (fig. 18) or *Mir Qasim Ali Khan* (fig. 19), there is no curving hill in the landscape of *Portrait of a Mufti,* nor are there palm trees to distinguish between Avadhi and Murshidabad. In addition, the high horizon line associated with Dip Chand's compositions and the Murshidabad style is lowered in *Portrait of a Mufti*.[81] Moreover, a light emanating from the right-hand side of the composition brightens the front of the mullah's robe and casts a shadow behind him.[82] The preoccupation with light and light sources is usually associated with an Avadhi aesthetic, as seen in Mīr Kalān Khān's *Shujā' al-Daula Entertained by Actors* (fig. 11) and in the anonymous artist(s)' *Portrait of Nawāb Shujā' al-Daula with Two Pictures of Beauty* (fig. 10). Based on these formal elements, *Portrait of a Mufti* is likely part of Bahadur Singh's repertoire while he lived in Avadh.

Portrait of a Mufti can be assigned to Avadhi based on its formal qualities. Using the same premise of style, however, scholars have questioned the artist's hand and the painting's provenance. As stated, Bahadur Singh's signature appears on one version of the painting *Portrait of a Mufti*. According to Malini Roy, this signature is most likely a scribal error, written at a later date. Instead, she posits that *Portrait of a Mufti* was completed by the Avadhi artist Mihr Chand, stating directly that the "problem lies in the signature or inscription in the lower left corner, which states that this painting is the work of Bahadur Singh. . . . Therefore it could be suggested that an eighteenth century scribe incorrectly attributed this work to Bahadur Singh instead of

[80] Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism," 42.
[81] Malini Roy, *Idiosyncrasies in the Late Mughal Painting Tradition: The Artist Mihr Chand, Son of Ganga Ram (fl. 1759–86)* (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, 2009), 133.
[82] Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of the Awadh Culture* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 155.

Mihr Chand."[83] According to Roy, Mihr Chand was known for "blue-green distances, bushy trees distributed towards the horizon and grey cloud-bands above formalized cumulus clouds. A similar style was adopted by other artists, notably Bahadur Singh who evidently worked in close collaboration with Mihr Chand at Faizabad and later in Lucknow."[84] Based on the representation of the landscape with its low horizon point and the softening of the grass into a pale blue color, Roy concludes that the painting must have been by the artist Mihr Chand.[85] Losty, on the other hand, argues that the distinctive landscape of diminutive trees and aerial perspective is in keeping with Dip Chand's, Mihr Chand's, and Bahadur Singh's styles.[86] Toby Falk concurs with Losty, stating that Bahadur Singh changed style because he needed to please different patrons: "court," "local patrons," and "Europeans."[87] As a result, both Falk and Losty conclude that *Portrait of a Mufti* is by Bahadur Singh.

I am not invested in whether Losty's or Roy's assertion is correct. I am more interested in the ways in which style can be mobilized to secure and detach artists and to question time and place. Roy pinpoints a crucial facet of the painting, which is the transition from green to blue in the background. This feature had previously been connected only to the hand of Mihr Chand. And now the *Portrait of a Mufti* suggests that multiple artists, including Bahadur Singh, utilized Mihr Chand's idiosyncratic style. This debate between two knowledgeable art historians shows that signatures can be questioned and that an artist's "distinctive" style can morph and mutate. If signatures are debatable as is an artist's stylistic consistency, how are we to ascribe works to artists in less secure situations such as when signatures are not present? In other words, when we

[83] Roy, "Idiosyncrasies in the Late Mughal Painting Tradition," 133.
[84] Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office*, 136.
[85] Roy, "Idiosyncrasies in the Late Mughal Painting Tradition," 133.
[86] Losty, "Towards a New Naturalism," 49.
[87] Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office*, 136.

attribute a work to an artist, we presume stability or clear aesthetic parameters of an artist's hand. As the debate with *Portrait of a Mufti* shows, there is stylistic instability in even the most widely regarded artists.

For nearly every visual fact, counterfactual visual evidence can be marshaled. For instance, Dip Chand's *Mir Qasim Ali Khan* (fig. 19) hovered between the Murshidabad and Avadhi styles, leading to taxonomic collapses. In the visual details of *Portrait of a Mufti*, one can argue that Bahadur Singh, Dip Chand, and Mihr Chand were in dialogue with one another and interacted with one another across stylistic schools. They possibly saw each other's work through charbas, or perhaps they worked together in the same workshop. If these are options, why are we separating artists into schools and enforcing borders when they were peripatetic? Nidhāmal presents another interesting case study, inhabiting the interstices of multiple styles and places. His painting *Nobleman Reclining on a Couch by Moonlight* (fig. 17) conveys the late Mughal, Avadhi, and Murshidabad styles. Why should we try to assign this painting to a single school?

The discipline of South Asian art history craves stylistic schools of paintings that are distinct. Curators, art historians, and collectors undertake a number of steps, which I have outlined, to differentiate among schools of style and arrive at provenance. These steps include pinpointing minuscule details such as the types of trees included, shading techniques, and color palette as well as the facial features utilized. Working with paintings such as *Princess and Maids Listening to Music on Terrace* (fig. 15) and *Portrait of a Mufti* (fig. 20), I have covered which details separate paintings into which stylistic schools. Using *Portrait of a Mufti* once more while also weaving in *Mir Qasim Ali Khan* (fig. 19), I showed how such parameters could be undone and dismantled. In the pursuit of stylistic purity, classificatory stalwarts of style such as signatures were questioned. In the eighteenth century, Murshidabad artists such as Dip Chand

and Bahadur Singh were as much a part of the regional courts of Avadh as they were of Murshidabad's. We should let their styles straddle the boundaries between schools, and not try to resolve their differences.

D. Conclusion

In Avadh, the nawabs surrounded themselves with intellectuals, poets, and artists to emulate the imperial court of the Mughals. The better their intellectual/cultural production was, the more prestige and authority the new court gained. To say that the Avadhi court produced bad, unsuccessful, depraved, or erotic art is equivalent to saying it couldn't command real artists to give it cultural prestige. In this regard, paintings from Avadh have been characterized as appealing to the "escapist mood" thanks to their compositional focus on love and feminine representations.[88] As such, Avadh's feminized paintings have been construed as political failings. According to this logic, political entails sponsoring portraits of men, representations of war, and scenes of a diplomatic court. On the other hand, femininity, intimacy, and representations of sex are posited as apolitical. Such art historical evaluations are connected to colonialism and the paradigm of oriental despotism. While such judgments are easily dismantled, I have moved away from an easy deconstruction and instead advocated for a reconsideration of the labeling system. Paintings considered good or bad, beautiful or ugly, restrained or erotic are all formally interchangeable and cohabitate the same theoretical space. I wanted a better way to approach the phenomenon of Avadhi painting that moved away from these binaries.

Such an endeavor is not meant to eradicate style; it is more of a push for the discipline to incorporate paintings heretofore considered to be stylistic outliers. The territory of Avadh, and in consequence the painting produced in Avadh, was unsettled in the eighteenth century. The

[88] Andrew Topsfield, *Paintings from Mughal India* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2008), 152.

dominion of the nawabs of Avadh expanded, contracted, and had contested borders. Rather than sanction a bounded notion of place and style, throughout this chapter I have focused on the visuality of Avadhi paintings to enable insights on the transregional flow of ideas and art occurring throughout eighteenth-century North India. From Delhi to Avadh to Murshidabad, artists were on the move. By focusing on paintings that have been considered outliers or that do not fit neatly into the either/or category, I have showed how our notions of style can move more toward the premise of contact zones. A new name for Avadhi painting could therefore be the transregional style of North India. While the name is not easily condensable for museological exhibitions, it evokes the complex artistic networks that accompanied the production of miniature paintings in eighteenth-century India in and around the court of Avadh.

CHAPTER THREE

RĀGAMĀLĀ: ISLAMIC, HINDU, OR EROTIC ART?

Rāgamālā paintings are an indigenous art form from South Asia. The genre depicts anthropomorphized musical notes, which contain erotic imagery as well as images of heroes (nāyak) and heroines (nāyikā), lovers and beloveds, and Hindu deities. *Rāgamālā* literally translates to "garland (mālā) of tonal frameworks (rāga)." The earliest textual description of the rāgamālā genre is from the fifth century. The oldest recorded rāgamālā painting album is dated to 1475.[1] Pictorial depictions of rāgas are thus a later development with an ambiguous relationship to musical poetic treatises. Throughout the course of its patronage history, the rāgamālā genre continued to transform. Once examples started to enter museums in the twentieth century, museum personnel classified some rāgamālā painting albums and folios as obscene and as pornography. From a purely textual form to a visual personification, and thence to a purely erotic signifier, the rāgamālā genre has acquired a host of new meanings.

A common painting in the rāgamālā series is known as a dīpak rāga, which is meant to invoke the amorous sentiment. The standard composition of a dīpak rāga usually shows two lovers embracing at night next to fire or candles. Figure 1 contains the standardized imagery of a dīpak rāga, with the obligatory sets of candles included. One is the middle of the composition right below the couple, and the second set is on the left-hand side. The nocturnal setting further sets off the candles' illumination and the iridescent glow of the moon. The composition also augments the dīpak rāga's conventional iconography by showing two lovers in the midst of copulation rather than depicting them merely in an embrace. The male figure's erect penis is

[1] Klaus Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting* (Basel: Ravi Kumar, 1972), 30; Catherine Ann Glynn, Robert Skelton, and Anna L. Dallapiccola, *Ragamala Paintings from India: From the Claudio Moscatelli Collection* (London: Philip Wilson, 2011), 15.

clearly visible. His feet are placed on top of hers so that their legs do not obscure the act of penetration. The artist of the painting shown in figure 1 was visually careful in drafting this scene. The line formed from his shin to her shin mirrors the line of his erect member, which further draws the viewer's eye to this intimate act. With slight variations in compositions as in the case of this dīpak rāga folio, rāgamālā paintings had standardized erotic imagery that varied in degree of intensity based on patronage needs and artistic desires.

This chapter traces the visual and textual transformations of folios such as figure 1. Moreover, I track how over the course of the history of these paintings, they were both textually and visually eroticized. While these images have so far not been classified as Islamic art, I argue that the rāgamālā genre, especially its erotic imagery, should be folded into Islamic art history since it contains Islamicate ideas such as the lover/beloved category (ʻashiq/maʼshūq).

Fig. 3.1. *Dīpak Rāga*. Album 32. Folio 1b (ca. 1825–1925)
Lucknow Style. From the Raza Library in Rampur
250 x 170 mm. Labeled as pornography

Overall, I provide a brief overview of the visual genre of rāgamālā paintings for those unfamiliar with its visual iconography A. Section B is a short introduction to the textual history of rāgamālā paintings and their sponsorship in Indo-Persianate courts. Section C focuses on the Indo-Persian text *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* to show how its writer, Thakur Das, and its patrons, most likely the nawabs of Avadh, aligned the genre of rāgamālā paintings with an Islamicate axis. Section D follows how the images of the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* painting album, *J.42*, contain both erotic and Islamic concepts. Section E further explores how the nawabs of Avadh visually reimagined the rāgamālā genre. By analyzing the new visual contexts of rāgamālā folios, I argue that the nawabs of Avadh favored rāgamālā paintings because of the *rasa* (emotional affectivity) in the rāgamālā system and its congruence with the Persianate category of love (ʻishq).

The two key terms in the title of this chapter, "Islamic" and "erotic," represent not only two different sets of viewing practices but also radical acts of translation that transformed the meaning of rāgamālā paintings beyond the "Hindu" paradigm first established in the colonial era. In short, as a result of the work of both nationalist and colonialist art historians, rāgamālā has come to be seen as an indigenous and Hindu art form free of both European and Muslim influence.[2] I show, however, that these two descriptors, "Islamic" and "erotica," are vital ways of conceptualizing rāgamālā painting, helping us think outside of a purely Hindu categorization. They also both have historical precedent. Both terms coalesce around the same manuscript, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā,* and its painting folios found in the *J.42* rāgamālā album. Therefore, the two categories of "Islamic" and "erotic" were not mutually exclusive. In addition, litterateurs of the court of the nawabs of Avadh remarked on the erotic nature of rāgamālā paintings as well as their Islamicate features. Elsewhere I have discussed how other rāgamālā painting albums have been categorized as obscenity and as pornography in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Without completely discarding the designation of erotic or favoring any of these views as more authentic than another, I interrogate the tension between these descriptors and ask: what kind of work will these images perform as Islamic and erotic art for the respective academic disciplines of South Asian and Islamic art history?

A. Brief overview of the rāgamālā genre

This section summarizes the key features of what constitutes the rāgamālā genre. Rāgamālā paintings pictorialize rāgas, Indian melodies that are composed of five to seven notes. These paintings are also known as sound forms. A rāga's visual and musical structure expresses moods or a set of emotions such as melancholy, passion, and serenity. Each melodic composition

[2] Harold S. Powers, "Classical Music, Cultural Roots, and Colonial Rule: An Indie Musicologist Looks at the Muslim World," *Asian Music* 12, no. 1 (1980): 26.

features various seasons, landscapes, deities, lovers, and humans. Courtship, quarrels and reconciliation, scenes of prayer, and entertainment by jugglers are common motifs. Rāgamālā paintings were bound into an album format containing thirty-six to forty-two folios of various musical notes.

Commonly, rāgamālās were patronized both as loose-leaf folios and as painting albums. Over time, the materiality of rāgamālās shifted away from paper, and rāgamālā iconographies were soon featured on royal tents and in murals.[3] Their iconographies differ slightly from region to region within India, though a shared formula in the depiction of each rāga persists across different time periods, different painters, and different courts.[4]

Fig. 3.2. *Saindhavi Rāginī*, wife of Bhērōn
From the *Impey Rāgamālā* India, Bengal, ca. 1760–73
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
34.9 x 25.9 cm (folio with borders), 23.2 x 15.8 cm (painting without borders)
The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, In 65.7[5]

To turn to a specific example, figure 2 personifies a subset of the bhērōn rāga—the sīndhī rāginī. In the composition, there is a female mendicant in a temple complex seated on a tiger skin listening to a musician playing the vīnā. The prayer beads, the serpent-like creature wrapped around the primary figure's arm, and the hide on the ground recall the Hindu god Shiva. Bhērōn rāgas are directly associated with the god Shiva, and Shiva is usually portrayed in the standard bhērōn rāga composition. Since the sīndhī rāginī falls under the bhērōn rāga, it makes senses that its iconography would invoke Shiva. Furthermore, the bhērōn rāga creates a more somber mood compared to other rāgas. This is reinforced by the miniature's compositional format. The mood of serenity is conveyed through the soft color palette of pinks and blues. The figural bodies are also restrained. Their limbs are set close to their bodies, and each occupies their own space. They

[3] Milo Cleveland Beach, "Wall-Paintings at Bundi: Comments and a New Discovery," *Artibus Asiae* 68, no. 1 (2008): 101–43.
[4] Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, 15.
[5] Linda Leach, *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings*, vol. 2 (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995), 672, figure 6.272.

are neither elated nor upset. Their facial expressions seem at peace as they gather together to play and listen to music.

There is no consensus among scholars as to the exact relationship between music, as practiced by musicians in India, and rāgamālā paintings such as figure 2, which visually personify a set of musical notes. There are a few anecdotes of artists and musicians working in concert to construct a painting album, but it seems most likely that both groups of artisans were inspired by one another and were involved in one another's platforms on a very limited basis. Therefore, while there are standardized forms—for example, as discussed above, the incorporation of candles and an amorous embrace signifies a dīpak rāga and including a mendicant, Shiva iconography, and a somber composition means a sīndhī rāginī—how this standardized process arose is still under debate, and how artists choose to deviate from this base remains speculative.

Currently, the rāgas are codified under a filial system in which six primary rāgas are personified as males, who procreate with five females (rāginīs). In rāgamālā sets, the offspring of the rāga (male) and rāginī (female) relationships are depicted as sons (rāgaputra) and daughters (rāgaputri). To understand the different permutations of the various pairings and to comprehend why some artists chose to feature sīndhī rāginī in their albums while others did not, art historians have been tasked with classifying albums into categories based on whether there are textual captions that refer to historical poetic treatises and/or through the iconographic structure of the album. For instance, there are two main categories: the Hanumān and Mesakarna systems.[6] Author Hanumān wrote a musical treatise in the eleventh century that included the major rāgas of bhērōn and dīpak, along with others by authors not mentioned so far, including mālkōs, hindōl, srī, and mēgha. These male rāgas are depicted with eight sons and/or with five wives.

[6] Glynn, *Ragamala Paintings from India*, 19–20.

Artists adapted this system into albums that usually had thirty-six or forty-two folios.[7] Mesakarna's manuscript was completed in 1570 and had the greatest transference for artists trained in the Pahari style. His treatise has the same main six rāgas coupled with thirty-one rāginīs, producing forty-nine putras. Pahari artists, following Mesakarna's formula, had varying permutations for their album folios, ranging from eight-six folios to two hundred and forty.[8]

And yet, within each organizational model such as the filial system, there were varying degrees of malleability and creativity for each miniature.[9] Tushara Bindu Gude remarks, "Scholars have . . . tended to dismiss . . . iconographical inconsistencies as instances of scribal or painterly confusion. Yet such confusion appears to have been a feature of the visual tradition since its very inception."[10] Because of the adaptability of the genre, this chapter does not arrange rāgamālā painting albums from Avadh into rigid structures such as the Hanumān and Mesakarna systems. Instead of specifying how each painting album adheres to these formulas, my aim is to show how shared iconographies within rāgamālā painting albums maneuver across various patronage systems and courts, acquiring different religious significations. To return to the dīpak rāga of figure 1, the artist was able to adapt common motifs from dīpak rāga and repurpose it to his own ends. This artist was not unique in his endeavor. Such transformations were a "feature" of rāgamālā albums since their "inception."

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[7] O. C. Gangoly, *Rāgas & Rāginīs: A Pictorial & Iconographic Study of Indian Musical Modes Based on Original Sources,* vol. 1 (Bombay: Nalanda Publications, 1948), appendix 33; Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, 18, 28.
[8] Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, 64.
[9] Molly Emma Aitken, "Transcendence and Desire in Ragamala Paintings," in *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, eds. Debra Diamond and Molly Emma Aitken (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2013), 222.
[10] Tushara Bindu Gude, *Between Music and Theory: Ragamala Paintings and European Collectors in the Late Eighteenth Century Northern India* (PhD diss., UCLA, 2009), 90.

B. Indo-Persianate patronage

Rāgamālā paintings invoke Hindustani music, which as a musical genre has Indo-Persianate features. Through providing a genealogy of Muslim patronage for the musical form of rāgas and the artistic practice of rāgamālā paintings, I demonstrate the ways in which the rāgamālā genre operated, both musically and aesthetically, in an Islamicate register beginning in the fourteenth century.[11] This overview makes it clear that the nawabs of Avadh were not singular in their integration of the rāgamālā form into their courtly aesthetics. The rāgamālā genre included Islamicate ideas throughout the early modern period.

The majority of past and contemporary scholars have seen rāgamālā paintings as a Sanskritic and indigenous South Asian art form. South Asian Sanskritic musical treatises such as the fifth-century *Nāṭyaśāstra* are said to be this art form's textual touchstone. Besides older Sanskritic manuals, rāgamālā paintings borrow visual imagery from texts such as *Barahmasa*, twelve-month cycle, and sixteenth-century devotional literature such as *Rasamañjarī* of Bhānudatta and *Rasikapriyā* of Keshavdās (1555–1617).[12] Colonial officers such as William Jones easily pigeonholed rāgamālā painting as a "Hindu" art form both because the form contains Hindu iconography and because of its ties to Sanskrit manuals. Ananda Coomaraswamy undertook this conflation most thoroughly in 1916 in his book *Rajput Painting,* in which the sectarian label of Hindu was transplanted into the rāgamālā form by privileging Sanskrit texts.[13] Tapati Guha Thakurta notes that afterward Rajput aesthetics, including rāgamālā painting,

[11] Madhu Trivedi, "A Congenial Space: The Cultural Context of Indo-Persian Synthesis in Medieval North Indian Music," in *Indo-Iran Relations: Papers Presented at the Seminar Held in February 2001,* ed. Shah Mohammad Waseem (New Delhi: Iran Culture House, 2008), 129.
[12] For a list of paintings inspired by the Rasmanjari text, see Bhānudatta Miśra, *Bouquet of Rasa and River of Rasa,* trans. Sheldon I. Pollock (New York: New York University Press, 2009), xxvi.
[13] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Rajput Painting: Being an Account of the Hindu Paintings of Rajasthan and the Panjab Himalayas from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century Described in Their Relation to Contemporary Thought* (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1916), 65.

became synonymous with Indianness or, as I would say, Hinduness.[14] As a result, rāgamālā painting albums have so far mainly been studied alongside Sanskritic culture, Hindu religiosity, and in particular Rajput patronage.[15]

Prior to our contemporary understanding of rāgamālā painting, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, musicologists consulted Sanskrit texts and adapted theories of Persian-Arabic music and applied them to the rāgamālā system. One of the earliest known Persian treatises on Hindustani music, *Ghuniyat al-Munya* (ca. 1374–1375), was written during the reign of Sultan Firüz Shah Tuglaq (r. 1351–88) by an anonymous author who was well trained in Persian, Arabic, and Indian music.[16] The Muslim governor of Gujarat, Malik Shams al-Din Ibrāhīm Hasan Abū Rajā, commissioned this text and like other Indian rulers who patronized musical texts, he sponsored and supported the arts of rāgas as part of his proper, courtly conduct (ādāb).[17] For some, it was also considered a branch of scientific knowledge (‘ilm).[18] A variety of textual manuals such as tazkiras and tarikhs tie the genesis of Muslim patronage of rāgas to Amīr Khusrow Dihlavi (1253–1325), a composer, poet, and musician associated with the seven rulers of the Delhi Sultanate in the thirteenth century. To be clear, Amīr Khusrow Dihlavi did not invent the rāga system. He is credited with transforming parts of rāgas into a musical speech

[14] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *The Making of a New “Indian” Art: Artists, Aesthetics, and Nationalism in Bengal, c. 1850–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 166.
[15] Most notably in Milo Cleveland Beach, *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1974). See also Linda York Leach’s use of the term “Hindu ragamala” in *Paintings from India* (London: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1998), 102, 187, 232; and again in *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library* (London: Scorpion Cavendish, 1995), 618, 672.
[16] Françoise “Nalini” Delvoye, “Indo-Persian Literature on Art-Music: Some Historical and Technical Aspects,” in *Confluence of Cultures: French Contributions to Indo-Persian studies*, ed. Françoise Nalini Delvoye (New Delhi: Manohar, 1994), 101; Delvoye, “Indo-Persian Accounts on Music Patronage in the Sultanate of Gujarat,” in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, eds. Muzaffar Alam, Françoise Nalini Delvoye, and Marc Gaborieau (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2000), 256–58; Shahab Sarmadee, *Ghunyat-ul-Munya: The Earliest Known Persian Work on Indian Music* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1978).
[17] Delvoye, “Indo-Persian Literature on Art-Music,” 94.
[18] Ibid., 96.

known as khyāl and with creating several new rāgas.[19] He is a foundational figure, as both musician and poet, in forging an interest in Indo-Islamic music.[20] As Dihlavi's corpus exemplifies, the transformation and translation of the rāgas into a Persianate framework during the Sultanate of Delhi in Gujarat and Delhi was a product of the interaction between Sufis and Hindu bhakti cults, which both utilized music in their devotional practices.[21]

Fig. 3.3. *Gauri Rāginī*
Northern Deccan, ca. 1575–1600
Bequest of Edwin Binney 3rd, Los Angeles County Museum (M.90. 141.2)

Beginning in the sixteenth century in the Indo-Islamicate courts of the Deccan (a central region in South Asia), local elites patronized rāgamālā paintings.[22] A series of loose folios, ten in total, are the first visual examples that can be tied to the Deccan. They were completed in the cities of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar in the 1560s (fig. 3).[23] The *Javāhir al-mūsiqāt-i Muḥammadī* (The jewels of music of Muhammad, ca. 1570) is considered one of the oldest rāgamālā manuscripts with pictorial depictions. It was produced by Shaikh ʻAbd al-Karim with a later dedication added by ʻAli ʻĀdil Shāh of Bijapur (r. 1557–79).[24] It is largely a Persian translation of the Sanskrit text *Saṅgīta ratnākara* and includes forty-eight miniatures.[25] The miniature below, figure 4, is part of this manuscript and showcases a subset of the mālkōs, a meditative

[19] Bonnie C. Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India's Classical Music Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1–19.
[20] Delvoye, "Indo-Persian Literature on Art-Music," 113.
[21] Wade, *Imagining Sound*, 147–52; Tushara Bindu Gude, "Between Music and Theory," 176.
[22] Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy* (New York: Yale University Press, 2015), 60; George Michell and Mark Zebrowski, *Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 153.
[23] The identity of the patron for this series is unclear. Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar, *Sultans of Deccan India*, 60–63; Mark Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting* (London: Sotheby Publications, 1983), 40–59; Glynn, *Ragamala Paintings from India*, 23.
[24] Michell and Zebrowski, *Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates*, 162; Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting*, 63; Katherine Schofield, "Indian Music in the Persian Collections: The Javahir al-Musiqat-i Muhammadi (Or.12857). Part 2," British Library (2014). http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2014/10/indian-music-in-the-persian-collections-the-javahir-al-musiqat-i-muhammadi-or12857-part-2.html#sthash.SsAtPXPc.dpuf; Katherine Ruth Schofield, *Hindustani Music in the Time of Aurangzeb* (PhD diss., SOAS, 2003), 41; J. P. Losty, "Early Bijapuri Musical Paintings," in *An Age of Splendour: Islamic Art in India*, eds. Karl J. Khandalavala and Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1983), 128–31.
[25] Schofield, "Indian Music in the Persian Collections: The Javahir al-Musiqat-i Muhammadi (Or.12857). Part 2."

rāga. It has the standard iconography of a mālkōs rāga: the figure has long, plaited tresses, a golden *choli* (blouse), and a necklace around her neck. The snakes are another reference to the Hindu deity Shiva. As Schofield explains, in the *Javāhir al-mūsiqāt-i Muḥammadī*, ʿAli ʿĀdil conceptualized the Indian rāgas in alignment with Islamicate humeral medicine, natural sciences, and ethical teachings (akhlāq) in the service of his courtly legitimacy.[26] Besides the *Javāhir al-mūsiqāt-i Muḥammadī*, ʿAli ʿĀdil Shāh of Bijapur sponsored the *Nujūm al-ʿulūm* (Stars of science, ca. 1570), which is an astrological treatise dedicated to astronomy and magic conveyed through a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim "symbology."[27] Another seminal Muslim figure, Ibrāhīm ʿĀdil Shāh II (r. 1580–1627), a sultan of Bijapur, was renowned for his patronage of music and paintings. He wrote the *Kitab-i Nuaras*, a book of fifty-nine songs, which describes the nine rasas (essences) of Indian aesthetic theory, Hindu deities, rāgas and rāginīs, and Muslim saints.[28]

Fig. 3.4. *Asavari*, the second rāginī of Mālkōs
folio 102r of *Javāhir al-mūsiqāt-i Muḥammadī*
British Library Or.12857

In the Mughal courts, rāgas, both musically and pictorially, were patronized. Akbar (r. 1556–1605) was the first Mughal ruler to heavily patronize music. He employed many musicians and artisans from Iranian cities such as Mashad, Khurasan, and Herat.[29] The most famous musician during this time was Tānsen (b. 1493 or 1506–d. 1586 or 1589), who joined the court in

[26] Ibid.; Schofield, "Hindustani Music in the Time of Aurangzeb," 189–201.
[27] Schofield, "Indian Music in the Persian Collections: The Javahir al-Musiqat-i Muhammadi (Or.12857). Part 2." See also Mark Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting*, 61–63; Emma J. Flatt, "The Authorship and Significance of the Nujūm al-ʿulūm," *JAOS* 131, no. 2 (2011): 223–44; E. J. Flatt, *Courtly Culture in the Indo-Persian States of the Medieval Deccan: 1450–1600* (PhD diss., SOAS, 2009), 251; Debra Hutton, *Art of the Court of Bijapur* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 50–69. It has been concluded that the *Nujum al-ʿulūm* was not produced by the Bijapuri royal workshop but was bought by a Bijapuri ruler at a later date.
[28] Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting*, 70; Navina Najat Haidar, "The Kitab-i Nauras: Key to Bijapur's Golden Age," in *Sultans of the South: Arts of India's Deccan Courts, 1323-1687*, eds. Navina Najat Haidar and Marika Sardar (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 26–43; Debra Hutton, *Art of the Court of Bijapur*, 70–72, 97–119.
[29] Wade, "Imagining Sound," 29.

1562.[30] Paintings completed in Akbar's imperial workshop regularly depicted the musical instrument bīn (vīnā), which is associated with the Hindu deities Sarasvati and Parvati and with bhakti musicians. As Bonnie Wade argues, Akbar's inclusion of this instrument in his visual program was an effort to mark himself as a "divinely inspired monarch."[31] Figure 5, *Akbar and 'Abdul Rahim*, is one such image in which a bīnkār (vīnā player) is featured at the court of Akbar. The main composition centers on Akbar receiving Abdu'r Rahim, the four-year-old son of Bairam Khan, at his court. The bīnkār is located on the lower right, and its inclusion in this scene, Wade argues, is to augment Akbar's prestige as a truly Indo-Islamicate ruler.

Fig. 3.5. *Akbar and 'Abdul Rahim*
ca. 1586–1589, painted by Anant
V&A IS.2-1896 7/117

The *A'īn-i Akbarī* (ca. sixteenth century), sponsored by the emperor Akbar and written by his vizier Abu'l Fazl, is the third volume of the *Akbarnāma*, which contains information on imperial administrative reports, statistical returns of Indian provinces, and judicial matters. The *A'īn-i Akbarī* volume is divided into five books and includes information on modes of governing, with the fourth book being dedicated specifically to Hindu philosophy, literature, and the musical synthesis between the Hindustani and Persianate systems. For instance, in chapter 64 of the *A'īn-i Akbarī*, Abu'l Fazl briefly describes the relationship of rāgas with particular emotions (rasa).[32] Later, Abu'l Fazl includes philosophical, "technical, and emotional knowledge" on the subject of

[30] There is debate as to whether they converted to Islam or remained Hindu. 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Lucknow, the Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* (London: Elek. 1975), 134; 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar and Muḥammad Ikrām Cughāī, *Guzashtah Lakhnaū: Hindustān men Mashriqī Tamaddun kā āk̲h̲irī Namūnah* (Lahore: Sang-i Mīl Publications, 2006), 179–80. Tānsen has attracted scholarly attention since his arrival in the Mughal court in 1562. For a primary source, see Abū al-Fazl ibn Mubārak, *Akbarnāmah*, vol. 1, trans. Henry Beveridge (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 2010), 279–80. For an overview, see Françoise "Nalini" Delvoye, "The Image of Akbar as a Patron of Music in Persian and Vernacular Sources," in *Akbar and His India*, ed. Irfan Habib (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 188–214; Wade, *Imaging Sound*, 113–17; Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, "A Contemporary Portrait of Tansen," *Lalit Kala* 1–2 (1956): 11–21.
[31] Wade, "Imagining Sound," 159, 234; Delvoye, "The Image of Akbar as a Patron of," 196, 214.
[32] Abū al-Fazl ibn Mubārak, *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, vol 3, trans. Henry Blochmann (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873), http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00702050%26ct%3D0.

music.[33] Furthermore, he mentions the nāyikā-bheda, a categorization of kinds of heroines (nāyikā) and heroes (nāyak) found in Sanskrit, Brajbhasha, and Persian manuals in verse and song. Through meditation on each couple, a listener is led down the path of rasa.[34] There was a whole performance culture that included courtly songs, poetry, and music devoted to explaining the nāyikā-bheda, with different rāgas invoking different nāyikās.[35] Hence, each nāyikā was associated with both the emotional effects of the rāga and the visual iconography of each rāga.[36] In the *A'īn-i Akbarī*, Abu'l Fazl mentions that the sringara rasa, the erotic sentiment, held a hallowed position.[37]

Hindustani music was further developed under the later Mughals such as Bahadur Shah (1707–1712) and Muhammad Shah (1719–1748).[38] The latter ruler was a famous singer who composed many khyals, a type of musical score that describes the exploits of a Hindu deity, Krishna.[39] Leading Muslim court musicians such as Na'mat Khan and Firoz Khan composed "lyrics on Hindu subject matter among other themes."[40] During this time, Muslim musicians monopolized the Hindustani music tradition in Muslim courts as well as Rajput courts.[41] An

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[33] Tushara Bindu Gude, "Between Music and Theory," 178.
[34] For more information on the *nāyikā* in Persian treatises see Carl W. Ernst, "Indian Lovers in Arabic and Persian Guise: Āzād Bilgrāmaī's Depiction of Nāyikas," *Journal of Hindu Studies* 6 (2013): 37–51. Other Persian treatises that featured the *nāyikā* bhedha were Mīrzā Khān ibn Faḫr al-Dīn's *Tuḥfat al-hind* (Gift from India) (ca. 1674–75), written in the court of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), and Faqīr Allāh Sayf Khān's *Rāg Darpan* (ca. 1666). Katherine Butler Schofield, "Learning to Taste the Emotions: The Mughal Rasika," in *Telling and Texts: Music, Literature and Performance in North India* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 410.
[35] Trivedi, "A Congenial Space," 150; Schofield, "Learning to Taste the Emotions," 411.
[36] J. P. Losty, "Turning the Heroine's Head: The Emergence of the *Nāyikā* Form in Medieval Indian Manuscript Painting," in *A Celebration of Love: The Romantic Heroine in the Indian Arts*, ed. Harsha V. Dehejia (New Delhi: Lustre Press, 2004), 23–29.
[37] Sahitya, http://persian.packhum.org/persian/main?url=pf%3Ffile%3D00702050%26ct%3D0.
[38] Yuthika Sharma, *Art in between Empires: Visual Cultures and Artistic Knowledge in Late Mughal Delhi, 1748–1857* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 46. She discusses late Mughal sponsorship of rāgamālā painting.
[39] Wade, *Music in India*, 170; Delvoye, "The Thematic Range of Dhrupad Songs," 416; Tushara Bindu Gude, "Between Music and Theory," 180; Wade, *Khyal*, 12; Katherine Butler Brown, "The Origins and Early Development of Khayal," in *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by Joep Bor et al. (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010), 159–94.
[40] Tushara Bindu Gude, "Between Music and Theory," 180.
[41] Janaki Bakhle, *Two Men and Music*: *Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 81; Tushara Bindu Gude, "Between Music and Theory," 195.

important Persian treatise, *Muraqqa-i Delhi* (1739–41), written by Dargāh Qulī Khān, was a firsthand account of the city of Delhi in the eighteenth century and described important poets, singers, and musicians.[42] During the eighteenth century, performers migrated to the neighboring courts of Murshidabad and Avadh, and irrespective of their religion adapted to their patrons' aesthetic tastes.[43]

During the decline of the Mughal Empire, courts such as Murshidabad and Avadh maintained the practices initiated in the Delhi Sultanate, Deccani, and Akbari periods. In these satellite courts, rāgamālā aesthetics were patronized in music, painting, and in textile depictions. The nawabs of Murshidabad (Bengal), who were contemporaries of the nawabs of Avadh, sponsored several embroidered tent panels and depicted themselves in rāgamālā painting cycles in the 1760s.[44] Previously, it had been common to see Rajput nobles insert themselves as nāyak (hero) figures into rāgamālā albums. This was the first recorded instance of members of an Islamicate court weaving their portraits into the iconographic landscape of rāgamālā painting. Robert Skelton was the first to note that Siraj ud Daula of Murshidabad (r. 1727–1739) included himself within a hindōl rāga painting, an amorous rāga in which lover and beloved are depicted on a swing.[45] Two other folios in this series have surfaced depicting Siraj ud Daula in a visant rāga and a dīpak rāga, which also capture amorous moods.[46] Roselyne Hurel argues that various

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[42] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa'-e-Delhi: The Mughal Capital in Muhammad Shah's Time*, trans. Chander Shekhar and Shama Mitra Chenoy (Delhi: Deputy Publication, 1989).
[43] Tushara Bindu Gude, "Between Music and Theory," 176; Madhu Trivedi, "Tradition and Transition: The Performing Arts in Medieval North India," *The Medieval History Journal* 2, no. 1 (1999): 79–80.
[44] Jasleen Dhamija, *Asian Embroidery* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2004), 30; Tushara Bindu Gude, "Between Music and Theory," 203; Ellen S. Smart and Daniel S. Walker, *Pride of the Princes: Indian Art of the Mughal Era in the Cincinnati Art Museum* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 1985), cat. 69; J. P. Losty, "Indian Painting from 1730 to 1825," in *Masters of Indian Painting*, 580–581.
[45] Robert Skelton, "Murshidabad Painting," *Marg* 10 (Bombay 1956): 10–22. Siraj ud Daula's *Hindola Rāga* (ca. 1755) is in the collection of Mrs. D'Archy Hart.
[46] "Folio from a ragamala series: Vasant Ragini. Murshidabad, circa 1755. Opaque watercolour with gold on wasli. 27.5 x 17.3cm," *Indian Miniature Paintings,* accessed December 10, 2016, http://www.indianminiaturepaintings.co.uk/Murshidabad_Vasant_Ragini_000611.html

folios of another rāgamālā album depict the Murshidabad nobleman Zain ud-din Ahmad Khan.[47] Another painting, a *Kedari Rāgini* composition (fig. 6), presents a possible portrait of Nawab Mir Qasim ʻAli (r. 1760 –1763).[48] Thus, these rulers of Murshidabad asserted pictorial and courtly control of an elite genre of painting, one that spoke to various religious spheres such as bhakti and Sufism. The Murshidabad nawabs and their courtiers sponsored rāgamālā paintings, much as the Mughals patronized books, in an effort to create a visual "manifestations" of their "enforcement of rule" for their diverse constituents.[49] Another aspect worth stressing is that by placing themselves as nāyak figures in their rāgamālā albums, the nawabs of Murshidabad proclaimed themselves pillars of masculine beauty. Their cultural refinement and attractiveness meant that their followers, who came from various sects of the local population, were bound to their rule.

Fig. 3.6. Possible portrait of Mir Qasim
Kedara Rāgini, ca. 1760
V&A IS.19–1958

Expanding on this recent scholarship that documents how Indo-Persianate courts and Muslim rulers patronized rāgamālā paintings and musical treatises, I demonstrate that from 1754 to 1856 the nawabs of Avadh sponsored rāgamālā paintings and folded the genre into an Islamicate genealogy. For instance, Avadhi poetic treatises such as the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* cite Islamic prophets such as David to explain how rāgamālā paintings were actually a subset of Islamicate music and art. In Lucknow, the nawabs of Avadh along with European colonial officers collected rāgamālā miniatures as complete rāgamālā albums and as individual folios, which were later placed within muraqqaʻ (chapter 4).

[47] Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, Smith-Lesouëf, 245; Roselyne Hurel, "A Ragamala Painted at Patna for Zain Ud-Din Ahmad Khan, Nephew and Son-in-Law of Alivardi Khan," *Artibus Asiae* 74, no. 2 (2014): 303.
[48] V&A IS.19–1958: *Kedara Rāginī*, ca. 1760.
[49] Wade, "Imagining Sound," 12.

C. The Islamization of rāgamālā treatises under the nawabs of Avadh

In the eighteenth century, the nawabs of Avadh commissioned their own translations for rāgamālā texts and paintings.[50] The Avadhi poetic treatise the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā,* completed in 1744, shows that the nawabs and the courtiers considered Avadhi rāgamālā texts to be part of their Islamicate aesthetic. Moreover, I will analyze the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* to discuss how the thematics of Hinduism were rendered intelligible for Islamicate audiences in Avadh. Previously, this manuscript remained untranslated. This is the first time any scholar has attempted a reading of the text. Throughout this section, my argument is that theoreticians in Avadh understood rāgamālā paintings and treatises such as *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* to be multivalent, which gave them license to create linkages to an Islamicate past and which ultimately enhanced the scribal work undertaken in previous Indo-Persianate courts such as the Mughals and the Deccan.

The nawabs of Avadh technically severed ties with the Mughal court in 1818, but they still relied on Mughal symbols and courtly practices to enhance their courtly legitimacy for their subjects.[51] From this Mughal cultural legacy, the nawabs of Avadh maintained their patronage of Hindustani music and rāgamālā paintings. ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar, in his oft-cited text on the Avadhi court, retraces the history of rāga patronage in Indo-Persianate courts by citing Akbar, his musical teacher Tānsen, and the poet Amīr Khusrow in his narrative (fig. 7). Similarly, Sharar notes that the mass exodus of artists to Lucknow, Avadh, after the sack of Delhi in 1739 included musicians who went to Lucknow from Delhi in search of patronage. He concludes that the nawab Shujāʻ al-Daula's "liberal" (faiẓi) ethos was the deciding factor that attracted musical experts

[50] Ethnomusicologists have extensively studied Lucknow as a hub for musical patronage. See Peter Manuel, *Thumrī in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives* (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1989); James Kippen, *The Tabla of Lucknow: A Cultural Analysis of a Musical Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Richard David Williams, *Hindustani Music between Awadh and Bengal, c. 1758–1905* (PhD diss., King's College London, 2014).
[51] Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707–48* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 16.

from across North India.[52] Earlier and later scholars have corroborated Sharar's account. In the *Muraqqa-e Delhi* (1739–41), Dargāh Qulī Khān notes that in the Avadhi cities of Faizabad and Lucknow, Hindustani music was heavily patronized.[53] Recent scholars such as Peter Manual and Madhu Trivedi have investigated the Avadhi city of Lucknow as a site of Hindustani music patronage and have researched the devotional lyrics produced in Lucknow, which resonated in Sufi and bhakti circles. Trivedi notes, for instance, that Nawab Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797) considered music an 'ilm (science) and sponsored musical treatises that further developed theories and principles along these lines.[54]

Fig. 3.7. Akbar (left) and Tānsen (center) visit Swāmī Haridās (right)
Kishangarth School. Second half of eighteenth century
National Museum, New Delhi[55]

The *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, a Persian text produced in North India, intensifies claims that there is an Islamicate meaning undergirding rāgamālā painting and music. Thakur Das wrote the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* in 1744, most likely in Delhi.[56] Lal Thakri recopied it for the British civil servant Richard Johnson on May 13, 1779, and utilized both the Hijri calendar and the Bengali calendar to mark the occasion.[57] Johnson collected the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* manuscript either in Lucknow or in Calcutta, as he had a basic level of Persian comprehension.[58] On June 29, 1776, in describing his daily routine in Calcutta, Johnson wrote, "I give an hour or two to the

[52] 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* (London: Elek, 1975), 134. 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Guzashtah Lakhna'ū* (Lahore: Sang-i Mīl Publications, 2006), 180.
[53] Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa'-e-Delhi*.
[54] Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 129.
[55] Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, "A Contemporary Portrait of Tansen," *Lalit Kala* 1–2 (1956): 11–21.
[56] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 14r. Hijri: Muharram 1188. Bengali: 1181.
[57] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā,* folio 14r. Following a Bengali calendar system, Lal Thakri gives the "month of Baisak on the 30th of 1186," which is equivalent to May 13. With the Hijri calendar, he states, "1193 25th rabia'th thani (rabi' II)," which is May 12, not May 13.
[58] Richard Johnson was appointed assistant resident of Lucknow from 1780 to 1782. Before then, he was mainly in Calcutta. Because Lal Thakri recopied the text in 1799, it is unclear whether Johnson resided in Calcutta or Lucknow at the time of transcription. Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1981), 323. Falk and Archer suggest the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* was commissioned in Calcutta.

attainment of Arabic and Persian and part of that time, I attach my private correspondence and letters of the society of Croftes and Johnson [his side business]."[59] Given this language schedule, it is unclear how much Johnson could glean from his Persian manuscripts. Even if he could not fully comprehend the text, however, he still found the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* worthwhile enough to commission artists to transform the manuscript into a rāgamālā album, *J.42*, in 1780 while he was stationed in Lucknow.

Other copies of Thakur Das and Lal Thakri's text have not surfaced.[60] It most likely circulated in Delhi, Lucknow, and Calcutta in the latter half of the eighteenth century. As figure 8 demonstrates, Lal Thakri copied Thakur Das's text in the naskh script, a type of calligraphy that expedites the writing process. The text is more legible in Richard Johnson's 1780 rāgamālā album, *J.42*, which will be discussed in greater depth in the following section. Based on the difficulty of reading the manuscript, especially for novice learners such as Johnson, it is likely that Johnson relied on local scribes and teachers to read aloud this text and other similar manuscripts in his collection.

Fig. 3.8. *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*. folio 1r
BL I.O.R. Pers. Ms.1739; Ethe (1903), no. 2018

Thakur Das begins the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* by introducing the different types of rāgas and rāginīs of India (of hind). He notes that experts (māhirān) and masters (kāmilān) hold opposing views on the origins (ibtidāī) of music and rāgas, and that God (Allah) has guided his own journey in deciphering this scientific knowledge ('ilm) of music.[61] This narrative conceit of a "disagreement (ikẖtilāf kard)" allows Thakur Das to reposition rāgamālā music through an Islamicate origin story. He states:

[59] JRL Mss. Eng. 191: Letter 71.
[60] O. C. Gangoly, *Rāgas & Rāginīs,* vol. 2, plate 111, suggests there is another version of the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* in Hindi. No such text has been located.
[61] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā,* folio 1r.

> Islam (ahl-i Islām) and religious states (jamāhīr) with rational, reasonable (aqlanī) peoples (anām) hold that the monstrous (hailāī) element (unsar) of man was composed (tarkīb) and made solid (tartīb) through the assistance (madad) of the powerful (qudrat) and glorious (subḥān) God (īzid). At this time, the essence (jauhar) of the soul desired to enter (daḵẖūl) the place which emitted a strange (ta'jīb va ġarīb) sound (ṣautī) and which was outside God's (ilāhī) powerful veil (parda). This sound stripped (mujarrad) away the essence of the soul's consciousness and senses (bī-hosh va madhūsh). After which, the soul was willing (rāġib) to be incarnated (ḥulūl) in the body (qafs), which would become a cage of its elements ('unsarī). This is also in accordance with the sultan of sheikhs, the red ruby (ol) of knowledge and sciences (ma'ārif), the offspring (sara) of holy (quds) God (Allah), Sheikh Nizāmulddīn Aludīn Aūlīya, who claimed that on the day of the covenant (mīsāq) he heard the words of truth (kalām ḥaqq) of God by means of a tune (ahang). In his narration, Nizāmulddīn Aludīn Aūlīya did not exaggerate (iġrāq) or give false (taẓyī') details.[62]

In Thakur Das's history of rāgas, God inaugurates sound, which later penetrates the soul of man. By stating that rational people believe in this rāga creation myth, Thakur Das makes it so that the reader of this treatise must accept Das's narrative. By citing Nizamuddin Auliya, the fourth Sufi saint of the Chisti order in India, Thakur Das further creates a genealogy for rāgas that gives prominence to the geography of India.

After this origin story, Thakur Das discusses how musicians in India (ahl-i hind) perceive music as being co-constitutive with divinity such as the divs who aided rāgas and rāginīs. In his discussion of one particular rāginī of dīpak rāga, kernātak rāginī, Thakur Das connects the kernātak rāginī to the prophet David,[63] stating, "In his heart, the nāyak became astounded (madhūsh) and inebriated (mast) through desirous (ishtiyāq) wine. Then, [kernātak] sang with her larynx (ḥanjara), which sounded as if she was the companion (sharīk) and female slave (kanīz) of David the prophet (dāwud). Her audience and her nāyak lauded (mauṣūf) her performance."[64] According to Islamicate sources, God revealed to David the book of Psalms (zabur) and the prophet's subsequent recitations of the zabur brought his listeners, including

[62] I would like to thank Farzad Akmali for providing me with a rough translation of this text. Afterward, I was able to re-translate all of the manuscript on my own. As a result, all translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 1v.
[63] The prophet David is also mentioned in the descriptions of the Hindōl Rāga, folios 7r–7v.
[64] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 8v–9r.

animals, joy.[65] Thakur Das repurposes this Islamicate story of David to elevate the sacrality of kernātak rāginī's singing and create a level of intelligibility for readers who may be well versed in Islamicate history but not entirely on sure footing with the rāgamālā canon.

After furnishing a description for each rāga, Thakur Das provides a taxonomy for the rāgas through the category of set sars, or seven branches, which was first proposed by Tānsen, the musician employed in Akbar's court.[66] While explaining the set sars, Thakur Das claims:

> These seven sars have a range of compositions (maqāmāt) that together are called Keram. There are two ways (rāyat) that rāgas were transferred from monsters (divs) to man (insān). According to the first method, in the ancient past (aiyām peshīn), men and monsters would encounter one another (muwājaha) and socialize (ikẖtilāt). Suddenly during these interactions (hangām), men seized (farā-girifta and) this scientific knowledge ('ilm).[67] This opinion (qaul) is in accordance with the historical narrative (riwāyat) of Islamic historians (muwarrakẖān ahl Islam), who wrote that Gayumars, the first king (pādshāh) on earth, killed many of monsters (divān) to avenge (intiqām) the death of his son.[68]

In this instance, Thakur Das reconnects rāgas back to the Mughals and Tānsen to create Islamicate anchor points. He also associates rāgas with the figure of Gayumars, the creator of the world in Zoroastrian and Persianate creationism. Gayumars is a well-known character in Ferdowsi's famous Persian text *Shahnama* (Book of kings). In the *Shahnama*, Gayumars is described as a ruler who dons a leopard skin while he speaks to all animals. A famous miniature painting, *The Court of Gayumars*, which was completed in 1522 in Tabriz, Iran, shows the resonance of the Gayumars tale in both Persia and South Asia (fig. 9). By folding the story of Gayumars into the history of rāgas, Thakur Das equips rāgas with a Persianate past. Furthermore, the reader draws connections between Gayumars and the prophet David, as they were both able

[65] Quran, Saba 34:10; Quran, Saba 38:18–19. From Saba 34:10: "We bestowed grace aforetime on Dawud from Ourselves. O ye mountains! Sing you back the praises of Allah with him and you birds also." https://quran.com/34/10. From 38:18–19: "It was We that made the hills declare in union with him Our praises at eventide and the break of day and the birds all with him turned to Allah." https://quran.com/38/18.
[66] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 12v.
[67] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 12r–v. Das states that Tān Senan from Akbar's court proposed the set sars. He adds in a mystical element by stating that humans can master only three sars, whereas and four are reserved for monsters.
[68] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 12v.

to speak to all living creatures. As a result, music, including the rāgas, is aligned with a distinctively Islamic and Persianate history.

Fig. 3.9. *The Court of Gayumars*, folio 20v from *Shahnama*
47 x 32 cm
Tabriz, Iran (ca. 1522)
Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, AKM165

Thakur Das continues, stating,

> After the battle, out of fear, many monsters moved to remote (dūr) spaces and concealed (mastūr) themselves from the gaze of man. They remained in this sorrowful state until the kings (mālikan) of the Deccan land (mulk dekan), which had hundreds of thousands of monsters (div lakh), performed magic (saḥr va jādū ḥāẓir namūdah) so that they could remember the knowledge (ʿilm musiqi) of music once again.

Through recitations of the "Brahman language of Sanskrit, they once again praised Mahādev and his son."[69] In Thakur Das's history of rāgas, the same monsters that Gayumars mastered in a Persianate and Zoroastrian world arise again in the Deccan (South India). Gayumars does not usually have a literary connection with the Deccan, but Thakur Das maneuvers the narrative device of Gayumars to create a seamless story between India, Persia, and Islam. Even while writing in Persian, Thakur Das identifies Sanskrit and not Persian as the unique language that is able to conjure divine spirits.

Thakur Das concedes that this manuscript is compilation of notes (mu'lif aurāq) that he acquired through conversations with other musicians and writers.[70] One of the ways that Thakur Das's story is consistent with a number of Indo-Persian rāga treatises is through his renarration of Amīr Khusrow's role in establishing rāgamālā as a form of musical art for Muslims. Thakur Das states:

> Amīr Khosrow was concealed (panhān) under the throne (taḵẖt) of Sultan Muhammad Tughluq Shah when the [musician] Nike Gopal recited and sang a concert (saṅgīt). At his dexterous (farāsat) display, Amīr Khosrow either memorized (ba-ḵẖātir dāshtah) his form or altered (tagaiyur) the words (alfāz) so that they (qaul) became more elegant (rangīn).

[69] Ibid.
[70] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 14r.

> Later, both Nike Gopal and Amīr Khusrow attended (ḥuẓūr) a majlis and recited their music. [Afterward,] Nike Gopal was astonished (mutaḥaiyir) with Amīr Khusrow's musical recitations."[71]

Amīr Khusrow's role in disseminating rāgas for an Islamicate and Indo-Persianate audience is foundational for many Indo-Persianate musical texts.[72] Thakur Das must include this story in his Islamization process for the rāgamālā to show that Muslim musicians were not only participants in the system but also inventors like Khusrow. Anecdotes like Khusrow's show that Thakur Das's mental map did indeed rely on past Persianate treatises. It is interesting to note that Thakur Das mentions Khusrow not at the beginning of his treatise but toward the end. Thakur Das concludes his treatise on the rāgamālā system by repeating all the names of the rāgas and rāginīs and giving praise to the 'ilm, or the scientific elements within the rāgamālā system.

In the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, Thakur Das translates the rāga system into a Persianate and Islamicate register by positioning it as a broader, syncretic devotional art that is not only about Hindu gods but also about a monotheistic praise of God. He achieves this by weaving in interrelated fragments of Islamicate motifs such as David, Gayumars, and Khusrow. In 1744, Thakur Das needed to craft a text that met the wishes of his patron in North India. Its scribal repetition in 1799 speaks to the durability of its message not only for Muslim courtiers but also for European colonial agents who took an interest in Hindustani music theory and its arts. The text was copied multiple times not only because of its multi-religiosity but also because of its utility as a political resource. As Thakur Das concludes his text, "Authorities (ḥākim) have become very informed and learned (wāqif) on every rāg and rāginī. By doing so, they will probably (shāyad) know how to become strong and powerful (qadr quwwat va qudrat) and

[71] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 13v–14r.
[72] O. C. Gangoly, *Rāgas & Rāginīs,* vol. 1 (Bombay: Nalanda Publications, 1948), 38–40.

exercise control (iḵẖtiyār) and power (tuwān) over all earthly (arẓ) inhabitants (sākinān)."[73] According to Thakur Das, various courts, regardless of their religious orientation, could reappropriate the power connected to the aesthetics of the rāgas and rāgamālā for their own political ends.

The *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* is not an outlier. Three musical texts, *Uṣūl al-Naġamāt-i Āṣafī* (composed in 1793), *Ma'din al- Mūsiqī* (1858), and *Naghma-yi 'andalīb* (1850), are hallmarks of this era and were produced in northern India around Avadh. Ġulām Riżā ibn Muḥammad Panāh completed *Uṣūl al-Naġamāt-i Āṣafī* (Principles of the melodies of Asaf), during the reign of Nawab Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797). It discusses art and musical theory in northern India,[74] classifies the rāgas based on scale instead of relying on the filial model of rāginī putra, and claims a scientific basis for Hindustani music.[75] Another oft-cited musical treatise is *Ma'dan al-Mūsiqī* (The mine of music), which was completed by Muhammad Karam Imām Khān Unnami in Urdu shortly after the annexation of Avadh.[76] It discusses musical theory and performance techniques. Besides these two treatises, Nawab Wājid 'Alī Shāh (r. 1847–1856), the last ruler of Avadh, is still remembered today for his love of music and for erecting his own music school. He penned musical treatises such as *Banī* and *Saut al-Mubārak* (Voice of the blessed, 1852–53), which remarked on his court musicians and their musical performances.[77] Muḥammad Riẓā B. Abul Kasim completed the *Naghma-yi 'andalīb* in 1850 and constructed it as a tazkira (a text on poetic theory) dedicated to Wājid 'Alī Shāh. *Naghma-yi 'andalīb* contains two main *rauzah*

[73] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 14r.
[74] 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, 134. Sharar notes that in the time of Asaf ud Daula, "No better book has ever been written about the art of Indian music." 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Guzashtah Lakhna'ū* (Lahore: Sang-i Mīl Publications, 2006), 181.
[75] Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, 129–30. Gangoly, *Rāgas & Rāginīs*, vol. 1, 67.
[76] Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, 131; Muḥammad Karam Imām Khān, *Ma'dinul mūsīqī* (Lahore: Bazm-i Rang, 1965); Regula Buckhardt Qureshi, "A Mine of Music History from Nineteenth Century Lucknow," in *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Joep Bor, Françoise Nalini Delvoye, Jane Harvey, and Emmie TeNijenhuis (New Delhi: Manohar, 2010).
[77] Richard David Williams, "Hindustani Music between Awadh and Bengal," 110–113, 140–148.

(parts), one of which centers on Persian poetry with sections on Persian grammar, meter, and rhyme, and provides a list of poets with their key poetic quotations. The second part is on Greek and Indian music. In the text, Muḥammad Riẓā expresses strong sentiments on how Hindustani music is aligned with Sufic and Quranic principles.

Avadhi musical treatises were coded with Islamicate features much as such treatises were in Deccan and Mughal Delhi. In both the visual and textual realms, artists and musicians relied on litterateurs to open up new avenues of thought on Hindustani musical history. To this end, authors of musical treatises such as Thakur Das created a chain of citation to create textual legitimacy. This chain also allowed them the freedom to improvise and rework the history of rāgas. For instance, Thakur Das's Indo-Persianate text coalesces around the figure of Akbar to make room for later musical patronage such as from the nawabs of Avadh. Through employing authors such as Thakur Das to restage Hindustani musical history, the nawabs of Avadh arrived at a shared language of musical arts with the Mughals and with local Hindu courtiers. The Mughals also sponsored visual depictions of Hindu deities such as Shiva and Krishna, which became a vital part of their courtly language.[78] While musical texts such as the *Risala-i Rāgamālā* still retain an underlying notion of difference between "people of Islam (ahl-i Islām)" and "the peoples of Hind (ahl-i hind)," the authors strove to show that there were similar musical sensibilities across South Asia that extended into Persia. By combing through textual sources from Avadh, the nawabs' mental framework for rāgamālā paintings is revealed. I contend that their sponsorship of rāgamālā painting was part of their erudition and civilized behavior (adab)

[78] I take a slightly different position from Prashant Keshavmurthy, who states that musical texts have been ideologically distorted though the insertion of current theological political identities of Muslim and Hindu. While I do agree that under national rhetoric rāgamālā has been identified mainly as a Hindu art practice, the texts do shore up rigid identities in order to arrive at a syncretic musical experience. Prashant Keshavmurthy, "Tuḥfat al-hind," in *Perso-Indica; An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions*, eds. F. Speziale and C. W. Ernst, available at http://www.perso-indica.net/work/tuhfat_al-hind-1. Accessed May 8, 2013.

as seen in the historical courts of the Delhi Sultanate, the Deccan Sultanate, and the nawabs of Murshidabad.

D. Image and text in the *Risala-i Rāgamālā* album (*J.42*)

Richard Johnson, who collected a copy of *Risala-i Rāgamālā* in 1779, later juxtaposed the text with a rāgamālā painting album, *J.42*, in 1780.[79] For rāgamālā album *J.42* and its *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* textual captions, Richard Johnson commissioned at least four artists—Udwat Singh, Mohan Singh, Ghulam Reza, and Gobind Singh—to complete its thirty-five folios.[80] The album is dated to 1780 by a leather album bookplate that also tells us that the album was constructed right to left in the Persian fashion. In 1807, the British Library acquired this album along with the rest of Johnson's book collection. Around 1830, Charles J. Mickle, clerk at the library from 1808 to 1832, undertook a formal valuation of Johnson's picture albums in a catalogue titled *List of the Oriental Drawings Belonging Chiefly to Mr. Johnson's Collection*.[81] Charles J. Mickle requested the censorship of some of Johnson's albums, including *J.42*, which he stated should be "destroyed" because it was "excessively obscene."[82] The album was never destroyed but was kept in private storage until 1954, after which the folios were disbound from the album covers. Today, the individual folios have been catalogued separately to aid art historians and students in

[79] The following ragas are represented in *J.42*: bhērōn rāga, madhamāda rāginī, bhēravī rāginī, bangālī rāginī, varātī rāginī, sīndhī rāginī, mālkōs rāga, tōdī rāginī, khēnbhāvatī rāginī, gōri rāginī, gunakalī rāginī, kōkōbeha rāginī, hindōl rāga, vilāval rāginī, rāmkarī rāginī, dēvasākha rāginī, patmanjarī rāginī, lalit rāginī, dīpak, kedārī rāginī, karnātak rāginī, dēsī rāginī, kāmūd rāginī, nat rāginī, srī rāga, vasant rāginī, mālav rāginī, mālasrī rāginī, dhanāsrī rāginī, asāvarī rāginī, mēgha rāga, malārī rāginī, dēsakārī rāginī, bhūpālī rāginī, gūjarī rāginī, tankāri rāginī. All of the rāgas in *J.42* are listed in the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*.

[80] Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, 215, figure 98. He suggests that the album follows the Hanuman organizational system and that the arrangement of *J.42* more or less corresponds to the Hanuman's system of rāgas and rāginīs. See also Ernst Waldschmidt and Rose L. Waldschmidt, *Miniatures of Musical Inspiration in the Collection of the Berlin Museum of Indian Art* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1967), 542, figure 35.

[81] Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures*, 307. Catalogue Eur. D.486 is dated to 1820 in the British Library. On one of its folios, there is watermark of 1826. A flyleaf on the catalogue reads 1830. Hence, Falk and Archer have dated the catalogue to 1830. I have followed accordingly.

[82] BL IOR. Eur. D.486, folio 19v.

their research. To understand the different reactions to album *J.42* that have deemed it everything from Islamicate to obscene, a visual and textual analysis of its individual folios is necessary.

By studying the *Risala-i Rāgamālā* holistically, the relationship between image and text is illuminated. Usually, images are more easily eroticized than a text. Mickle, for one, could only see the image and he had a visceral response to images of copulation. During the process of removing individual folios from rāgamālā albums, Mickle like other museum personnel flattened their meaning into the museological categories of pornography and obscenity. By translating the text, I provide new insights into how these images were sieved into an Islamicate register that is not necessarily aligned with the obscenity label. However, the textual descriptions of *J.42* are actually more erotically charged than its images. The rāgamālā genre's erotics do not disappear in the translating process. It is part and parcel of the rāgamālā genre. Rather than ask if Mickle was correct in assessing this *J.42* album and other similar rāgamālā albums as obscene, I am more invested in how erotics in both image and text operated within the album as a whole.

Fig. 3.10. *Madhyamadi Rāginī* by Ghulam Reza
BL Prints and Drawings Album J.42, folio 2

The first folio in the sequence, folio 2, represents the madhamāda rāginī and the painting falls under the subset of the bhērōn rāga. The composition features Shiva with Madhamāda (a nāyikā or rāginī) on a terrace at sunset. Ghulam Reza, the artist of this miniature, painted Shiva in a bluish-gray hue and placed him on a roof next to his lover, their legs entwined in an amorous embrace (fig. 10). Shiva clearly places one hand on Madhamāda's breast. They occupy the main space of the composition, with the bushes, trees, and mountains parted to the right and left to make room for their centrality. The symmetrical balance of the background is reminiscent of many compositions produced in Lucknow and in Muhammad Shah's court in Delhi (chapter 2). The composition is drained of color. The miniature appears to have been completed in the *nim-*

qalam fashion, as a pen-and-ink drawing with light washes. Johnson perhaps chose the nim-qalam style because it expedited the artist's coloring process.

The caption is an excerpt from the *Risala-i Rāgamālā*. Thakur Das describes a madhamāda rāginī in the following manner:

> The Madha is the first rāginī of Bhērōn. She has a golden (tilā'i) glow, long (darāz) tresses wave like the pattern of a hyacinth (musalsal saṃbul), arc-like eyebrows, an auspicious (farḵẖunda) forehead, and on her head a freckled (sīs). . . . She wears pearl (dur) earrings (āweza) on her ears (bunāgosh). She has intoxicating (maḵẖmūr) almond (bādām) eyes, a nose (bīnī) similar to a beak of a bird (minqār), red (suḵẖ) smiling (tabassum) lips, and like a blossoming pistachio (pista) she has a happy stature (ḵẖush qamat). She has circular [breasts?]. . ., a slender (bārīk) waist (kamar), and buttocks (sirīn) that resemble the hump (koha) of a cow (gā'o). She wears a dress (peshwāz) of silver brocade (zarī). . . . And on her body is a red cloth (sālū) done by Avadhi work. She is a master (māhir) at the play of love ('ishq bazī) and coquetry (firīb bazi). She stands smiling cheerfully with her husband. Her husband places both his hands on her shoulder (dosh) out of extreme joy (khūshī kamāl). On her rosy (gūl-gin) face, he gives kisses to his lover (ma'shūqa), acquiring repetitious (dam be-dam) sweet (ḥalāwatī) fresh (tāza) kisses in return.[83]

On the one hand, the text could be read as a *dhyana*, prayer formula, examples of which were commonly utilized in Rajput rāgamālā folios.[84] On the other, it is also likely that Johnson ordered his artists to line up the text to the corresponding imagery so that they could act as explanatory headings. For instance, the text states that the nāyikā has mastered the various stages of love play ('ishq bazī). The miniature visually demonstrates her mastery by showing her passionately kissing her lover (fig. 10). Thakur Das's detailed list of madhamāda's attributes is only selectively depicted. Her "golden" skin is depicted through a bright yellow choli (blouse). Her "long" hair does hang past her waist, with slight curls visible cascading down her back.

Fig. 3.11. *Kōkōbeha Rāginī* by Udwat Singh
226 x 137 mm
BL Prints and Drawings Album J.42, folio12

The next amorous miniature is the twelfth in the series, which depicts a kōkōbeha rāginī

[83] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 4v.
[84] Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, 28, 30, 112.

of the mālkōs rāga sitting on a bed in the midst of copulation, with food and drink in the foreground. The text reads:

> The fifth is the Kōkō Behā or Kakob Rāgnī of Rāgmāl Kōs. She is very beautiful (ḥasīn), has a silver fair (sīmīn) body, a face (rū) like the moon (qamar) and as bright (duruḵẖshān) and beautiful as the moonlight on the fourteenth (a full moon). She has a silvery (sīm) facial complexion inclined a little (andakī) to yellow (zardī), and tresses (zulf) that curve (kaj) around her face. She has braided (bāfta) her long (darāz) hair to below her waist and has fixed (nasb) golden jeweled (murassa‘) small boxes (ja‘ba) under her hair. The curve (ḵẖam) of her eyebrows has the appearance of a drawn bow (kāmān) and her eyelashes (muzhagān) resemble upright (rāst īstāndan) arrows. She boasts intoxicating (ḵẖumār-ālūd) eyes (chasm) that look askance (kaj nigāh). She is coquettish (kirishma sāz) and bashful (sharmnāk). She has an upright (rāst) nose like the letter *a* (alif) and her red (surḵẖ) smiling (tabassum) lips are like a pistachio (pista). She has a red (surḵẖ) gown (peshwāz) embroidered with a silver thread (zarī) and other necessary (lawāzima) clothes. She also has a five-piece (panch lazzi) emerald (zumurrud) necklace and other jewels that have made her body more treacherous (firīb) and coquettish (bā nāz). She is a master at heart-ravishing (dil-rubāy) agreements (muwāfiq), commands (aḥkām), and recipes (nasḵẖa), which is the science (‘ilm) of copulation (mubāsharat). In India (ahl hind), the term (iṣṭilāḥ) for such practices is kamashāstra. She tries (mubtalā) copulation (mubāsharat) with her nāyak.[85]

The above inscription alludes at various moments to the rāginī’s sexual mastery. It opens with the name of Kok, author of the *Kokashāstra*, an Indian sex manual written around the eleventh century. Besides this citation in the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* manuscript, Kok’s name appears in the Persian musical treatise *Naghma-yi ‘andalīb* (ca. 1850) in describing the erotology of the nāyikās. Moreover, toward the end of the inscription, the rāginī is described as a master of the *Kamashāstra* manuscript.[86] At that juncture, the rāginī is twice directly associated with copulation (mubāsharat). Most likely, the artist, Udwat Singh, depicted a scene of copulation because of the appearance of the name Kok and the mention of the *Kamashāstra* in the textual heading. The miniature is not graphically painted except for a hint of the nāyak’s testicles, which peek out underneath his thigh.

[85] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 6v.
[86] Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures*, 171.

The rest of the textual description does not correspond much with the image (fig. 11). The nāyikā's elaborate jewels are not depicted, and her hair is barely featured, though both are explicitly mentioned in the text. The inclusion of the food in the foreground, however, could allude her to prowess with concocting recipes (nasḵẖa) that aid in her sexual affairs. The symmetrical balance provided by the pillars in the canopy and the tops of the trees in the background once again reinforces the main figures of kōkōbeha rāginī and her nāyak.

The artist Ghulam Reza completed the thirteenth miniature in this *J.42* album, which is of the hindōl rāga (fig. 12). It includes the standard iconography of the hindōl rāga, with the nāyak sitting on a swing surrounded by his lovers. This composition is populated with more figures than in other miniatures such as figures 10 and 11. A small group of women, two on each side, flank the nāyak. Unlike other rāgamālā albums, as shown in figures 1 and 2, the compositions of the *J.42* album are generally sparse. There is a lack of spectatorship via court assistants watching and listening to the nāyak or the nāyikā. As such, the principal nāyak/nāyikā continues to hold the viewer's main focus. While figure 12's composition is busier thanks to the inclusion of waterfowl and surrounding lovers, it still relies on symmetry to reinforce the nāyak's central position.

Fig. 3.12. *Hindōl Rāga* by Ghulam Reza
BL Prints and Drawings Album J.42, folio 13

The text of the hindōl rāga is much longer than the other excerpts. It reads:

> He has a silvery (sīm) body (andām) and a face as luminous (tābān) as the moon on the fourteenth (a full moon). He has lovely (maʿshūqāna) clothes that are red like the flowers (gul) of a pomegranate (anār). He wears an ornament (sar-pech) that is a little rose (gulaki) covered with gold and jewels (murassaʿ) and a necklace (ḥamāʾil) of pearls (marwārīd) around his neck. He sits on and is accompanied with (lawāzima) a dignified (shaukat), lovely (maʿshūqāna) cradle (mahd) that is braided with golden jewel-covered (murassaʿ) strings (rasan). The beloved (maʿshūqa) embraces (āg̲osh) intoxication (nashā) and is confounded (madhūsh) by lust (shahwat-mast). He has a bīn instrument (bājā) on his shoulder. He is especially beautiful (jamāl) like kāmadēva (the Hindu god of human love). His lovers (maḥbūba-āsh) and companions (sharīk) sing (surod) with him while drinking

> wine from their ruby (yāqūt) goblets (piyāla). With companionship (shirākat), he (maḥbūba) has an affectionate (mail) disposition (tab‘). Several (chandīn) female slaves (kanīz) who are beautiful (ḵẖūb-rū), heart-ravishing (dil-āwezān), and moon-faced (māh-rū) surround him to his left, right, front, and back. They slowly rock the cradle (mahd) with sensual pleasure and delight (‘aish o ‘ashrat) all the while speaking in coquettish, soothing expressions (adāī nāz) and making amorous gestures (kirishma). At the same time, while rocking the cradle, the jewelry on their hands emits sounds. In this wondrous (‘ajīb) state (ḥālat), the rāg is drunk (mast) and intoxicated (maḵẖmūr) with the wine of love (‘ishq). In all four directions, he looks askance (kaj nigāh) at the desert (ṣaḥrā‘ī) and at the verdant (sabza-zār), fresh (serāb) garden (bāg̲). During this time, the animals in the water, desert, and pasture (chār-gāh) return (bargasht) and journey (mutawajjih) home. Once the water animals (jānwar ābī) and desert birds listen (istimā) to his voice (āwāz) and song (naghma), they run in every direction (ba-har char taraf) out of happiness (farḵẖundagī).[87]

Hindōl Rāga (fig.12) corresponds almost exactly to the text. The nāyak retains the sarpech on his turban, and sits on a cradle while playing the bīn (as seen in fig. 5). The text heightens the passionate mood of the image by invoking the visceral sound of rattling jewelry and of his music. Though the text mentions that the waterfowl grow delirious at the nāyak's playing and run in every direction, in the image they appear quite rigid and ordered, perhaps as a result of the miniature style of painting, which emphasized static compositions. A few of waterfowl's heads are turned in a few directions. The *Hindōl Rāga*'s eye movements, which are described as being in all four directions, are depicted in the miniature through half-open eyes with the pupils upturned. Thus, the extreme movement emphasized in the text is distilled in the miniature format through subtle poses. Even his female companions' drunken escapades are visually rendered through small movements: a female on his left holds a wine glass, and a female on his right throws her head back due to inebriation.

Fig. 3.13. *Srī Rāga* by Ghulam Reza
BL Prints and Drawings Album J.42, folio 25

The artist Ghulam Reza also completed the twenty-fifth miniature, *Srī Rāga* (fig. 13). As in the *Kōkōbeha Rāginī*, in this *Srī Rāga* composition, the nāyak and nāyikā are rendered having

[87] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā,* folio 7r.

sexual intercourse. Moreover, as in the *Kōkōbeha Rāginī*, only the male nāyak's testicles are visible and no other genitalia are presented. The text reads:

> He has a beautiful (k̲h̲ṿash) face (paikar) and is a commander (sar-k̲h̲ail) of the rāgas. He has an appearance (shakl) like kāmadēva (the Hindu god of human love). His body is camphor (kāfūr) colored because of the effects of the flashing (duruk̲h̲shān) moonlight (mah-tāb). He is quite young (nau-jawān) and is a celebrated (ma'rūf) eighteen years old. He wears red clothes embroidered with silver thread (zari), elegant (mukallaf) jewels (zīwarāt), and a pearl (marwārīd) necklace (hār) around his throat. Above the ocean (daryā), with princely (mulūkāna) dignity (shaukat), he sits on a carpet made of serpents (mār) that is wondrous ('ajīb o gharīb) to behold. With a woman (zan), he purely (kamāl) desires (shauq) conversation (ik̲h̲tilāt) and to be occupied (mushg̲ūl) in sexual intercourse (mubāsharat). For his appearance (shakl), he is the most universally (shamil) celebrated (mauṣūf) rāg. [88]

The background of palm trees, mountains, and a small town is not mentioned in the text but is visually depicted. Pictorially the couple engages in sexual intercourse, an aspect that is directly mentioned in the text (mubāsharat). Other visual features remain faithful to the inscription, such as the bed of snakes that hovers over a body of water. In the composition, Ghulam Reza renders the snakes viscerally alive, with their tongues jetting out as opposed to the ambiguous description of eliciting wonder ('ajīb o gharīb). Moreover, textually the rāga is linked to Kāmadēva, the Hindu god of love who is an avatar of Vishnu. Vishnu in one of his incarnations sleeps on a bed of snakes (aheshanaga) with his consort, Lakshmi, above the ocean of creation. *Srī Rāga* imitates Vishnu's iconic posture.

Since Ghulam Reza is the primary artisan for both *Hindōl Rāga* (fig. 12) and *Srī Rāga* (fig. 13), there are some visual similarities between the paintings. For instance, the nāyak appears almost identical in both compositions, with his turban prominently featured. Ghulam Reza may have embellished his clothing since in both textual descriptions the nāyak's body is eroticized and his beauty is revered. By paying attention to dress, Ghulam Reza was beautifying his body in accordance with the spirit of the inscriptions. In *J.42* and in many other rāgamālā albums, both

[88] BL OMS/I.O. Islamic 1739, *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, folio 10r.

female and male beauty is taken into account, which promotes the overall amorous mood of the compositions.

Fig. 3.14. *Mālavi Rāginī* by Gobind Singh
BL Prints and Drawings Album 42, folio 27

Artist Gobind Singh completed the last amorous miniature in the *J.42* album, which is the *Mālav Rāginī* and is part of srī rāga series (fig. 14). In the composition, it is ambiguous whether the nāyak and nāyikā are in throes of lovemaking or if the nāyikā is merely sitting on the nāyak's lap. The text reads:

> She is extremely (bisyār) beautiful (ḥasīniya) with a beautiful (ḵẖūb) face (ṣūrat) that is moon faced (māh-rū). Her skin is the color of pure (ḵẖāliṣ) gold (tilāī). She has curly ringlets (pech) in her hair (zulf) that encircle her face. Her red eyes look askance (kaj nigāh) quickly (chust) and under vigilance (chālākī). Her eyebrows curve (ḵẖam) together (bā yak-digar). . . . She is swift-paced (tez-raftār). She wears men's (mardāna) clothes (poshāk) such as a turban (dastār) embroidered with silver thread (zarī) and a robe (jāma) of golden brocade (zar-baft). She wears an emerald (zumurrud) and diamond necklace, a ring (ḥalqa) of pearl (marwārīd) earrings. At night, full of pure lust (shahwat), she has walked (ḵẖirām raft) into his private room (ḵẖalwat-kada) to engage in sexual intercourse (mubāsharat). She appears to start a conversation (iḵẖtilāt) with her husband. Out of desire (shauq), she places both of her hands on his shoulders. From this embrace, she has made a necklace (ḥamā'il) out of love. She gives him kisses on his lips. The nāyak attempts (mubtalā) to shower love (dil-rezī) on his lover.

The visual scene corresponds almost exactly to the text except for the gender confusion. Minute details are included such as the pearl earrings, gold shirt, and the cascading curls on mālav rāginī's check. The text is surprisingly more graphic than the image. The kissing session is visually rendered. And yet, because of the static nature of the miniature painting style, the "passion" is absent. Upon first reading the text, the viewer might assume that mālav rāginī is on the right-hand side in the male clothing since the text describes her as wearing male dress. In Gobind Singh's version, however, she dons female clothing and sits on her husband's lap. This is reinforced by the fact that the female figure is the one with the gold shirt and the "curly" locks.

Singh thereby erases the most transgressive element of the text, the switching of gender-specific garments in order to engage in an illicit activity.

By examining only the erotic or amorous paintings in *J.42*'s thirty-five folios, I have provided a window onto why library personnel such as Charles J. Mickle found this album lascivious in 1830. In doing so, however, I am also complicit in heightening this painting album's reputation for lewdness. There are thirty other paintings that have no link to erotica. I ask: what do we lose by treating these images as individual folios and not as participants in an album and text's overarching meaning? The charge of vulgarity was a later value judgment by European and Indian collectors; in the eighteenth century, Europeans in Avadh were coproducing erotic imagery through their sponsorship of rāgamālā albums. Thus, Avadhi erotic paintings were not merely an output of the "degenerate" nawabs. European collectors such as Richard Johnson had an active hand in shaping and crafting Avadhi erotic painting albums.

Johnson's sponsorship of album *J.42* was a didactic move. Johnson's fluency in Persian is murky, but he probably had a teacher who could help him read the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*. To aid his Persian language acquisition, Johnson bought complete manuscripts. His brother Alexander Johnson solicited books on his behalf, writing on July 20, 1776, "You mention that there is a pundit at Fyzabad [Faizabad, city in Avadh] who would send a book or two down the country, if they could be received of him there: as there are several who have that title at Fyzabad. If you will let me know his name, I will procure the books of him and send them down, the first opportunity."[89] In patronizing rāgamālā albums, Johnson inserted musical treatises that would facilitate his comprehension of a foreign visual program. Johnson relied somewhat on the text to guide his visual collection, but he did take some liberties with the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*. In the overall visual construction of the *J.42* album, the more Indo-Persianate textual features of the

[89] JRL Mss. Eng. 173. Letter 14. See also letter 17 from this same volume.

Risāla-i Rāgamālā, such as the references to Nizamuddin Aliya and Gayumars, were suppressed. Two mentions of the prophet David still remain in *Kernātak Rāginī*, which was folio 21, and in the *Ramakali Rāginī*, which was folio 15 of the *J.42* album. By exercising the more Islamicate motifs found in the text, however, Johnson did slightly alter the meaning of *Risāla-i Rāgamālā* in his painting album. During the sale of his rāgamālā collection, Johnson asserted that his albums were a "Hindu" art practice.[90] One wonders why Johnson would make such a claim—especially if he could, indeed, understand the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*'s Islamicate references.

By arranging the composition of *J.42*, Johnson made his own alterations to the rāgamālā genre. From its very inception, the rāgamālā genre was manipulated and reworked. For instance, various Indo-Muslim rulers folded the painting genre into their existing knowledge on Persianate and Arabic music. Johnson's curation project is therefore not entirely divorced from what the rāgamālā form allows. Moreover, Johnson's project of *J.42* still relied on an Indo-Persianate text as his and his artists' guidepost. While we may never know how the nawabs of Avadh would have differed in their visual construction of *Risāla-i Rāgamālā,* in all likelihood it would have looked remarkably similar to Johnson's formulation. The only difference might have been that the nawabs of Avadh favored individual rāga and rāginī folios and would have placed them not in complete rāgamālā albums but in a variety of book genres.

Instead of relying solely on Mickle and Johnson's interpretations, by combining the image and text of *J.42*, I have focused on the transregional and vernacular connections between the Indic and Indo-Persianate courts that went beyond obscenity and the purely Hindu paradigm. At the heart of these transregional resonances was the erotic sentiment, which provided a shared knowledge base for the Persianate, Islamicate, and Indic visual systems. I argue that the erotic (sringara) was not merely a later imposition, but that this vein ran across the genre, which

[90] BL IOL E/1/115, folio 78; Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures*, 26–27.

attracted Indo-Islamic patrons such as the nawabs of Avadh. As seen in figures 10–14, the erotic constituted a vital component of the rāgamālā canon. In fact, the erotic was translated throughout the early modern period in various courtly settings, and operated in both Indic and Indo-Islamicate aesthetics.

E. New interpretations: muraqqa‘ and the erotic sentiment in rāgamālā

J.42, as a rāgamālā album, was not the only form by which rāgamālā folios were produced in Avadh. The nawabs of Avadh and their courtiers sponsored a number of rāgamālā paintings and placed them into new visual contexts. By studying how rāgamālā imagery functioned outside of rāgamālā albums such as loose-leaf folios and in muraqqa‘ albums, I trace how the nawabs of Avadh visually reconceived of the genre into an Islamicate register. Moreover, the conceit of eroticism operated in many of these new rāgamālā paintings patronized by the nawabs. To further understand erotica, I discuss more in detail *rasa*, emotional affectivity, in the rāgamālā system.[91] Rasa is translatable as to feel, taste, or savor. Its efficacy in music was to touch the heart of the listener. One of the most important of the nine rasas is sringara rasa, the erotic sentiment. In Muslim courts and Indo-Persianate literature, sringara rasa has been textually and visually filtered through the Persianate category of love (‘ishq). The travails of rāginī and nāyikā (heroines) awaiting their lovers, for instance, may invoke the rasa of sadness but also the possibility of a pleasurable union with the lover (sringara rasa).[92] On another plane, this same narrative may invoke the Persianate category of separation (firaq) and that of love (‘ishq).[93]

[91] Rasa in Indian miniature painting has been explored by B. N. Goswamy, *Essence of Indian Art* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1986).
[92] Allison Busch, “Hidden in Plain View: Brajbhasha Poets at the Mughal Court,” *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 267–309; Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 27, 33, 35.
[93] Aditya Behl, “The Magic Doe: Desire and Narrative in a Hindavi Sufi Romance, circa 1503” in *Indian Islamic Traditions, 711–1750*, ed. Richard M. Eaton (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 190, 194, 202; Schofield, “Learning to Taste the Emotions,” 411.

Various nawabs of Avadh patronized rāgamālā paintings as loose-leaf folios rather than bind them into complete rāgamālā albums like *J.42*. Nawab Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1814–1827) praised native artist Lala Thakur Das for his skills in both "oil and water colour painting" and painting "rāga and rāginīs series."[94] Lala Thakur Das's rāgamālā miniatures have so far not been located, but his signature appears on one miniature that is currently housed in the Raza Library in Rampur.[95] A number of rāgamālā paintings produced in Avadh by other artists survive in the Baroda Museum. According to Trivedi, these folios contain mostly "erotic" nāyikā compositions.[96] Klaus Ebeling, in his encyclopedic book on rāgamālā, agrees with Trivedi, noting that Avadhi rāgamālā painting (along with Murshidabad) contains "some very outspoken erotic scenes and an occasional portrait of a patron in the role of the nayak."[97] The largest cache of Avadhi rāgamālā albums is currently in the British Library and is derived from the collection of British civil servant Richard Johnson. Because Johnson assembled and reworked many of these Avadhi rāgamālā albums in the 1780s, it is difficult to decipher whether the nawabs of Avadh sponsored these albums or if they were Richard Johnson's doing alone.

The painters Mihr Chand and Mīr Kalān Khān, who worked in eighteenth-century Lucknow, produced beautiful rāgamālā-like folios. I say "like" because though their imagery corresponds well to the rāgamālā series, they have rarely been considered part of the canon. It is

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[94] P. C. Mukherji, *The Pictorial Lucknow* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2003), 180. It was first published in 1883. Lala Thakur Das has no relation to Thakur Das the writer of the *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*.

[95] Barbara Schmitz and Ziyaud-Din A. Desai, *Mughal and Persian Paintings and Illustrated Manuscripts in the Raza Library, Rampur* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 2006), 44; Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, 162.

[96] Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture*, 152–153, 166; Trivedi, *Cultural History of the Kingdom of Awadh* (PhD diss., Aligarh Muslim University, 1977), 57; Preeti Awasthi, *Awadh Congenial Home for Nurturing Arts—in Historical Perspective of Painting and Music (1722–1856)* (PhD diss., University of Lucknow, 2014), 99. Goetz never refers to any of the folios as rāgamālā paintings but merely describes them as generic love scenes: Goetz, "The Early Oudh School of Mughal Painting: Two Albums in the Baroda Museum," in *Bulletin of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery* 9, no. 1–2 (1953), 9–34; Madhu Trivedi, "Hindustani Music and Dance: An Examination of Some Texts in the Indo-Persian Tradition," in *The Making of Indo-Persian Culture: Indian and French Studies*, ed. Muzaffar Alam, Francoise "Nalini" Delvoye, and Marc Gaborieau (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2000), 285–86.

[97] Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, 44.

unclear how their rāgamālā-like folios would have operated within a complete book album. Although the visual context of these rāgamālā-like folios may be lost, by studying more closely their compositional iconography, some its eighteenth century vernacular meaning can be restored.

Fig. 3.15. Attributed to Mīr Kalān Khān
Mughal/Avadh, ca. 1765–1775
47.5 x 31.3 cm (page). 26.7 x 17 cm (painting)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art Acc. no. 1997.30.1

Mīr Kalān Khān is the attributed painter of figure 15, which shows a woman worshiping at a Saivite shrine.[98] Art historians have studied Mīr Kalān Khān's compositions for their remarkable use of light and shadow (chapter 2). In particular, in figure 15, two sets of fires punctuate the scene and illuminate the figures. While Mīr Kalān Khān's technique with light is of interest, the meaning of this miniature is also important. Figure 15 is no doubt in reference to the bhērōn rāga, which usually shows a female ascetic visiting a shrine, as seen in figure 2. In figure 15, a female figure performs acts of worship on the right-hand side of the composition, where the light of a diya (oil lamp) engulfs her. The Saivite elements usually associated with the bhērōn rāga can be found in the three mendicants, who wear saffron robes and bear Saivite markings on their foreheads (*tripundra*) as they sit by a fire in front of their hut. There is an ambiguous architectural structure in the background that could be either a mosque or a temple. The building has a *gumbad*, a hollowed dome, which was used in both temples and mosques. There also appear to be two minarets on either side. There are more mendicants in saffron robes within the structure, however, which furthers the argument that this is a temple complex. Figure 15 works simultaneously as a rāgamālā folio of the bhērōn rāga and as a quotidian snapshot of ascetic life. It does not necessarily have to be about rāga, as the composition functions as a scene

[98] Rosie Llewelyn-Jones, "Nawabs and Nayikas: The Romantic View from the Court of Lucknow," in *A Celebration of Love*, 217.

of everyday life in which multiple females perform *puja* (prayer), a common occurrence throughout South Asia. Miniatures like figure 15 were popular in Lucknow, Avadh, in part because their compositions had polymorphous imagery that could be interpreted in a number of different ways.

Fig. 3.16. *Bhērōn Rāga*
Muḥammad Faqirullāh Khān (active 1720–70), ca. 1750
Opaque watercolor on paper
BL Prints and Drawings Album J.17, folio 3
Signature: ʻamal-i Muḥammad Faqirullāh Khān

In another mode, many rāgamālā folios from Avadh were sponsored not as loose-leaf folios but as part of muraqqaʻ albums, which are scrapbooks with heterogeneous compositions that have alternating pages of calligraphy and image (chapter 4). For instance, during the years of 1745–1775, the artist Muḥammad Faqirullāh Khān produced rāgamālā-like miniatures that were bound in muraqqaʻ albums (fig. 16).[99] Faqirullāh Khān painted a few rāgamālā folios such as the dīpak rāga and madhamāda rāginī.[100] In another miniature, figure 16, Muḥammad Faqirullāh Khān like Mīr Kalān Khān plays with the bhērōn rāga by foregrounding a Shiva lingam and the necessary puja items such paan, a garland, and blossoms. In this composition, a figure, who sits inside the niche of the temple and whose hand grazes her chin, was retraced and reworked into a miniature painting, shown in figure 2. The figures are exact replicas of each other.

There are three copies of *Bhērōn Rāga* (fig. 16): one is in the Lucknow State Museum, another at the Smithsonian, and the third in the British Library. The duplication of this composition shows its ongoing aesthetic resonance. Two of the copies have *qitʻa* poetry

[99] His signature is found on the bottom of one of the miniature copies. See Asia and Pacific Collections, British Library, J.17, 3. For a reproduction, see Jeremiah P. Losty and Linda York Leach, *Mughal Paintings from the British Library*, catalogue 18; For another version of "Bhairavi Ragini" see Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, F.1924.9. Another version is in the State Museum of Lucknow, no. 59.104. Reprinted in Goswamy, *Essence of Indian Art*, 51.
[100] Edwin Binney, *Indian Miniature Painting from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd* (Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 1974), 107 and cat. 84; John William Seyller, *Mughal and Deccani Paintings: Eva and Conrad Seitz Collection of Indian Miniatures* (Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2010), 84–85.

(fragmentary quotations) on their verso folios. This shows that the miniature paintings were originally part of muraqqa‘ albums since muraqqa‘ alternate pages of calligraphy and images. The poetry on the Smithsonian folio quotes ‘Ali, who was the cousin and son-in law of the prophet Muhammad and an important figure in Shiaism.[101] In Arabic calligraphy, it reads: “Ali (upon whom be peace) said, ‘Most of the battlefields in which minds are lost are under lightning flashes.’ And also from him: ‘Despair is free and hope is a slave.’ And from his words, peace be upon him.”[102] The verso folio from the Lucknow State Museum (fig. 17) is a poem by Seljuk poet Azraqi that was commonly used in other Avadhi muraqqa‘.[103] The third miniature painting is from the British Library and was once part of Richard Johnson’s collection. There is no poetry on its verso folios. Either Johnson removed the poems from a previously completed muraqqa‘ or he never bothered to attach poetry when he was creating his new album.

Fig. 3.17. State Museum of Lucknow no. 59.104 verso
Picture taken by the author on February 2016
This is the only documented image of this verso

The nawabs of Murshidabad sponsored complete rāgamālā albums and wove in their portraits throughout the entire album series. While the nawabs of Avadh and their courtiers experimented with patronizing individual rāgamālā folios, they mostly reinscribed and incorporated them into muraqqa‘ albums, an established Persianate genre. For instance, the two copies of figure 16 that have a poem on their versos were most likely part of a muraqqa‘. The poem is from Azraqi of Herat’s corpus.[104] To be exact, it is his sixty-ninth *rubā‘iyāt* (a quatrain poem), completed in the eleventh century in Seljuk Herat.[105] It reads: “From fearful respect, you

[101] Smithsonian, Freer Sackler Gallery: F1924.9.
[102] Wheeler Thackston, translator, Harvard University, Summer 1990. https://www.freersackler.si.edu/object/a-visit-to-a-temple/
[103] Windsor Castle, Royal Collection Inventory Number 1005038, 22 verso.
[104] The poem is mistakenly attributed to the Persian poet Rumi in Windsor Castle’s catalogue.
[105] https://ganjoor.net/azraghi/arob/sh69/

will scatter within the ranks and lines of war / From the sharpness of the spear, the string of the bow is full of arrows / From magnanimity you will rise for the wise king / From the turquoise of the sheath, inside the oyster shell is the red stone."[106] Azraqi's poem recalls the spirit of war as soldiers follow their king into battle. The sovereign's blue sword contrasts with the bloodstained battlefield, implied here by the red stone.[107] With this literary association, local audiences could have seen the succeeding folio not only as indexing the bhērōn rāga but also as a Persianate beloved that was in conversation with Azraqi's Persian poetry.

In figures 15 and 16, there are visual congruencies between the nāyikā, the heroine figure, found in many rāgamālā folios such as the bhērōn rāga, and the Persianate beloved, the literal and figural motif found in Persianate literature and painting. Operating in both the Persianate beloved and nāyikā register is desire. Erotica via the Persianate beloved formula existed in Islamicate literature and visual arts in other genres beside rāgamālā paintings, which attests to the formula's enduring message.[108] For instance, figure 16 contains open-ended imagery of the erotic sentiment (sringara) that taps into a lover's desire for the nāyikā, the Persianate beloved. The female figure has transparent garments, exposed breasts, and bejeweled ornamentation that accentuate her body and the viewer's attraction to her. To entice her lover, the beloved would dust her skin with vermilion, giving off a rose tint.[109] In figure 16, the female figure's skin glows with a pinkish hue. On closer inspection, it appears that her rosy skin may be a product of her

[106] My translation is from Azraqi's original text. In the muraqqa' poem, there are some transcription errors in terms of spelling errors and the arrangement of the lines: "Az haibat, tū be-rīzad, andar ṣaff jang / tezī [a]z sinān, zih az kamān, par [a]z ḵẖadang / az jūd tū ḵẖezad, aī shah bā-farhang / pīroza [a]z kān, dar [a]z sadf, la'l [a]z sang."
[107] The contrast of the blue pīroza with a red-colored object is found in other parts of Azraqi's corpus. See Leonard William Harrow, "A Study of the Imagery of the Eleventh Century Panegyrist Azraqi of Herat" (master's of philosophy thesis, University of London, 1973), 108.
[108] For an introduction on this subject see J. C. Burgle, "Love, Lust, and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam as Reflected in Literary Sources," in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, ed. Giorgio Levi Della Vida Conference and Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1979), 81–118. In the same volume, see "Eros Heavenly and Not So Heavenly in Sufi Literature," 119–42.
[109] Aditya Behl, "The Sufi Nayika: Qutban's Mirigavati," in *A Celebration of Love*, 69.

pink translucent sari. In either case, her skin and the fabric together give off a pastel hue that was meant to be an attractive feature and heightens desire. Moreover, the images in figures 15 and 16 do not have the prominent red border found in Rajput rāgamālā folios, which further allows the compositions to slip among various literary genres such as muraqqa‘ albums.

Since the nawabs of Avadh and their courtiers placed their rāgamālā folios into muraqqa‘ albums, they allowed them to have ambiguous meaning. Within a muraqqa‘, rāgamālā folios could represent the visual categories of rāginī, nāyikā, or the Persianate beloved. All three of these representations were revered for their beauty.[110] Now that rāgamālā folios were bound in muraqqa‘, there was no clear narrative structure to define these images. They were allowed to visually index all three categories.

In the realm of Indo-Persian poetry and literature, the connections between rāginī, nāyikā, and the Persianate beloved have been thoroughly investigated in terms of the shared concepts of sringara rasa (erotic sentiment) and ‘ishq (love) since both principles accommodate mystical devotion through the worship of the beauty of the body. Rasa (taste or emotional connection) was meant to be the overriding feeling experienced by the viewer upon seeing miniatures, reading a piece of literature, or listening to music. Rasa is an Indic conceptualization that had shared mystical, emotional, and philosophical proprieties with ‘ishq, a Persianate idea. For instance, Shantanu Phukan investigated seventeenth-century Mughal poetry that included enactments of both sringara rasa and ‘ishq in its vocabulary.[111] Aditya Behl has shown that in pre-Mughal and medieval Mughal romances, the main theme is usually centered on a hero’s quest for love, which

[110] For more art historical studies that show the conflation of these motifs, see Harsha V. Dehejia, ed., *A Celebration of Love: The Romantic Heroine in the Indian Arts* (New Delhi: Lustre Press, 2004); Vidya Dehejia, ed., *Love in Asian Art and Culture* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, in association with the University of Washington Press, 1998).
[111] Shantanu Phukan, “‘Through Throats Where Many Rivers Meet’: The Ecology of Hindi in the World of Persian,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38, no. 1 (2001): 33–58.

acts as an allegory of Sufism, 'ishq, and sringara rasa.[112] In these medieval narratives, the hero's erotic and aesthetic quest becomes synonymous with the soul's search for an invisible divinity.[113] Schofield has also argued that the cultivation and control of all nine rasas (sentiments) were linked to Islamicate understandings of "mental and physical health."[114] In the poetic texts of pre-Mughal romances, there were verbal, emotional, and religious resonances between 'ishq and sringara.[115]

Scholars have traced how the nāyikā-bheda, the categorization of the nāyikās used in the rāgamālā canon, centers around sringara rasa and maps onto Persianate conceptions of lover ('ashiq) and beloved (ma'shūq) found in Persian ghazals and literature. Thematically, the nāyak/nāyikā and the 'ashiq/ma'shūq are similar in that the nāyikā is like the ma'shuq who grieves over the separation (firaq) from her lover.[116] Except for gender, they share major emotional and narrative similarities. Persian and Urdu poetry contain a more ambiguous gender of the lover/beloved, allowing for queer and heterosexual couplings, whereas the nāyak/nāyikā clearly places the hero as male and the heroine as female.[117] Using these literary and visual

[112] Phukan, "'None Mad as a Hindu Woman': Contesting Communal Readings of Padmavat," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 16, no. 1 (1996): 41–54; Aditya Behl and Wendy Doniger, *Love's Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379–1545* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 16, 26, 30–34, 63, 66; Aditya Behl and Wendy Doniger, *The Magic Doe: Qutban Suhravardī's Mirigāvatī: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Aditya Behl, Simon Weightman, and Simon Manjhan, *Madhumalati: An Indian Sufi Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[113] Aditya Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic*, 71, 75.
[114] Schofield, "Learning to Taste the Emotions," 412.
[115] Aditya Behl, "Presence and Absence in Bhakti: An Afterword," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 11, no. 3 (2007): 321–22.
[116] V. P. Dwivedi, *Bārahmāsā: The Song of Seasons in Literature and Art* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1980); Charlotte Vaudeville, *Bārahmāsā in Indian Literatures: Songs of the Twelve Months in Indo-Aryan Literatures* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986); Francesca Orsini, "Barahmasas in Hindi and Urdu," in *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture* (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2010).
[117] Persian grammar "lacks a distinction of gender and the sex of the Beloved" and "is often linguistically unspecified." Johannes Thomas Pieter de Bruijn, "Beloved," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 4, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1989), 128–29.

precedents, litterateurs inserted ‘ashiq and ma’shūq (lover and beloved) to translate the sringara rasa of nāyak and nāyikā into an Indo-Persianate register.[118]

In translating, scribes and litterateurs borrowed vocabulary from the Islamicate category of ‘ishq to conceive of sringara rasa. In translating Sanskrit treatises into Persian, scribes and litterateurs had to find comparable Persian terms for a complex structure of thought. Within Persian treatises on rāgas, Persian terms such as *zauq* and *lazzat*, which also translate to taste, were interchangeably used for the concept of rasa. As Schofield states, in this process, early modern authors did not merely exchange terms; they also infused the category of rasa with “Sufic” conceits that were already accompanying the terms *zauq* and *lazzat*.[119]

In these few key visual examples, the nawabs of Avadh sought a comparable poetics in the music and arts of rāgamālā by focusing on the erotic sentiment since it already existed as a religious and cultural idea in their Persianate world. As Ali Akbar Husain points out, Persian texts as early as the Qutb Shahi period thematically centered on sringara rasa and erotics, such as author Żiyā’ al-Dīn Nakhšabī (d. 1350–51) and his corpus of *Lazzat al-Nisā* (Delights of women) and *Tazkirat Al Shahawat* (List of aphrodisiacs).[120] From this long history of centering on erotics, the nawabs of Avadh selected the rāgamālā system since it contained a translatable notion of lover/beloved as nāyak/nāyikā. The erotics of the rāgamālā, which invoked both desire and religiosity, were the mitigating factor in why this genre was consistently translated and sponsored by the nawabs of Avadh. Passion and erotics can be interpreted as a letting go of agency in which a person allows an emotion to overwhelm them. In the embodied structure of

[118] To understand how the nāyikā bheda and sringara rasa are translated in a specific musical treatise, *Tuhfat al Hind*, see Prashant Keshavmurthy, “Tuḥfat al-Hind,” *Perso-Indica: An Analytical Survey of Persian Works on Indian Learned Traditions*, eds. F. Speziale and C. W. Ernst (2013), available at http://www.perso-indica.net/work/tuhfat_al-hind-1.
[119] Schofield, “Learning to Taste the Emotions,” 417.
[120] Ali Akbar Husain, *Scent in the Islamic Garden: A Study of Literary Sources in Persian and Urdu* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 40–41.

rasa and ‘ishq, local courtiers engaged and cultivated their expressions for emotions. Though erotics was an internalized feeling, it was activated by a person’s control of that emotion and control over the visual register of rāgamālā.

Art historians in the 1950s understood these rāgamālā paintings to have been produced in Muslim courts as result of their “pleasure loving spirit.”[121] Even in contemporary museum labels, these images are labeled as “escapist.”[122] Such an analysis dissolves the religious, cultural, and political elements of the erotic sentiment in rāgamālā paintings. What I contend is that pleasure is not merely an expression of sexual desire but also a conduit of courtly refinement adapted by early Muslim rulers in Gujarat, the Deccan, Mughal territories, Murshidabad, and the Avadhi court. Indic courts and rulers such as the nawabs of Avadh harnessed these ideals of love, eroticism, and devotion in the rāgamālā genre to demonstrate their personal sophistication (adab) and their engagement with courtly politics.

Within the genres of loose-leaf, rāgamālā-like, and muraqqa‘, the pictorial experiments of artists such as Mīr Kalān Khān and Faqirullāh reinforce how these images effectively align with Persianate conceptions of lover/beloved (‘ashiq/ma’shūq) and with nāyikā/nāyak and have shared affinities across sringara rasa and ‘ishq. There is a common physical response of desire in Islamicate and Indic conceptualizations of the rāgamālā canon even when rāgamālā folios travel to different visual genres. The concepts of ‘ishq and sringara actualized a feeling of passion, which was translatable across various courts including the nawabs of Avadh and in various visual contexts.

F. Conclusion

Through a detailed analysis of the Indo-Persianate treatise *Risāla-i Rāgamālā*, this

[121] Robert Skelton, “Murshidabad Painting,” *Marg* 10 (Bombay, 1956): 14.
[122] https://www.freersackler.si.edu/object/a-visit-to-a-temple/

chapter highlights the ways in which rāgamālā as an art form functioned within the Indo-Islamicate court of Avadh. Litterateurs and their patrons stretched certain elements of the textual genre. So, too, did artists in Avadh visually play with the standard rāgamālā iconography. At times, they kept the typical compositions but then placed the folios in muraqqa‘ next to Persian and Arabic poems that praised God and the beloved. At other times, rāgamālā iconography was revamped into pastiche compositions as in Mīr Kalān Khān’s miniatures. Avadhi artists took elements of standardized rāgas and placed them in new visual contexts, blurring the figural meanings of the Persianate beloved and rāga heroine.

During the British colonial process in the eighteenth century, officers such as Richard Johnson imposed their own ideas about the rāgamālā canon. They foregrounded the notion that rāgamālā’s true origins lay in its Hindu and Sanskritic past, overlooking the subsequent Islamization process undergone by the genre. Later, after rāgamālā images entered museums and other similar institutions, they were interpreted anew as obscenity and at times as pornography in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. During this time, their religious meaning as either Hindu or Muslim was forgotten. Instead, museum personnel could see bodily acts only as mere expressions of bodily pleasure. Today, rāgamālā paintings linger on the borderlands between obscenity, erotica, and a Hindu art practice.

For the most part, this chapter has not provided a discursive or institutional genealogy of how colonial officers and twentieth-century museum personnel labeled these rāgamālā objects as obscenity, pornography, or Hindu artifacts. Instead, I focused on the transregional connections between Sanskrit and Persian visual genres and the interregional dialogue occurring between different courts. By so doing, I wanted to understand the vernacular meaning of erotica before the imposition of the obscenity label and the Hindu paradigm. Of course, such an enterprise is

fraught. We may never know the true intentions of the nawabs of Avadh or whether they truly believed that these erotic rāgamālā folios were divine and political conduits for their courtly aesthetics.

And yet there are enough visual and textual translations within the rāgamālā genre to suggest that the nawabs of Avadh did indeed incorporate these objects as part of their Indo-Persianate and Indo-Islamicate world. For contemporary museum going audiences, there persists a general myth that Islamic art does not contain any human figures. Paintings of the body especially ones with sexual acts are considered outside the field's representability program. However, as the case of the nawabs of Avadh shows, the nawabi court conceived of the body, within the rāgamālā genre, as being related to and part of their Islamic and Persianate visuals. So far, these folios and their visual genre have remained squarely within South Asian art history and have not been considered part of Islamic art history. By reevaluating this rāgamālā art canon as part of a local Islamicate culture, I implore Islamic art historians to remember this vernacular art practice. In doing so, we might learn more about early modern south-south connections that relied on congruencies rather than difference and that promoted a new visual terrain.

CHAPTER FOUR

"PAINTINGS ARE PRECIOUS LIKE JEWELS": THE CHANGING VALUE OF AVADHI PAINTING ALBUMS

Fig. 4.1. Johann Zoffany, *Colonel Antoine Polier with His Friends Claude Martin, John Wombwell, and the Artist*
Lucknow, c. 1786–87
Oil on canvas, 138 cm x 183 cm
Calcutta, Victoria Memorial Hall R-2066

A. Vignette

From 1783 to 1789, the German neoclassical artist Zoffany visited Lucknow, a city in northern India, where he painted the nawabs of Avadh, European merchants, and colonial officers in large oil paintings.[1] In the above painting, *Colonel Antoine Polier with His Friends,* Polier, Claude Martin, John Wombwell, and Zoffany gather in a room on Polier's estate, Polierganj (fig. 1). On the left is Colonel Antoine Polier, a Swiss entrepreneur who was based in and around Lucknow from 1773 to 1788. He sits at a table next to three types of books: a bound manuscript, a loose portfolio, and a *muraqqa'* (painting album). Polier does not look directly at his manuscripts as he directs his attention to his native servants, who offer him a vegetal survey of his gardens. To Polier's right is the artist Zoffany, who is followed by Claude Martin and John Wombwell. These latter two figures were European merchants and officers based around northern India much like Polier. Together, these figures command the pictorial center of Zoffany's painting, while the native servants are relegated to the painting's periphery.

In Zoffany's painting, a muraqqa' sits on table next to Polier. Muraqqa' are painting albums that contain alternating pages of calligraphic and painting specimens. The word is derived from Persian to designate a dervish's patchwork frock and came to be used for these albums because the albums' arrangements of paintings and calligraphies appear to have been

[1] Mildred Archer and W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770–1880* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 56.

assembled in a patchwork fashion.[2] While in India, Polier nurtured a fascination for books and made frequent trips to book bazaars. When he returned to Europe, he carried with him over six hundred books, manuscripts, and albums.[3] Furthermore, Polier established his own *kitāb-k̲h̲āna* (artist workshop) when he was in India and instructed artisans to create new muraqqa‘ for his growing library. After Polier's death in 1795, painting folios from some of his muraqqa‘ were disbound and sold at auction to various museums across Europe and North America.[4]

The unidentified muraqqa‘ is opened to a folio of an unknown painting. Zoffany did not paint the exact details of the folio, and therefore it cannot be visually traced to a particular miniature painting. The rest of the folios are painted white to show that the album is unfinished. Since Polier had his own artist workshop and employed Indian artists such as Mihr Chand to carry out the calligraphy and painting of his albums, the unfinished state of the album in the oil painting indicates that the Polier had the authority and cultural expertise to complete it at his discretion. Interestingly, Polier does not share the muraqqa‘ with his counterparts. It is under his elbow, which suggests he was inspecting the album as a singular endeavor. Scholars have argued that muraqqa‘ were constructed to be viewed in *majlis* (small, intimate assemblies), with a maximum of six people able to view an album at one time. Here, the muraqqa‘ is not shared; it is merely a prop symbolizing Polier's status and his encyclopedic erudition regarding India.

When reading Zoffany's painting, one is compelled to ask: What did the muraqqa‘ albums mean for Polier and other Europeans stationed in Avadh? How and why did Europeans

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[2] Wheeler M. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), vii.

[3] Muzaffar Alam Polier and Seema Alavi, *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient: The I‘jāz-i arsalānī (Persian Letters 1773–1779) of Antoine-Louis Henri Polier* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 32–36; Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750–1850* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 86.

[4] Currently, thirteen of his muraqqa‘ are housed in Berlin's Museum für Islamische Kunst. The muraqqa‘ folio's *hashiya* (border design), which is depicted in Zoffany's painting, is visually similar to hashiya in Polier's muraqqa‘ in the Museum für Islamische Kunst.

collect them? Did the native elites in Avadh treat the albums similarly to European officers, or did they possess contrasting views? How are these albums viewed and displayed today?

B. Line of argumentation

To answer these questions, I sketch a short history of how Avadhi albums traveled to Europe, ultimately revealing the uneven power structures inherent in cross-cultural encounters and in the circulation of objects throughout the early modern period. The few scholars who have investigated Colonel Polier and his collecting practices position him as an intermediary figure who navigated the colonizer/colonized divide because he had kinship affinities with colonial subjects. To deepen his relationship with Indic practices, Polier adopted native customs such as collecting muraqqa‘ and overseeing his own kitāb-k̲h̲āna. Another often-discussed figure active in the eighteenth century is Robert Clive, who worked for the East India Company (EIC) and participated in a number of key British military exploits. Until now, no scholar has discussed Clive's album collection. In a novel line of inquiry, I elaborate on Clive's three muraqqa‘ (the *Small, Large*, and *Auction Albums*) since his albums connect the social history of the nawabs' gift-giving practices to later European reconfigurations of muraqqa‘ as curiosities, and later still as aestheticized commodities of empire. His albums present a micro-history of the economic and social reception of muraqqa‘ from the colonial period to the present.[5] While Polier presents a friendly image as a bridge between colonizer and colonized, Clive, who has been relegated to the annals of diplomatic history, is more emblematic of this early modern era. Clive shows how the tentacles of colonialism encircle European collection practices of muraqqa‘.

Clive is a peer of the men depicted in Zoffany's painting, as he was active in the era of colonial agents such as Warren Hastings, Colonel Antoine Polier, and Richard Johnson. In many

[5] For an introduction to Clive as a collector, see Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, 32–38.

respects, he typifies the Indology stage of collecting in which colonial officers collected objects to establish cabinets of curiosities (*wunderkammer*) and extract knowledge on Indian civilization.[6] Clive, like many Europeans in the eighteenth century, routinely received painting albums in diplomatic exchanges with Indic courts and coerced many native elites to surrender parts of their painting collections. Unlike these other European figures, Clive more overtly staged his albums as artifacts of colonialism. After his return to England, he preserved his collection of Indian objects in the décor of his home like European paintings; even so, his Indian objects were displayed separately from his European canvases. His collection persists even into the twenty-first century since parts of his albums were dispersed in Christie's and Sotheby's sales in 1956, 1968, and 2015. When they were auctioned off, the Clive albums were sold mostly as individual folios instead of as whole books so that dealers could procure more profit.

Through their long life in private and public collections, Clive's three albums underline the changing historical conditions that produce value for muraqqa'. They therefore provide a useful framework for mapping both congruencies and differences between how the nawabs and British elites assigned value to Indian aesthetic objects from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first. To offer a few examples: In an act of regional continuity, Clive, like the nawabs of Avadh, collected his albums as spoils of war and deployed them to enact political claims. Yet the nawabs valued muraqqa' for their use in social contracts such as the public act of gift giving. In an act of discontinuity, Clive and his descendants dislodged the public, ritual engagement with albums by foregrounding their aestheticism over their role in the social sphere. Moreover, the paintings in the Clive albums were transformed into a commodity in the twentieth century since they were

[6] Robert Skelton, "Collecting Indian Miniatures," in *Indian Miniatures: The Ehrenfeld Collection*, ed. Daniel J. Ehnbom (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the American Federation of Arts, 1985), 9, 11. Mildred Archer, "Mr. Cobbe's Cabinet of Curiosities," *Country Life* 182 (1988): 130–33; Robert Skelton, "Indian Art and Artifacts in Early European Collecting," in *The Origins of Museums*, eds. Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 274–80.

collected as tools of the British Empire and their vernacular social and ritual meanings were silenced.

I will unpack how Robert Clive's three muraqqa' (the *Small, Large*, and *Auction Albums*) became essentialized objects for the British Empire and the economic global art market by providing a detailed history of their transactional commerce between northern India and Europe. Section C delves into the Indo-Persianate use of muraqqa', specifically looking at the social and economic value that the nawabs of Avadh ascribed to albums such as the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'*. Section D provides a contrast to the nawabs by turning to Clive and his history of collecting albums at the height of the East India Company's power in the 1750s. Section E establishes how Clive displayed his muraqqa' in his home in England in the 1800s. This section shifts from the reception of muraqqa' in India to their reception in Europe and contrasts how the nawabs understood and displayed their albums. Afterward, F and G provide a close analysis of the Victoria and Albert Museum's acquisition of two of Clive's muraqqa', the *Small* and *Large Clive Albums*, in the 1950s. Section H turns to Clive's third muraqqa' and its dispersal in auction sales in 1968 and 2015. Section I concludes this chapter and discusses how the erotic imagery in the *Small* and *Large Clive Albums* have gained greater potency under the current conditions of the art market.

Clive was active in the eighteenth century, a period in which collectors and buyers accelerated the circulation of Indian painting throughout India and into Europe. This chapter focuses on the market and networks of exchange for Indian paintings from the 1750s to the 1920s collected in the form of muraqqa'. The two temporal markers of the 1750s and the 1920s represent a distinct shift in collecting practices for muraqqa' and in ideas on Indian aesthetics. In the 1750s, most collectors, like Clive, considered Indian objects such as albums to be

manufactured craft; by the 1920s, however, most collectors regarded Indian painting as a form of art. The meaning and value of muraqqa‘ and their paintings shifted along with political changes from colonial Indological pursuits and the mercantile economy of the East India Company (EIC) to the establishment of the British Raj. Robert Clive and the later circulation of his Indian painting collection serves as an exemplar for each type of collecting practice and each time period. Various individuals such as his relatives and museum personnel used his albums and folios to promote a project of imperial aesthetics from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

At its core, this chapter scrutinizes the marketing language utilized to sell individual paintings from Clive's muraqqa‘ to show that the aesthetic significance of these painting folios and albums, which were first valuated during the eighteenth-century colonial era, resonates today through their current monetary worth. For instance, Mughal folios produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were always assigned a higher monetary value than their Avadhi counterparts, even after the intellectual shifts that transformed Indian paintings from craft into art.

Early and later European collectors assembled, reassembled, disassembled, and disfigured muraqqa‘. Though the nawabs of Avadh, too, traded and reconfigured individual folios within albums, in economic terms they perceived the albums to be "precious" and extensions of their Persianate culture for the ways in which they captured social relations among king, courtiers, and foreign emissaries, and between patron and artisan. In contemporary museum spaces, Avadhi albums have not been granted such a high economic or social stature. Because the albums were sold and displayed as bits and pieces, individual folios stand in for the whole albums. The album covers are rarely, if ever, displayed. The Clive albums thus exemplify how the asymmetrical hierarchies of power at play during India's colonial era live on in present-day

museum practices, disrupting the new art historical turn to the mobility and circulation of objects as if they were untethered from political inequalities.

C. The nawabs and the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa‘*

A muraqqa‘ is an assemblage of loose content such as calligraphies, paintings, and sketches that are placed together to create an album. Patrons, in coordination with a workshop of artisans such as gilders, binders, painters, and calligraphers, cut and pasted older images from their book and album collections. In addition, patrons hired these artisans to create new images and texts. To give precision to the vernacular meaning and form of the muraqqa‘, I dissect the various visual components of the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa‘* (c. 1785) and Nawab Āṣaf al-Daula’s (r. 1775–1797) collecting practices.

The form and function of muraqqa‘ had visual antecedents in an Islamicate and a Persianate past, stretching from the Timurid dynasty in the thirteenth century to the Mughals in the eighteenth. Harnessing the conceptual capital of their Islamicate ancestors, the nawabs of Avadh played within the parameters of the genre, and sponsored and collected albums such as the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa‘*. Nawabs such as Āṣaf al-Daula thought of their albums as precious and circulated them only in intimate, courtly ceremonies. By turning to the vernacular, we can see the ways in which Clive and other Europeans diverged from local aesthetic practices for collecting and viewing muraqqa‘.

Fig. 4.2. 16v of the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa‘*
Oval section of the painting is 5.3 cm x 4.3 cm
RCIN 1005068, Windsor Castle, UK

Muraqqa‘ vary in size, shape, and content. Some contain only calligraphy while others only miniature paintings. The classic structure of a muraqqa‘ has alternating pages of calligraphy and painting. The images were prized along with the beauty of calligraphy, with its miscellaneous styles of scripts such as thuluth, naskh, and nasta‘līq. During this early modern

period, calligraphy ranked higher than painting as an art form. For instance, figure 2, a folio from the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'*, has calligraphy completed in the nasta'līq script, which provides an aesthetic "ornament" to the painting.[7] While the anonymous compilers of muraqqa' albums followed the dictates of their patrons, they were also bound by the format of the genre. Local artisans could not add too many pages; otherwise, the album would be too bulky and could not be opened properly. Figure 2 is one folio out of thirty-three in the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'*—a number that facilitates easy page turning and a comfortable reading and viewing experience.

Figure 2 presents a portrait-like image of an ascetic woman, which is surrounded by calligraphy in vertical and horizontal strips. The calligraphy is derived from an older folio, as evidenced by the holes and stains surrounding the calligraphy but not the rest of the painting folio, which is constructed from newer paper. Thus, it is evident that the painting was produced contemporaneously with the production of the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'* during the eighteenth century. Most likely, artists created the painting composition by tracing it from older *charbas* (tracing paper), which most artists carried with them as they moved from court to court. In early modern India, artists regularly used older compositions from charbas as an outline for their new assemblages. Patrons, too, drew from their vast collections of books, albums, and loose folios to find older compositions and establish deeply interfused albums in the process. Because of these old and new calligraphies and paintings, muraqqa' are reminiscent of contemporary scrapbooks.

Since the form of the muraqqa' allows for continuous aggregation and disaggregation of its folios, the nawabs of Avadh procured many muraqqa' folios from the libraries of the Mughals that were then reconfigured into new albums. This is true for the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'*,

[7] Wheeler Thackston, "Calligraphy in Albums," in *Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin*, ed. Elaine Wright (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2008), 153–63.

completed in 1750 under the Mughals and reworked in 1785 under the nawabs.[8] It is speculated based on visual analysis that the first iteration of this album was completed under Mughal ruler Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748) around 1750. The only date found on the manuscript is 1785, when Āṣaf viewed and possibly reworked the album. The muraqqa‘ is further traceable to the nawabi court since it bears the seals of Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797) on many of its folios.[9] A genealogy of visual adaptation among Mughal and Avadhi rulers is corroborated by the fact that portraits of Mughal emperors are scattered throughout the muraqqa‘, including Shāh Jahān (r. 1628–1658) on 23r, ‘Ālamgīr (r. 1658–1707) on 22v, Bahādur Shāh (r. 1707–1712) on 27r, and Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748) on 29r. The portrait of Shāh ‘Ālam II (r. 1759–1806) is located on 28v.[10] Āṣaf al-Daula’s image is not included.[11] Together these royal portraits function as visual legitimization of these rulers’ political succession. The fact that Āṣaf al-Daula’s portrait is not included suggests that he was not the original compiler of this album and that he did not feel the need to insert his portrait into this Mughal royal genealogy when his presence was visible through his seals.

From this, two details can be gleaned. First, around 1775, Shāh ‘Ālam II manipulated the album from its original 1750 formula so that he could add his portrait.[12] Second, Āṣaf did not make any major visual changes to the album in 1785 except for adding his seals. Through a meticulous analysis of the folios in the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa‘*, I postulate that three different rulers—Muḥammad Shāh, Shāh ‘Ālam II, and Āṣaf al-Daula—reworked it in 1750, 1775, and 1785, respectively.

[8] RCIN 1005068, Windsor Castle, UK.
[9] Folios: 1r, 2r, 3v, 4r, 5v, 6r, 7v, 8r, 9v, 10r, 11v, 12r, 13v, 14r, 16r, 17v, 18r, 19v, 20r, 21v, 22r, 23v, 24r, 25v, 26r, 27v, 28r, 30r, 31v, 32r, 33v.
[10] TBM 84.183, “Intoxicated Mystics and Assorted Subjects,” c. 1775.
[11] https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/search#/1/collection/1005068/album-containing-specimens-of-persian-calligraphy-and-mughal-paintings
[12] His facial features, including the shading of his beard, are almost identical to how he is portrayed in another painting dating to 1775, which is currently housed in the Brooklyn Museum.

A dating inscription on the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'* provides another clue as to how albums were viewed in the nawabi court of Avadh. In contrast to books, the form of a muraqqa' creates a unique reading experience for the viewer. Because a muraqqa' is not a narrative, a reader can start and stop at will. As such, the albums' typographies allow for a different rhythm with each viewing experience. On the lacquered book covers of the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'*, a note completed in naskh script states that the "album was viewed in 1199/1784–5 and 1205/1790–91."[13] In 1785, Āṣaf al-Daula perhaps viewed the album sequentially, starting with the first folio and ending at the last. In 1791, Āṣaf al-Daula may have decided to start in the middle, with his favorite folios, and skipped along intermittently. The two dates of 1785 and 1791 affirm that Āṣaf al-Daula returned to the album more than once. In addition, by specifying the two dates on which he viewed the volume, Āṣaf remarked on the special circumstances of sharing an album. Muraqqa' such as the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'* were part of private, social gatherings and were valued for the ways in which they promoted intimacy among their viewing public. We can therefore assume that Āṣaf al-Daula would have limited the viewers of his album and prevented a dynamic circulation of it beyond his physical presence.

Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797) used local networks in northern India to collect and buy painting folios and albums such as the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'*. In the *Yādgar-i Bahādurī*, completed in 1831, author Bahādur Singh Nāmī mentions that after Ghulām Qādir Khān sacked Shāh 'Ālam II's treasury in 1788, his relatives (*aqwām*) sold Shāh 'Ālam's "paintings (*waraq taṣāwīr*) and books (*kitābhā*) like they were vegetables (*ghalla*) and crops (*gīyāh*)."[14] Bahādur Singh Nāmī confirms that the nawabs regularly bought paintings folios and muraqqa' from the

[13] Muhammad Isa Waley summarized the *'Ishqnāma* in "Islamic Manuscripts in the British Royal Collection: A Concise Catalogue," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 6 (1992): 19.
[14] My translation is an amalgamation of two copies of the *Yādgar-i Bahādurī*, one of which is in Allahabad and the other in the British Library. BL MS Add. 30786, *Yādgar-i Bahādurī*, 369 verso. CRO Persian MS. 255, *Yādgar-i Bahādurī*, 663r.

dispersed Mughal library. According Bahādur Singh Nāmī, such exchanges allowed the precious value of painting to be restored.[15] These events match up with my dating of the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'*. The album was first completed around 1750, and Shāh 'Ālam reworked the album in 1775. Finally, Āṣaf al-Daula retained the album in his treasury in 1785. Textual and visual analysis makes it clear that in the 1780s, Āṣaf al-Daula bought many older Mughal paintings through courtly and merchant intermediaries.

Nawab Āṣaf al-Daula had a high regard for paintings and artisans. He "awarded land grants to many" of them once they settled "in Awadh permanently."[16] In the *Yādgar*, Bahādur Singh states that when compared to jewels (*jawāhirāt*), paintings are only slightly less precious and expensive (*qīmat girān*). Since the form of the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'* and other similar muraqqa' promoted a continual reworking of their sequencing, Āṣaf al-Daula, in conjunction with his workshop of artisans, disaggregated older Persianate calligraphy and compiled newer Mughal folios into albums, providing his kingship with a visual genealogy linking him to the Mughals and a Persianate past. Āṣaf was thus actively engaged in social relationships with artisans and merchants that allowed him to fashion his political aesthetics.

D. Robert Clive and collecting in the age of the East India Company

In contrast to European collectors such as Warren Hastings and Antoine Polier and to local elites such as Āṣaf al-Daula, Clive did not frequent the book bazaars or attempt to understand the larger intellectual and cultural context for his albums. His collection of Indian objects in many ways highlights the hegemony of British colonial politics that operated behind the scenes during the frenzy of European collectors in the eighteenth century. Polier is representative of the in-between space of colonizer and colonized since he worked with local

[15] BL MS Add. 30786, *Yādgar-i Bahādurī*, 369v.
[16] Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of the Awadh Culture* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010), 226.

Indian artists to bridge the aesthetic gap between Europeans and locals. On the other hand, Clive collected through coercion and through diplomatic transactions, forcing the nawabs and local elites to surrender parts of their painting collection.[17] Clive and his collecting history are thus more reminiscent of this early modern era in India than the other collectors since he shows how the aesthetics of muraqqa‘ map onto the power of colonialism.

Clive arrived in India on June 1, 1744, at the age of eighteen. His career in India spanned events that shaped the course of British colonialism and Indian history such as the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the Battle of Buxar in 1764, and the Bengal Famine of 1770. Throughout his military career, at various intervals, he would leave India for England, bringing with him booty from his diplomatic exchanges. Figure 3, *Robert Clive, 1st Lord Clive*, showcases how Clive imagined himself as a high-ranking colonial officer.

Fig. 4.3. Nathaniel Dance, *Robert Clive, 1st Lord Clive*
Oil painting on canvas
Powis Castle. The National Trust, 86052

While in India, Clive was stationed around the northern belt spanning from Madras to Patna. The objects he collected reflect the areas where he traveled most frequently and included martial armory such as diamond swords and spears, decorative artifacts such as jade cups and jewelry, and a few painting albums.[18] Between March 17 and 24, 1775, Mr. Crisp, an employee of Clive’s estate, created an inventory of Clive’s Indian “curios” that had a total value of 1,154 pounds (97,338.15 GBP today).[19] The curios included ninety-five Indian cards with gilt backs, two ivory combs, two tiger skins, a gold snuffbox with filigree, and a vast collection of

[17] Lucian Harris, *British Collecting of Indian Art and Artifacts in the 18th and early 19th Centuries* (PhD diss., Sussex University, 2002), 25.
[18] NLW H 12/4. Clive notes that there were “India goods of kinds in Mrs. Ashley’s case” worth 500 pounds and also a “diamond sword” worth 500.
[19] NLW T1/1, image 96 and image 98. “Currency Converter,” The National Archives, accessed July 7, 2017, https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid. “Currency Converter,” Fxtop, accessed July 7, 2017, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=72528.9&C1=GBP&C2=USD&DD=01&MM=01&YYYY=2005&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21.

bejeweled Indian hookahs.[20] The provenances of these art objects have been traced to Hyderabad, Murshidabad, and Avadh as well as Mughal territories such as Delhi, and they are dated to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[21]

Clive collected manuscripts and muraqqa‘ in India when other European collectors such as Antoine Polier and Richard Johnson were acquiring and commissioning paintings directly from Indian artists.[22] Another active collector who held a high position in the British administration was Warren Hastings, who was governor general of India in 1774 and a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784.[23] Hastings had a working knowledge of Urdu and Persian, promoted oriental studies, and may have even commissioned native artists to compile new albums and create new Indian miniatures on his behalf.[24] Unlike manuscript illustrations or *masnavī* (poetic literature) depictions, individual folios within muraqqa‘ were not bound to a set narrative structure nor tethered to a prescribed literary formula. New European patrons such as Hastings, Johnson, and Polier favored muraqqa‘ because their folios could be traded and reconfigured into new albums. Single-sheet paintings allowed Europeans to collect them sporadically and leisurely without the need to maintain a complete kitāb-k̲h̲āna. Various Europeans collected individual album folios as they had income available. In short, high-ranking Europeans collected muraqqa‘ as complete codices, broke them apart, traded images and

[20] NLW T7/5.
[21] NLW H 12/3, image 35, which is an “inventory and valuation of household furniture belonging to the right honorable the Lord Clive at his house in Berkeley Square taken either 1760 or 1700.”
[22] Harris, *British Collecting of Indian Art*, 95; Mildred Archer, “The British as Collectors and Patrons in India, 1760–1830,” in *Treasures from India: The Clive Collection at Powis Castle*, eds. Mildred Archer, Christopher Rowell, and Robert Skelton (London: Herbert Press in association with the National Trust, 1987), 13.
[23] Some of these paintings were sold in 1852. BL Add. MSS 41611A, Clark & Lye Farebrother, *Catalogue of the Valuable contents of Daylesford House, Worcestershire, the seat of the late Warren Hastings, Aug 22nd + 5days, 1853*, 28r–29r.
[24] Harris, *British Collecting of Indian Art*, 94; P.J. Marshall, “Warren Hastings as Scholar and Patron,” in *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth Century History Presented to Dame Lucy Sutherland*, eds. Anne Whitman, J. S. Bromley, and P. G. M. Dickson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 242–62.

calligraphy with other officers, and commissioned new albums. The muraqqa‘ form promoted elasticity within European patronage.

In contrast to collectors such as Richard Johnson and Warren Hastings, Clive was less interested in the "scholarly" aspects of Indian painting, and even less invested in trading paintings with fellow Europeans. Lucian Harris argues,

> Clive was not entirely detached from [these] early Indological circles. Several of his close friends and associates were involved in scholarly research on Indian culture, and were also collecting a variety of Indian artifacts. These included civilians like the historian Robert Orme, Warren Hastings, and John Zephaniah Holwell, who succeeded Clive as Governor of Bengal, as well as officers like General John Camac and Captain Archibald Swinton.[25]

Nevertheless, Clive never engaged in larger epistemological questions on Indian culture. Unlike Johnson and Hastings, he never commissioned whole Persian manuscripts to be assembled or frequented book dealers or traders. His collection is a reflection of the spoils of military intervention and war assembled haphazardly, rather than in pursuit of aesthetic cohesiveness.

During his tenure in India, Clive amassed a large fortune. The British Parliament and his superior officers criticized Clive for doing so and took measures to curb his practices while he was in India.[26] As a result, on February 20, 1760, in Calcutta, Clive was forced to sell sundry goods at "public outcry," and in October sold part of his jewelry collection.[27] Clive had obtained these goods directly from the treasury of the nawabs of Avadh following "military campaigns in the 1750s."[28] After the Battle of Plassey of 1757, Clive entered the treasury of Mir Jafar, the nawab of Murshidabad, and remarked that he stood "astonished by my own moderation" that he did not take more from the "vaults piled with gold and jewels."[29] While this looting of Mir

[25] Harris, *British Collecting of Indian Art*, 30.
[26] The economic decisions of the EIC and the ways in which their administrative apparatus coerced Indians were debated in Britain at various intervals.
[27] NLW CF 11/2.
[28] Harris, *British Collecting of Indian Art*, 22.
[29] Thomas Babington Macaulay and W.H. Hudson, *Macaulay's essay on Lord Clive* (Boston: Heath, 1910), 104.

Jafar's possessions was later questioned, the fortunes Clive amassed through possessing a *jagir* (landed estate) elicited greater public rancor.

Many of Clive's letters speak of the act of nazr, a ritualized gift-giving practice from and to native elites, and pishkish, the presentation of money or goods. In one letter dated July 8, 1766, Clive notes, "In answer to his [Shujā' al-Daula] lordship's letter where he informed him of his having settled his pishkish to the [English] king at 3 lakhs, whereas his predecessor Nazim ul Dowlah had paid 5 lakhs. He returns his Lordship thanks for this and for the receipt of the royal Shukah, and encloses his answer thereto."[30] Throughout the eighteenth century, the nawabs of Avadh were bound by treaties and courtly protocol to give gifts and funds to the British. Clive took advantage of his position of power to acquire decorative artifacts. He even collected a menagerie of animals including a zebra and four wild geese.[31]

Clive received four muraqqa' albums between 1765 and 1766 either as a gift from Nawab Shujā' al-Daula (r. 1754–75) or because Clive forced Shujā' al-Daula to hand them over under the Battle of Buxar's Allahabad treaty of 1765. According to the terms of the treaty, Shujā' al-Daula was to pay 50 lakh rupees to the British along with other gifts.[32] It was common practice for Indic rulers to gift muraqqa' albums to colonial agents. On March 16, 1796, for instance, Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797) presented Resident of Lucknow Cherry with an album of paintings (muraqqa'-i taṣvīrāt).[33] Cherry never reported the album to the EIC even though he provided a

[30] BL Clive papers, Mss. Eur. G37/5/10, folio 5.
[31] BL Clive papers, Mss. Eur. G37/18/8, folio 4v.
[32] In the Sotheby's catalogue, the possible dates are given of 1765 to 1767, but since the treaty of Allahabad occurred on September 6, 1765, and Clive wrote his inventory list in 1766, the albums were most likely given from 1765 to 1766. Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of a selected portion of the celebrated library from Powis Castle, Co. Montgomery, the property of the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Powis, C.B.E., and in part derived from the libraries of Edward first Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648) and Robert first Baron Clive of Plassey (1725–74), "Clive of India": which will be sold by auction by Messrs. Sotheby & Co. . . . at their large galleries, 34 & 35, New Bond Street, W.1 on Monday, the 16th January, 1956 and following two days* (London: Messrs. Sotheby & Co., 1956), 37.
[33] BL IOL Add MS 16721, folio 205v, Ramzān 8, 1210.

list of other gifts he had received such as shawls, khilat, and gushwara (a tear-shaped jewel).[34] Similarly, no record exists either from the nawabs or from Clive on how he acquired the manuscripts. Art historians, using formal analysis, have surmised that all of Clive's albums were assembled under the oversight of Shujā' al-Daula, as his seals appear on a number of folios.[35] Like Cherry, Robert Clive, who was notorious for extracting as many goods as possible during diplomatic contracts, was gifted four painting albums by Shujā' al-Daula in 1765–66 and failed to report them to his superiors. The nawabs gifted the albums to Clive in an effort to socially and politically tie Clive to Avadh.

Clive finally retired to England in 1767. At his arrival in England, critics intensified their protests against him for having obtained ill-gotten wealth in India. Clive was pejoratively labeled a "nabob," a term that signified cultural approximation to Indian rulers, the nawabs.[36] An investigation into Clive's corruption was opened in 1772 to question his acquisition of money and goods.[37] The Regulatory Act of 1773 was passed as a direct response to Clive's collecting practices of land and goods and was meant to curb future exploitation of Indian courts. After his acquittal, Clive took his own life on November 22, 1774.

Fig. 4.4. Attributed to Mir Kalan Khan. *A Lion Hunt with Shujā' al-Daula*
Gouache on paper
c. 1760, 72 cm x 84.5 cm
Clive Collection. Powis Castle. The National Trust 8851

Before his death, public criticism did not entirely deter Clive. He continued to collect objects of Indian provenance during his retirement in England. He purchased a painting, *A Lion Hunt with Shujā' al-Daula,* composed by Avadhi artist Mīr Kalān Khān, from General Carnac in

[34] BL IOL Add MS 13522, folio 92, January 10, 1796.
[35] Christie, *Catalogue of Important Autograph Letters Manuscripts and Drawings, Oriental Miniatures and Manuscripts: 18 December 1968* (London: Christie, Mason, and Woods, 1968), lots 66–74.
[36] Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); P. J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead: Eastern India, 1740–1828* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[37] Bence-Jones, *Clive of India,* 271.

1771 (fig. 4). Carnac received the painting in 1765 when "Shujā' al-Daula [the third Nawab of Avadh] surrendered after the defeat of his Maratha allies."[38] This painting was most likely part of the monetary and gift exchange Carnac extracted from Shujā' al-Daula following the latter's military defeat, which was the same event that allowed Clive to receive his four albums. It is difficult to say whether *A Lion Hunt* was ever part of a muraqqa' or another book format. In that same year of 1771 in which Clive acquired the *A Lion Hunt*, Clive "and Archibald Swinton both attended the auction of the library of Dr. Gregory Sharpe in London, where both men purchased Persian manuscripts."[39] During Clive's retirement, he continued to assemble both manuscripts and paintings from India and Persia.

Clive received four muraqqa' from Shujā' al-Daula in 1765–66, most likely in a public display of gift giving. Unlike other colonial officers such as Johnson, Hasting, or Polier, Clive never established his own kitāb-k̲h̲āna or further pursued a passion for Indian aesthetics. His reluctance to actively engage with the intellectual affairs of native aesthetics echoes how most eighteenth-century EIC officers treated the form. Although Polier is more widely studied for his ability to bridge the two cultures of India and Europe, Clive is more emblematic of the early modern period for his intermingling of colonial politics with his collecting practices. Clive accepted the albums from Shujā' al-Daula because they were curiosities and emblems of Clive's high status in the EIC. The ways in which albums indexed Indo-Persianate and Islamicate aesthetic and social ideals were not questioned or valued.

E. Displaying and selling albums in Europe

Muraqqa' from Avadh and other Indian courts were first sold in auction houses from the 1770s to the 1810s when British officers and merchants returned home from their stints in India

[38] Robert Skelton, "Drawings and Books," in *Treasures from India*: *The Clive Collection at Powis Castle* (London: Herbert Press in association with the National Trust, 1987), 123–24.
[39] Harris, *British Collecting of Indian Art*, 79.

and needed to supplement their incomes by selling their property. To recoup their finances and obtain greater financial profit, many of these colonial officers and their family members such as the Ouseley brothers sold the folios from their muraqqa‘ as individual paintings.[40] Instead of one album, auction houses now had about thirty paintings to sell. Moreover, auction houses were the prevailing mode for circulating and selling Indian miniatures because they gave colonial officers the flexibility to sell their objects in smaller quantities and at different intervals.

Many colonial officers and collectors died shortly after returning home to England following their stays in India. Their family members had no attachment to their Indian collections and sold them off. Claude Martin's estate sale occurred in 1801; Captain Jonathan Scott, who was an active collector in India, had an estate sale in 1808; Captain Archibald Swinton's sale occurred in 1810; Elijah Impey's sale was in 1810; and, following the death of Nathaniel Middleton, a sale of his personal belongings also occurred in 1810.[41] Warren Hastings's collection was one of the last to be dispersed, in 1853. For the Clive albums, their dismemberment would occur much later, as Clive and his relatives at first chose to keep the albums at their estate, Claremont. I will discuss how Clive and his relatives arranged the albums, including their framing techniques and the emergence of their cabinet of curiosities. Their practice of dismantling and dispersing painting albums offers a window onto how display practices instilled during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries endure in contemporary museological exhibitions.

The case of the Ouseley brothers' manuscript collection is illustrative of this era. Sir Gore Ouseley (1770–1844) and his older brother Sir William Ouseley (1767–1842), who had been stationed in Bengal and Persia, were financially unable to retain their manuscript and art

[40] Skelton, "Collecting Indian Miniatures," 12.
[41] Harris, *British Collecting of Indian Art*, 120.

collections once they returned to England. They went to both individuals and institutions such as Sir Thomas Phillips and the King of Bavaria in an effort to sell their manuscripts.[42] In 1798, William Ouseley distributed a catalogue of his, *Oriental Collections*, drafted in the hope of tempting a buyer.[43] Thomas Phillips never did purchase Ouseley's collection, as he was heavily in debt. As a result, Gore Ouseley was forced to sell his collection in parts: he first sold items to John Bardoe Elliott; his heirs then sold part of his collection to the Bodleian Library for 500 pounds after his death in 1842 and donated the rest to the Bodleian in 1859.[44] Larger institutions such as libraries and museums—rather than individual collectors—were more likely to purchase complete collections. When they did, they paid only a fraction of the original cost incurred by oriental collectors like Ouseley.

When colonial officers dispersed their collections in the latter half of the eighteenth century, only a closed network of interested buyers such as friends and acquaintances who had also traveled to India collected their paintings and manuscripts, since a general audience did not consider Indian painting "art." William Beckford (1760–1884), a British connoisseur, collected some of Polier's muraqqa' albums, having harbored a fascination with Indian pictures since childhood.[45] One day in 1771, his father asked a family servant to destroy the Indian pictures in William's possession.[46] Beckford's father's indifferent destruction of William's Indian paintings is a window into how such paintings were viewed in the eighteenth century: they were not held

[42] BLOU MSS. Eng. Lett., b.128, f.161v, Gore Ouseley to Thomas Phillips, May 17, 1834; BLOU c. 429, f.170, Dec. 13,1830; Sir Wiliam Ouseley to Sir Thomas Phillips; Yale Library 1412553: 1794 August 31, Dordrecht: Sir William Ouseley to Joseph C. Walker, Dublin. Folio 3. In these letters at Yale, Ouseley writes he is interested in the Bibliothèque Nationale as a possible buyer since the institution was buying collections from noble families.
[43] BLOU W. Ouseley (ed.), *Oriental Collections*, Vol. l, Ind 85 E 16/1; Bodleian Library, "Catalogue of Several Hundred Manuscript Works in Various Oriental Languages Collected by Sir William Ouseley" (1831), OIB 011.31.
[44] Harris, *British Collecting of Indian Art*, 126, 246.
[45] For more information on Beckford's collecting practices, see William Hauptman, "Beckford, Brandouin and the Rajah," *Apollo* 143 (May 1996): 30–39.
[46] Stuart Cary Welch, "Private Collectors and Islamic Arts of the Book," in *Treasures of Islam*, ed. Toby Falk (London: Sotheby's and Philip Wilson Publishers, 1985), 25.

in any great esteem, aesthetic or otherwise. They were not precious and were easily replaceable. They were a long way from Avadh, where they had once been equal to jewels. Instead, they were now easily destroyable.[47]

For these former colonial officers and bibliophiles, muraqqa‘ paintings were admired to the extent that they conformed to European viewing patterns. Take, for instance, Archibald Swinton, who was a Persian interpreter in India during the 1760s and had a passion for Indian manuscripts. Swinton separated album folios as early as 1782 so that he could frame them like European prints in his home.[48] Rather than languishing in books in his library, his folios were preserved for maximum viewership on his walls. Auction sales met the demands of buyers like Swinton. Auctioneers sold Indian miniature folios that had once been in albums as individual folios so that buyers could display them on their walls like European paintings.

For Clive, it seems that there was not one way to view and interact with his albums. He kept some albums in his library, and perhaps others in a chest in his bedroom. Before his death in November 1774, Clive mentioned the different ways he viewed his albums. In 1766, Clive employed an ambiguous language in regard to his Indian collection, describing a chest “full of shawls, pictures, swords, and other curiosities.”[49] In his bedchamber in 1770, Clive mentions that he kept this same chest from India, which further substantiates the possibility that the chest as late as 1770 held his muraqqa‘ collection.[50] In one of his catalogues for his library books, Clive may have been alluding to his muraqqa‘ when he wrote in 1774 that he had three volumes of “the

[47] I therefore disagree with Eaton’s stance that in the 1770s and 1780s, “contemporaries did not necessarily denigrate Mughal art as mere craft or fetish.” Eaton, “Nostalgia for the Exotic: Creating an Imperial Art in London,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39, no. 2 (Winter 2006): 235. While paintings may have been displayed in homes, they continued to be treated as craft and as curios.
[48] Lucian Harris, “Archibald Swinton: A New Source for Albums of Indian Miniatures in William Beckford’s Collection,” *The Burlington Magazine* 143, no. 1179 (June 2001): 365.
[49] BL Clive papers, Mss. Eur. G37/3/4, folio 7v.
[50] NLW H12/3, image 35.

pictures."[51] And it is also possible that he would have displayed them, like Swinton, in the rooms of his estate behind glass.

Therefore, unlike other colonial officers, Robert Clive did not immediately disperse his collection after his return to England in 1767. Many of his items remained at his home. When Clive rebuilt a new estate on Claremont, he had specific instructions to maximize the space for his European paintings. On the principal floor, he wrote, "The walls (except the hall entering room and staircase) to be prepared for hangings, the ceilings of floated lath and plaster enriched with ornaments in stucco and painting. The compartments with historical painting and various colours and the whole finished in a most elegant manner."[52] In this letter, Clive is preoccupied with framing his historical and European paintings such as his Benjamin West canvases. While in England, Clive collected a vast array of fine art from European masters and carefully curated their display in Claremont.[53] Attentive instructions were not provided, however, for his Indian miniatures or albums.

Fig. 4.5. Folio from *Small Clive Album*
V&A IS.48:22/B-1956
Provenance: Mughal Empire/Avadh

For his move to Claremont in 1774, Clive created various inventories for his Indian objects and his albums. Alongside these new inventories was an older list completed in 1766, written before he departed from India. According to the list, Clive possessed 195 pictures distributed across four albums; 169 miniature paintings have been located so far in three extant albums: the *Small Clive Album*, the *Large Clive Album*, and the *Auction Album*.[54] A year after his death in 1775, a member of Clive's family framed and encased ten of Clive's "Indian hunting"

[51] NLW T8/2, image 45. He makes mentions of Peruvian letters and Persian tales, but not of picture albums. NLW T8/4, image 260.
[52] NLW EC2/1, image 331, 1772.
[53] Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, 36.
[54] BL IOL, Clive Papers MSS Eur. G37/18/8, folio 7r. Listed date January 31, 1766, and the items were received September 17, 1766.

painting folios behind glass as early as March 17, 1775,[55] placing them in a room next to an office and not in the more accessible spaces of the front parlor or the dining room.[56] In total, the ten paintings were worth 6 pounds, 6 pence (508.13 GBP today), an appraisal considerably lower than those for many of Clive's European paintings.[57] In the same study, one painting, *A Portrait of a Man and a Boy* by the artist Morillio, was worth 19.06 (1,604.53 GBP today).[58] Therefore, it is likely that Clive restructured all four albums and reassembled them into three albums either once he arrived in England in 1766–67 or in 1775, when his relatives decided to hang some of the folios on the walls.

After Robert Clive's death in 1774, his descendants merged his collection with that of his son, Edward Clive (1754–1839), in 1804 to create a cabinet of curiosities.[59] Together these two collections created the Estate of Powis Castle, which was held for public viewing as early as 1805.[60] The Reverend J. Evans, who visited Powis Castle in 1812, described the arrangement of Clive's art collection as follows:

> In a detached building, more modern than the castle is a collection of 60 to 70 pictures some of these are by the first masters as Poussin, Claude, Veliger, Canaletti, Cuyp, and c… the portrait of the late Lord Clive by Dance. In an adjoining closet is the model of an elephant, covered with a coat of a mail with two Indians upon its back, bought from India by the late Lord Clive.[61]

Another visitor in 1846 described the collection, stating:

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[55] SA 552/7/130, folio 7.
[56] Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765–1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 30; Eaton, "Nostalgia for the Exotic," (2006): 235. Natasha Eaton notes that "London's elite displayed these images above the fireplaces in their most public domestic spaces, their dining rooms, or parlor." I have not found that to be the case for Clive or any other European collector when they chose to display Avadhi paintings.
[57] "Currency Converter," Fxtop, accessed July 7, 2017, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=378.67&C1=GBP&C2=GBP&DD=01&MM=01&YYYY=2005&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21.
[58] SA 552/7/130, folio 5.
[59] Christopher Rowell, "Clive of India and His Family: The Formation of the Collections," in *Treasures from India: The Clive Collection at Powis Castle* (London: Herbert Press in association with the National Trust, 1987), 29.
[60] William Fordyce Mavor, *The British Tourist's or Traveller's Pocket Companion through England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland*: *Comprehending the most celebrated tours in the British Islands*, vol. 5 (London: Phillips, 1809), 328–329.
[61] Rev. J. Evans, *The Beauties of England & Wales: or Original Delineations Topographical, Historical, and Descriptive of Each County, North Wales*, vol. 17 (London: Printed for J. Harris, 1812), 879.

> In the large gallery or ballroom, 117 feet by 90, which was detached from the castle by fire about a hundred years ago, is a fine collection of sixty or seventy paintings by the first masters, collected by the late Lord Powis. . . . [A]t the end of the gallery there is another room, a sort of museum of curiosities brought from India by the great Lord Clive, consisting of birds, fossils, &c. both rare and valuable: amongst the antiquities is a model of an elephant covered with a coat of mail with two Indians on its back.[62]

These two descriptions from 1812 and 1846 are almost identical. It seems that Clive's collection of curiosities was little modified during this time period. Visitors did not indicate the spatial layout of the room or the extent to which objects were arranged, including the display of muraqqa' or Indian miniature paintings. Although not directly mentioned by name, the muraqqa' and their folios would most likely have been placed alongside other objects in the room that were deemed different from European paintings. The inclusion of fossils and Indian "curiosities" in a single room suggests that Clive's descendants created a cabinet of curiosities, much like the one shown in figure 6, that was meant to hold all objects that had radical alterity to contemporary Europe. British cabinets were well received by British elites.[63]

Fig. 4.6. Depiction of a cabinet of curiosities
in Ferrante Imperato, *Dell'historia naturale* [1599]
2nd edition, Naples, 1672
Photo: Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

Cabinets of curiosities such as Clive's display room were an "intellectual enterprise" to reconstitute the order of the world through objects.[64] Viewing them was meant to instill a sense of fantasy and wonderment. Clearly, Clive's descendants arranged objects that would convey otherworldliness and otherness, or a fabricated sense of difference. Acquiring said objects also

[62] Edward Parry, *The Cambrian Mirror or a New Tourist Companion through North Wales* (London: Simpkin and Company, 1846), 289.
[63] On the other hand, the British continually disparaged Āṣaf for his expenditure on items that populated his cabinet of curiosities, known as the *āyina-k̲h̲āna*. Charles John Shore Teignmouth, *Memoir of the life and correspondence of John Lord Teignmouth, Vol.1* (London: Hatchard and Son, 1843), 410–11; Eaton, "Gifting and Collecting Art at Lucknow," 201; Daniel Johnson, *Sketches of Field Sports as Followed by the Natives of India with Observations on the Animals* (London: Johnson, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Browne, Thomas Fowler, Great Torrington, Devon, 1822), 188; Lewis Ferdinand Smith, "Letter to a Friend Containing an Historical Sketch of the Late Asuf ud Dowlah," Lucknow, March 1, 1795 in *Asiatic Annual Register*, *Vol. 6* for the year 1804 (London: Printed by T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1806); Eaton, *Mimesis*, 185.
[64] Isabel Yaya, "Wonders of America: The Curiosity Cabinet as a Site of Representation and Knowledge," *Journal of the History of Collections* 20, no. 2 (2008): 173–88.

symbolized their wealth and cosmopolitanism.[65] Singled out in both travel accounts of 1812 and 1846 was Clive's elephant armor. Today, the elephant "mail" continues to hold currency for its otherness and is currently on view in the Royal Armories Museum in its Leeds-Oriental Room (fig. 7).

Fig. 4.7. Clive's elephant armor
Royal Armories Museum XXVIA.102

Even as the Estate of Powis Castle was still open to the public, the Crystal Palace Exhibition, one of the first world fairs, was held in Hyde Park in London in 1851. The exhibition coincided with the "rise of imperialism" and was meant to demonstrate the artistic industry of all nations. To this end, the space of the exhibition was organized by geography so that the "orderliness of empire" was on display as well as the "exoticism" of the colonies. Many of the objects in the India section were considered "craft" and had manufacturing significance. In addition, Carol Breckenridge states that many Indian objects (such as crowns and scepters) were valorized for their ties to Indian emperors or to the bodies of historical personages.[66] Exhibitions like the Crystal Palace Exhibition offered collectors and institutions a chance to purchase foreign objects that had been lifted from their "everyday contexts," such as cooking vessels and textiles.[67] These objects were not considered to be on an equal footing with European artisanship but were celebrated for their exoticism. Overall, these large-scale exhibitions commoditized Indian objects, contributed to a larger Victorian awareness of them, and linked them to imperial aspirations.

Much like the Crystal Palace Exhibition, Clive's collection at the Estate of Powis Castle held public interest for the ways that it represented a radical past of colonialism for both the

[65] Silvia Spitta, *Misplaced Objects: Migrating Collections and Recollections in Europe and the Americas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 38.
[66] Carol Breckenridge, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (Apr., 1989): 204, 201, & 211.
[67] Ibid., 211.

collector and the viewer.[68] As Natasha Eaton affirms, "the presence of Mughal miniatures in Britain became indicative of the practices of colonization."[69] To be more precise, the British and Victorian ecumene aesthetically marked Indian painting such as the Clive albums as "other," which allowed the elites to differentiate themselves from colonial subjects and their arts. As a result, the folios from the albums at the Estate of Powis Castle were seen primarily as craft and as curios, signifying British imperial interests rather than aesthetic beauty.

Starting in the eighteenth century, displaying miniatures affixed to walls and behind glass was the preferred method for households and museums. In Clive's estate and his cabinet, to optimize the spectatorship potential of paintings, individual folios were separated from the album format and rendered physically distant from viewers and visitors. Households with cabinets of curiosities were the forerunners of museums. Clive's "closet" of 1805 turned into a much larger museum in 1987, known today as the Clive Museum at Powis. Indian objects were moved from the detached building and from other rooms within the estate, and consolidated "in the billiards room, lopped off the Adamesque ballroom by Bodley."[70] With the muraqqa', as seen in the Zoffany composition, owners and viewers were allowed to physically touch folios. In this new public format of display cases, cabinets, and glass encasement, the intimate and social viewing experience of sharing an album was lost.

F. The Victoria and Albert Museum's acquisition of the *Small Clive Album*

During the eighteenth century, muraqqa' and manuscript folios of Indian paintings were available in auction houses, as collectors deemed the paintings curiosities and commodities of colonialism. By the 1930s, through the scholarship of Ananda Coomaraswamy and E. B. Havell,

[68] Ibid., 196 and 210.
[69] Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis*, 29.
[70] John Cornforth, "Exotic Curiosities: The Clive Indian Collection at Powis Castle," *Country Life* 181, no. 34 (August 1987): 60.

Indian paintings began to be classified as art. By India's independence in 1947, Indian painting was fully conceptualized as art and the demand for miniatures increased. Following from these larger processes, during the 1950s the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) acquired Indian miniatures through donations and by working alongside dealers such as Maggs. In the name of cohesiveness, William Archer, keeper (curator) at the Victoria and Albert Museum, acquired the *Small* and *Large Clive Albums* in 1956 and 1964, along with other individual folios from Avadh.[71] The third album, the *Auction Album*, was sold at auction to private owners in 1968.

To understand why museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum started to value painting albums like the *Small Clive Album*, I provide a brief chronological overview of the art market for Indian painting from the 1910s to 1956, noting how discursive adjustments such as the term *Indo-Persian* transformed Indian painting from craft to art. Afterward, I discuss the keeper of the Indian section of the V&A, William Archer, for the ways he advocated for the *Small Clive Album* and participated in elevating Indian painting from an object of curiosity into art.

Archer's aesthetic tastes lay with tribal, spiritual, and modern art that represented his ideal of India. His tastes were indicative of changes within the art market for miniature paintings, which turned toward "indigenous" painting styles such as Rajput and Pahari. For Archer, Mughal paintings were not as desirable since Muslim patrons had produced them. In his quest to complete the V&A's collection, however, Archer bought early and late Mughal paintings such as a Fateh Chand folio and the *Small Clive Album*. When championing the Mughal art form, Archer preferred folios that had artists' signatures, making them solidly attributable to the "late Mughal School" of painting, or paintings that had connections to British imperial history. The social and historical significance of the *Small Clive Album* and the Fateh Chand folio for the court of the

[71] V&A IS.48-1956; V&A IS.133-1964.

nawabs of Avadh is never acknowledged. While Archer may not have had a strong appreciation for Avadhi paintings and the Avadhi court, his estimation of the *Small Clive Album* and its paintings was still higher than that of the V&A Museum and British government officials.

Starting from its origins in the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, the V&A, in its many iterations, bought and was gifted objects from domestic and international exhibitions.[72] Later, critics of the V&A considered the museum to be a mere "cabinet of curiosities."[73] To combat these criticisms, starting in 1881, V&A staff traveled to India, worked with local dealers, and began to acquire handicrafts and painting folios from manuscripts such as the *Hamzanāma* and *Āīn-i Ākbarī*.[74] Spurred by early donations and developing alongside massive public exhibitions, art commerce for the V&A expanded.

Beginning in the 1910s, art dealers invented the term *Indo-Persian*, which pinpoints India as the site of geographic production and Persian as the artistic style, to sell and elevate Mughal and Deccani paintings, employing the term in exhibitions and catalogues. [75] The market for Islamic and Persianate miniatures was more lucrative than the one for their Indian counterparts, with such works selling "for several times the price."[76] The collapse of the Qajar dynasty (1779–

[72] The Victoria and Albert Museum was previously known as the Museum of Manufactures, the South Kensington Museum, and the India Museum. It was officially named the V&A in 1899. The Indian section in the South Kensington Museum moved into a new building of the V&A in 1911. For clarity, I have employed the term *the V&A* for all of these subsets.
[73] Partha Mitter, "The Imperial Collections: Indian Art," in *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*, eds. Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997); Ray Desmond, *The India Museum, 1801–1879* (London: H.M.S.O., 1982), 192.
[74] Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism In Colonial India, 1850–1922: Occidental Orientations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 32; Skelton, "Collecting Indian Miniatures," 13; Terence McInerney, "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings: Twentieth-Century Issues and Personalities," in *Intimate Worlds: Indian Paintings from the Alvin O. Bellak Collection* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2001), 1n3; C. Stanley Clarke, *Indian Drawings: Twelve Mogul Paintings of the School of Humayun Sixteenth Century Illustrating the Romance of Amir Hamzah*, Victoria and Albert Museum Portfolios (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1921), 3; Desmond, *The India Museum*, 192; Skelton, "The Indian Collections: 1798 to 1978," *Burlington Magazine* 120, no. 902, special issue devoted to Victoria and Albert Museum (May 1978): 301–2.
[75] See Smith's employment of the term in his book. Vincent Arthur Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 450–499.
[76] Terence McInerney notes that "Indo-Persian [was] a label invented by dealers to enhance [a painting's] value." "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings," 5. See also Toby Falk, "Rothschild Collection of Mughal Miniatures,"

1924) and the Ottoman Empire (1299–1924) also brought a greater number of Islamicate miniature paintings into exhibitions and museums.[77] Terence McInerney describes how Vever, a collector in the twentieth century, considered Mughal paintings in his collection to be a "subset of his Islamic collection, an assessment reinforced by the term Indo-Persian, which he and others often used to describe these paintings."[78] Vever paid "approximately 4,000 francs" in 1910 "for seven illustrated folios from the so-called Late Shāh Jahān Album (c. 1650) that he bought from [the dealer] Demotte which equals roughly $15,000 per page today."[79] For Vever and other collectors, the folios in the Late Shāh Jahān muraqqa' were calculated at a premium because of their technical merit and because they had been produced under Mughal rulership that had visual affinities with a larger Persianate aesthetic. Under the auspices of the new Indo-Persian brand, Mughal paintings sold for more than Rajput and other styles of Indian miniatures during the 1910s.[80]

Sales of Indian painting abroad declined during World War I (1914–1918) and the consequent economic stagnation of many European powers. The Great Depression of 1929 also negatively impacted sales.[81] An outlier was the Burlington House Exhibition of 1931, which opened in close proximity to the Great Depression and the start of World War II (1939–1945). Featuring 2,000 objects, the exhibition was followed by a series of lectures at the British Academy and the Victoria and Albert Museum, further elevating the stature of Mughal and

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in *Persian and Mughal Art*, eds. P. & D. Colnaghi & Co. (London: Colnaghi, 1976), 167; Stuart Cary Welch, *The Emperors' Album: Images of Mughal India* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 13.

[77] Glenn D. Lowry and Susan Nemazee, *A Jeweler's Eye: Islamic Arts of the Book from the Vever Collection* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, in association with University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1988), 31.

[78] Lowry and Nemazee, *A Jeweler's Eye*, 37.

[79] McInerney "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings," 5; Lowry and Nemazee, *A Jeweler's Eye*, 230.

[80] McInerney "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings," 5.

[81] The largest sale of Indian painting occurred in a 1929 Sotheby's sale in London, "when the great Kevorkian Album dated to 1658—now mostly at the Met—was sold for 10,500 pounds or roughly 400,000 today. The purchaser was Hagop Kevorkian, a dealer and collector from New York; Beatty was the underbidder." McInerney, "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings," 6.

Persian painting in the art market.[82] While the British economy was recuperating, the most notable painting purchases for the V&A were the *House of Timur* in 1913 and other "Mughal acquisitions"[83] such as folios from the *Minto Album* and the *Bāburnāma*.[84]

A major administrative shift occurred at the Victoria and Albert in 1935 when Kenneth de Burgh Codrington, keeper of the V&A's Indian section from 1935 to 1948, changed the focus of the collection of Indian objects from "materials and techniques to one of historical, cultural and religious themes"[85] (fig. 8). The shift in the V&A's halls reflected trends within academic scholarship, which moved from the decorative to the artistic, spiritual, and historical. A seminal book that aided collectors and museum staff was Percy Brown's *Indian Painting under the Mughals*, completed in 1924. Another was N. C. Mehta's *Studies in Indian Painting* from 1926. Through such works, I argue, objects and paintings were outfitted with greater historical, artistic, and social weight to increase their financial worth.

Fig. 4.8. The arranged Mughal Room on the first floor of the Eastern Galleries in 1936
Image taken from Robert Skelton, "The Indian Collections: 1798 to 1978,"
Burlington Magazine (Victoria and Albert Museum issue), May 1978

The work of Ernest Binfield Havell (1861–1934) and Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) further moved the discussion from Indian painting as objects of craft toward a form of art by creating separate artistic schools of painting and imbuing objects with spiritual significance. Both scholars had a vast impact on the field. In their wake, "Indian arts and antiquities were now recast as Indian art and aesthetics."[86] Havell and Coomaraswamy both advocated for an "authentic" Indian art reviving aesthetic objects produced in "Hindu" courts.

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[82] B. W. Robinson, "The Burlington House Exhibition of 1931: A Milestone in Islamic Art History," in *Discovering Islamic Art*: *Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850–1950*, ed. Stephen Vernoit (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 149.
[83] Terence McInerney. "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings," 6.
[84] Susan Stronge, "Collecting Mughal Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum," in *Discovering Islamic Art*, 94.
[85] Skelton, "The Indian Collections: 1798 to 1978," 303.
[86] I do not have the space to do these two aesthetes justice. For more information, see Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia

With India's independence in 1947, many collectors and scholars in India were driven to collect, inspired by a new wave of scholarship and exhibitions. An exhibition of Indian and Pakistani art was held in 1947–48 at the Royal Academy of Arts and Burlington House in London. In this exhibition, organizers laid out objects according to their site of geographic production within India.[87] Basil Gray, keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum from 1946 to 1969, wrote the catalogue for this exhibition, which was used by scholars and elite buyers. In India, there was an upsurge in painting collections from 1947 to 1975 as many Indian royal families and princely states liquidated their estates of art objects, shedding their collections of "old surplus or unwanted paintings" that consisted mostly of Rajput paintings.[88] The National Museum of India, founded in 1949, "purchased miniatures" that flooded the Indian art market. It also amassed a large amount of art from private donations.[89] Mohinder Singh Randhawa, who worked at the Chandigarh Museum, assisted in distributing objects between the newly created nations of Pakistan and India.[90] V. S. Agrawala held a rival exhibition to the Burlington House exhibition in 1948 to create a "grander, more representative show."[91] The movement of the Bengal School of Art, led by artist Abanindranath Tagore (1871–1951), also affected how local Indian aesthetics were appraised. Artists who participated in this movement revived indigenous Asian genres such as miniature paintings and moved the format

University Press, 2004), 156; Brinda Kumar, *Of Networks and Narratives: Collecting Indian Art in America, 1907–1972* (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2015), 20, 39–144; Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 176–79.

[87] Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*, 188.

[88] McInerney, "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings," 6.

[89] Sivaramamurti took charge of the National Museum in 1956 and was a leading "authority to all the museum and official publications of the period." Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*, 188; McInerney, "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings," 6.

[90] The Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 was a catastrophic event that propelled a series of border disputes along India's northeastern and northern frontiers that have continued into the present day.

[91] Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*, 188.

into a modernist aesthetic, which allowed Indian painting to be utilized as an aesthetic tool of *swadeshi* (nationalism).

Benefiting from the availability of Indian painting was William George Archer (1907–1979), who worked as keeper for the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1949 to 1959 and became a key player in Indian art scholarship. He was in the Indian Civil Service from 1931 to 1948, stationed mainly in Patna.[92] Archer married Mildred, who later catalogued the East India Company's painting section in the India Office Library from 1954 to 1980 with Toby Falk. After his return from India and before his tenure as the Victoria and Albert's keeper, Archer "collaborated with Roland Penrose and Robert Melville" in an exhibition on "4,000 years of modern art" at the Institute of Contemporary Arts.[93] After he was offered the position of keeper, Archer amassed a private collection of Indian painting while securing paintings for the V&A. Archer was the first to advocate for the *Small Clive Album*'s aesthetic worth in 1956. Its subsequent donation was completed under his guidance.

Archer's main interest lay with Rajput and Pahari painting, which arose from his own inclinations of taste, his preconceived notions of primitiveness and modernism, and the increasing availability of these painting in the 1950s. Archer's aesthetic interests culminated in his seminal book, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, in 1973.[94] Havell and Coomaraswamy heavily influenced Archer, who followed their intellectual premises on Indian art and aesthetics. During his governmental tenure in Patna, he encountered collectors such as P. N. Manuk and dealers such as Radha Krishna Bharany, who worked in Amritsar selling miniature paintings

[92] W. G. Archer and Mildred Archer, *India Served and Observed* (London: BACSA, 1994).
[93] Archer and Archer, *India Served and Observed*, 125.
[94] This book cemented the friendship between Bill Archer and M. S. Randhawa. When he visited India to research more on the subject and purchase additional miniatures, Archer stayed with Randhawa.

from the Punjab Hills to curators such as Coomaraswamy.[95] Archer stated, "By 1941 the supply of Mughal paintings had almost ceased but descendants of the former ruling families in the Punjab Hills States (present day Jammu and Himachal Pradesh) were disposing of their ancestral pictures."[96] At the time that Archer was collecting Indian painting, many Rajput paintings were available for sale at affordable prices even though more and more collectors desired them.

Archer's investment in Pahari paintings, like Coomaraswamy's, stemmed from their "Hindu" origins. Archer opened his dissertation with remarks on Indian paintings:

> During the last five years, I have changed my ideas about the Mughals quite a lot but much as I admire Akbar, and loathe Aurangzeb, I shall never feel about them as I do about Goverdhan Chand, or Balwant Singh [Kangra/Rajput artists]. As we drove around, I realised how much I loathed the Muslims and the Muslim spirit. Why Congress should not have welcomed Partition, I cannot imagine. It is quite the best thing that has ever happened in India.[97]

Archer's aversion to Mughal art and art produced under Muslim patronage led him to Pahari miniatures and art from the Punjab Hills. In his biography, he stated,

> It was only later when searching for the historical connections [of the kama sutra] that I realized how it had all happened, how this early unrepressed Indian society had given way under the pressure of Muslim rule. It was only later too that I found among the tribal peoples of Chota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas, a world where men and women still had gaiety and freedom of ancient India.[98]

Archer viewed the Mughal Empire, with its Islamicate ethics, as a repressive force on Indian/native aesthetics. This is a direct carryover from British imperial policy, which viewed the late Mughals as a degenerative force on the "Indian spirit." Moreover, Archer, like other art scholars such as Coomaraswamy, partitioned Indian paintings into the categories of religious and

[95] For more information on Bharany, see Chhote Bharany and G. H. R. Tillotson, *A Passionate Eye: Textiles, Paintings and Sculptures from the Bharany Collections* (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2014).
[96] W.G. Archer, *Visions of Courtly India: The Archer Collection of Pahari Miniatures* (Washington: Foundation, 1976), x–xi.
[97] BL IOL/EUR F236/ 118, folio 282–83.
[98] Archer and Archer, *India Served and Observed*, 37.

secular, stating that Rajput paintings were usually the former and Mughal paintings the latter.[99] Only out of deference to establishing a complete and comprehensive collection at the V&A did Archer turn to late Mughal paintings and the *Small Clive Album*.

While Archer collected for himself and the V&A, new export duties were established in India. The antiquities export act of April 1947 banned the export of "sculpture, manuscript, epigraph or other work of art or craftsmanship. Any article object or thing detached from a building or cave. Any article object or thing illustrative of science art crafts literature religion customs morals or politics in bygone ages."[100] Other export acts were passed in 1951, 1958, and 1972 to preserve ancient and historical monuments and manuscripts.[101] Indira Gandhi's export ban in 1981 was the most consequential. All but the latter did very little to stop the export of manuscripts and paintings. There was enormous "ease of circulation" in India's post-independence years.[102] Collections, once held by princely estates, were "vulnerable" to state "liquidation."[103] While many of these paintings found homes in private collections within India, many others traveled abroad to Europe and America. Dealers found it easy to smuggle painting folios since they fit in their suitcases and satchels.[104] The portability of paintings and their albums facilitated their exponential growth in the global art market.

All of these factors—the elevation of Rajput and Mughal miniature styles, the rebranding of miniatures as Indo-Persian, the transformation of painting from craft to art—were

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[99] Archer, *Indian Miniatures* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1960), 11–12; McInerney, "On Collecting Indian Miniature Paintings," 3.
[100] The Antiquities (Export Control) Act, April 18, 1947. http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/pakistan/pakistan_act_1947_engl_orof.pdf
[101] Kumar, *Of Networks and Narratives*, 239, 261–267.
[102] Kavita Singh, "Museums and the Making of the Indian Art Historical Canon," in *Towards a New Art History: Studies in Indian Art: Essays Presented in Honour of Prof. Ratan Parimoo*, eds. Shivaji K. Panikkar, Parul Dave Mukherji, and Deeptha Achar (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 2003), 351; Pratapaditya Pal, *In Pursuit of the Past: Collecting Old Art in Modern India, circa 1875–1950* (Mumbai: The Marg Foundation, 2015), 162.
[103] Kumar, *Of Networks and Narratives*, 1–16.
[104] Pal, *In Pursuit of the Past*, 55.

instrumental in the *Small Clive Album*'s entry into the V&A's collection. Midway through Archer's tenure at the V&A, Sotheby's held a sale for the *Small Clive Album* in 1956. Initially, William Archer wanted to purchase the album and instructed Maggs, a dealer, to bid on behalf of the V&A.[105] Kevorkian, a renowned New York collector of Indian miniatures and a major benefactor to the Metropolitan Museum, won the sale.[106] He purchased the album through the intercession of his own dealer, A. Garabed, who specialized in "Egyptian, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Chinese and in Persian antiquities."[107]

Since relationships with dealers affected government collections, curators and librarians were not meant to "cohabit" with them professionally.[108] William Archer, however, was considered a "celebrated exception."[109] Archer worked with dealers so that they could bid on his behalf and resell him miniatures at only a slight profit. The V&A purchased few paintings in 1911 and during the World Wars. A turn came under the direction of Archer, who worked with Maggs on a regular basis to acquire Indian folios. Whereas in 1911 a total of 6 pounds, 6 shillings, 8 pence was spent on nine paintings, in 1949, the year Archer began as keeper, 94 pounds, 9 shillings was spent on twenty-two Indian miniatures. In Archer's first year, then, he bought more than double the number of paintings through dealers than had been acquired at the V&A's previous purchasing peak in 1911. The price of Indian paintings had slightly increased as well between 1911 and 1949. Adjusting for inflation and using present-day numbers, the average price for an Indian painting in 1911 was roughly 54 pounds and in 1949, 131 pounds. This means that Archer purchased double the number of paintings when the price of paintings had

[105] Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of a Selected Portion of the Celebrated Library from Powis Castle* (1956), lot 332A, p. 37.
[106] Welch, *The Emperors' Album*, 11.
[107] V&AA MA/1/G979, folio 11, July 11, 1956.
[108] Giles Eyre, "Postscript," in *India Served and Observed*, 143.
[109] Ibid.

doubled.[110] According to Stuart Welch, even though Indian paintings had increased in value, they remained relatively affordable in the 1950s.[111] Under the guidance of William Archer, the V&A took advantage of Indian paintings' low price point since they still did not have wide public appeal.[112]As a result, the V&A exponentially increased its holdings of Indian paintings, in particular Mughal and Pahari folios.

For the *Small Clive Album*, on May 7, 1956, Archer entreated Mr. Adamson, who worked at the Commonwealth Office Board of Trade, to stop the export of "this important historical album of Indian miniatures" to Kevorkian and the United States on the grounds of "national interest."[113] Archer argued, "Very few of these albums now remain in private hands in this country. Export of Indian miniatures from India has been stopped and the association of this particular album with Clive gives it a very special interest. For this reason, I had greatly hoped that the Commonwealth Relations Office would see its way to finding the necessary amount."[114] The Board disagreed and did not object to its export. According to Archer, the India Office Library did not want to pursue the matter because "of [the] politics concerning India's claim to the Library" and an "unwilling[ness] to attract any kind of publicity."[115] Staff members at the Commonwealth Relations Office were reluctant to publicly advance the correlation of the *Small Clive Album* with British colonialism because the Indian government might counter with repatriation claims.

John Goelet, an American collector, learned that Archer desired the *Small Clive Album* and offered to donate a sum of $4,500 to the V&A so that the museum could purchase it. With this donation, Archer met with Kevorkian and Garabed to negotiate. Eventually, the V&A

[110] My sample size was the based on the V&A's holdings. V&AA MA/1/M333.
[111] Welch, "Private Collectors and Islamic Arts of the Book," 28.
[112] Skelton, "Collecting Indian Miniatures," 14.
[113] V&AA MA/1/G979, folio 4, May 7, 1956.
[114] Ibid.
[115] V&AA MA/1/G979, folio 8, May 30, 1956..

purchased the album for $1,600 (or 573.54 GBP), adding a 10 percent commission to the original Sotheby's sale price of $1,400. The equivalent price in 2017 is 14,442.46 USD or 10,422.72 GBP.[116] Archer returned the remaining sum of $2,900 (of the original $4,500) to Goelet. The V&A incurred no cost in the purchase. Goelet's estimation of the *Small Clive Album*'s worth of $4,500 surpassed the actual market value of the album of $1,600. Although a number of curators and collectors engaged in bidding wars over albums and paintings, only a select few Mughal folios sold for astronomical prices. One American collector, Binney, bought a prized *Hamzanāma* folio from the early Mughal period for $3,500 in 1963.[117] Goelet's assumption of $4,500 seems less stark when compared to Binney's single *Hamzanāma* folio. Given that the album is complete with a set of 56 painting folios, $4,500 seems reasonable and $1,600 a bargain. Because of the *Small Clive Album*'s provenance, which places the paintings not in the *Hamzanāma*'s early period but in the late Mughal period/Avadh, the album was assigned a lower price.

John Goelet wanted his role in the transaction to be kept a secret, and for many years the V&A's album label for the *Small Clive Album* indicated that it was a "gift from a friend." In 1960 Goelet's lawyer contacted the V&A to ascertain whether the album could be considered a charitable donation by Goelet's foundation. The lawyer stated, "Under our [US] income tax law, a gift or transfer to a foreign government, although it may be limited to a charitable use, is not a charitable contribution. On the other hand, a gift or transfer to an organization such as the British Red Cross or the Peoples' Dispensary for Sick Animals would be a charitable contribution with certain exceptions which are not relevant hereto."[118] Because the V&A is financed by the British

[116] "Currency Converter," Fxtop, accessed July 7, 2017, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=573.54+&C1=GBP&C2=GBP&DD=07&MM=05&YYYY=1956&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21
[117] Kumar, *Of Networks and Narratives*, 229.
[118] V&AA MA/1/G979, folio 39, September 16, 1960.

government and is not an eleemosynary institution, neither Goelet nor his foundation received any US tax benefits for their roles in the donation.

A museological and British nationalist language was employed to justify the purchase of the *Small Clive Album*. On November 20, 1956, Archer argued that the *Small Clive Album* was "far too good an opportunity of strengthening our Mughal collection" and a "great prestige value to us."[119] Writing to Mr. Goelet, T. C., a colleague of Mr. Archer, stated that this beautiful book would "be a source of interest and delight to students and members of the general public alike."[120] Much like museums and scholars in the nineteenth century, T. C. cited the educational value of the album. His words echo those of the Board of Trade in 1857 that aimed to "establish museums by which all classes might be induced to investigate those common principles of taste."[121]

In 1956, an anonymous staff member at the V&A remarked on the *Small Clive Album*, describing it as a mixture of Mughal miniature paintings and images of flowers completed by Avadhi artisans who were "prolific" in the Mughal style of painting.[122] While this museum member, who was most likely Archer, acknowledged that the paintings were primarily from Avadh ("Oudh"), he bolstered their pedigree by drawing on their association to the Mughal school. Sir Hercules Reade, keeper of the British Museum in the early 1900s, influenced the above description. Reade had left a note on the *Small Clive Album*'s back folio stating, "With few exceptions which are marked there are Indian drawings of Mogul potentates mostly seventeenth and eighteenth century." For Archer, Reade, and Coomaraswamy, paintings were

[119] V&AA MA/1/G979, folio 8, May 30, 1956.
[120] V&AA MA/1/G979, folio 30, Nov. 20, 1956.
[121] Elizabeth James, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: A Bibliography and Exhibition Chronology, 1852–1996* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Pub. in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1998), xiv.
[122] V&AA MA/1/G979, folio 33.

understood through their designated stylistic schools. In the case of the *Small Clive Album*, Avadh remained a subsidiary of the Mughal school of painting.

As of 2016, many of the folios from the *Small Clive Album* have been relabeled as being of Mughal provenance, with only a few directly tied to the Avadhi school (fig. 9). The taxonomic convention within the V&A galleries, starting with Codrington's remodel in 1935, called for the creation and separation of stylistic schools of painting. Sites of production were divided territorially even though courts were in continual contact and in flux. The *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa',* much like the *Small Clive Album,* defies these stylistic definitions, as it was created by multiple patrons and artists and produced in multiple cities.

Fig. 4.9. Folio from *Small Clive Album*
Provenance: Mughal Empire/Avadh
V&A IS.48:48/A-1956

Archer also remarked that the *Small Clive Album* should be collected because, unlike other albums that had "been broken up and the miniatures dispersed and mounted separately," the *Small Clive Album* was intact. He continued, "Although V&A museum has long had separate pages from such albums of the highest quality, the Clive album is the only one in the museum's collection which (apart from nineteenth century rebinding) remains in its original state. It is thus of quite exceptional importance in indicating traditional Indian practice."[123] What Archer elides is the role that curators and collectors played in shaping the art market and causing the dismemberment of these albums. To feed the appetite for the volume of collectors, albums were broken apart and individual folios sold. By the 1950s, some collectors and museum staff were searching for an expression of a more authentic Indian aesthetic. Whole albums met their demands by providing them with a means to understanding "traditional Indian practice." The

[123] Ibid.

"traditional" as a concept was deployed, but no research was undertaken to comprehend what it meant besides the paradigm of style.

Fig. 4.10. Cover of *Small Clive Album*
V&A IS.48-1956

Yet, the *Small Clive Album* was not a perfectly intact manuscript from how the nawabs of Avadh structured it in 1766. In the inscription in the *Small Clive Album*, it states there they were 118 miniatures within the album in 1854.[124] It also references the covers of the *Small Clive Album*, which were replaced that same year, 1854, "with a flowered and striped [Indian] Benares silk brocade (kincob) and enclosed in a black morocco case" (fig. 10).[125] By 1956, museum staff recorded that the *Small Clive Album* had only 56 folios, and its current structure bears this out. Between 1854 and 1956, someone clearly altered the order of the folios within the albums to how they were originally structured in 1766, changing the folio count of the *Small Clive Album* from 118 to 56.

William Archer was invested in the *Small Clive Album* because of its aesthetic relationship with other Mughal paintings. Archer had discretionary funds for his V&A department to buy miniature paintings, but he had exhausted its budget by 1957. When his funds were tightened, a year after the purchase of the *Small Clive Album*, Archer wrote to the director to plead for the purchase of thirteen Indian paintings. He did not want them to "slip" through the museum's hands. He stated, "I would like to add that up to the present we have only purchased thirteen Indian paintings this year [1957], although there are many gaps which we ought to fill if

[124] The date of 1854 is inscribed on the front cover. Sotheby & Co., *Catalogue of a Selected Portion of the Celebrated Library from Powis Castle* (London: Sotheby & Co., 1956), 37; "Album Cover," Victoria and Albert Museum, accessed Nov. 29, 2016, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O438356/album-cover-album-cover-unknown/. The webpage states, "The album has clearly been rebound in a European manner at a later date and covered with an Indian textile, probably made in the Madras Presidency, which may have been cut from one of the lengths brought home by the 2nd Lord Clive, later 1st Earl of Powis, who served as Governor of Madras, 1799–1803."
[125] V&A IS.48:22/B-1956. This date is found on the first flyleaf of the album.

we are to retain our present status as the world's premier collection."[126] The total price for all thirteen paintings was 67 pounds, 2 shillings (1,162.39 GBP today).[127] Nine of the thirteen paintings were from Sikh patronage and were worth a total of 12.2 pounds.

Archer described two of the thirteen paintings as being eighteenth-century Mughal (one of which is shown above in fig. 11). Both of these have now been relabeled as Lucknow/Avadh. For Archer, these two paintings were vitally important to the V&A because of the signatures of the artists, Faqirullāh and Fateh Chand: "Indian pictures are very frequently unsigned and this picture will therefore provide us with an invaluable fixed point with which to dignify other works by this artist."[128] The painting by Fateh Chand, an illustration of Madhavania and Kamakandala, was one of the most expensive paintings of the group, at a price of 22 pounds (380.54 GBP present day).[129] Archer agitated on behalf of the Fateh Chand folio, stating: "The 18th century is one of the most difficult periods in Indian painting to sort out and this picture will therefore provide us once again with a most important clue."[130]Archer advocated for the Fateh Chand folio because of the artist's signature, which allowed him to concretize the artistic style of the late Mughal school. For Archer, the *Small Clive Album* played a similar role, providing him with a more comprehensive collection of late Mughal style.

Fig. 4.11. Fateh Chand, *A Painting of Madhavania and Kamakandala*
c. 1750–1770
V&A IS.7-1957

In the process of acquiring the *Small Clive Album*, the V&A moved the album away from Clive's private collection to a large institutional infrastructure, which shifted the viewing

[126] V&AA MA/1/M333, Jan. 18, 1957.
[127] "Converter in the Past," Fxtop, accessed November 29, 2016, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=67.2&C1=GBP&C2=USD&DD=01&MM=01&YYYY=1957&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21
[128] V&AA MA/1/M333, Jan. 18, 1957.
[129] "Converter in the Past," Fxtop, accessed Nov. 29, 2016, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=22&C1=GBP&C2=USD&DD=01&MM=01&YYYY=1957&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21
[130] V&AA MA/1/M333, Jan. 18, 1957.

audience. In Āṣaf's treasury, albums circulated during majlis among a small galaxy of courtiers. During the nineteenth century, the albums moved to Clive's estate and were displayed in the cabinet of curiosities, which was seen by small elite audiences who went from estate to estate in the British countryside on holidays. After the V&A acquired the albums, a general public had access to them for the first time. Because audience members have not left behind diaries describing their first interactions with the Clive folios, it cannot be known whether they comprehended that the *Small Clive Album*'s worth derived from its designation as belonging to the ambiguous stylistic school of late Mughal and its connection to British history in India.

G. The Victoria and Albert Museum's acquisition of the *Large Clive Album*

Because of trends within art historical scholarship, Archer (keeper of the Indian section of the V&A from 1949 to 1959) and John Irwin (keeper from 1959 to 1978) taxonomized Indian paintings into various stylistic groups such as late Mughal and Rajput in an attempt to reify Indian painting as an art form. The stylistic ambiguity in Avadhi painting resulted in various museum labels such as late Mughal, Mughal Empire, Avadh, and Oudh. When Avadhi painting style did not fall into a cohesive and clear stylistic category, as was the case with the *Large Clive Album*, art historians and curators had to point to its educational merits as a document of history.

The *Large Clive Album* entered the Victoria and Albert Museum more smoothly than the *Small Clive Album*. After protracted negotiations, Clive's descendants donated the *Large Clive Album* to the V&A in 1964 to avoid estate taxes following the death of George Charles Herbert, Fourth Earl of Powis, in 1952.[131] Similar to the *Small Clive Album*, museum personnel stressed the educational value of the *Large Clive Album* for public audiences. Sir George Trenchard Cox,

[131] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folio 11.

the museum's director from 1956 to 1966, wrote to Mr. R. C. Griffiths, who was employed in HM Treasury, Britain's economic and financial ministry, stating:

> This album is said to have been brought to England by the first Lord Clive but in fact has no relevance to events of his lifetime, most of the miniatures being a century or more earlier. Yet this album is a unique document of very great educational importance not primarily on account of the aesthetic pre-eminence of its contents (although some its miniatures are in fact of the highest quality) but more especially because of the light it throws on the history of Indian painting—in particular, the influence of European styles and technique in the early seventeenth century. It includes for instance Indian copies of Flemish paintings and a number of original European engravings tinted by Mughal court artists. Such evidence makes it essentially an album for the serious student and can hardly be of interest or significance to the ordinary visitor to Powis Castle.[132]

Having made a case for the paintings' aesthetic merit through their association with "European styles," Cox continued, stating, "It can be kept with our own collections of Mughal art and where its full educational value can alone be appreciated."[133] As with the *Small Clive Album*'s admittance into the V&A, the Mughal pedigree of the *Large Clive Album* was stressed. In the case of the *Large Clive Album*, there were calligraphic folios as well. Cox did not include them in his assessment of the album's aesthetic or educational worth.

On August 28, 1962, R. C. Griffiths responded to Cox, stating that the album constituted a "unique document" since it was connected with Clive and thus belonged to the "Nation" of Great Britain.[134] Unlike what had occurred with the *Small Clive Album*, Griffiths, as an acting official of the British government, agreed that the *Large Clive Album* needed to be preserved within the V&A. He cited the role of institutions such as the V&A to educate "scholars" and "students" rather than the "general public" through their superior display techniques.[135]

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[132] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folio 1, August 24, 1962. Director Trenchard Cox to Mr. R. C. Griffiths (H.M. treasury). Another director addressed this letter on August 24, but in the subsequent folio it is explained that Trenchard Cox wrote the letter.
[133] Ibid.
[134] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folio 3, August 28, 1962. Mr. R. C. Griffiths (H.M. treasury) to Director Richard Lowe.
[135] Ibid.

The British Commissioner of Inland Revenue purchased the *Large Clive Album* under subsection 1 of section 24 of the 1956 finance act. To qualify, the album needed to be considered a "pre-eminent work of art." As the correspondence between Cox and Griffiths demonstrates, however, the *Large Clive album* did not meet this criterion, being of "low financial value."[136] In 1962, Griffiths stated that "the album . . . [was] vitally important as a document of art history rather than as a work of art."[137] More and more US collectors, emboldened by the work of Coomaraswamy and Stella Kramrisch, were collecting Indian paintings.[138] To prevent the album from entering an American collection, Cox reassured Griffiths and Mary Loughnane, who worked for the treasury, that the album was of "special significance." Griffiths and Loughnane then sanctioned the purchase of the album.[139] Students and visitors would have greater access to it at the V&A than at its location in Powis Castle, allowing them to gain knowledge on British imperialism.

Fig. 4.12. Folio from the *Large Clive Album*
Assembly of Fakirs Preparing the Narcotics Bhang and Ganja
Provenance: Mughal Empire
V&A IS.133:34/A-1964

Ultimately for the V&A, the *Large Clive Album* did not qualify as a masterpiece based on its price, but was deemed such based on its educational value as a "historical document" of empire.[140] In 1962, the price of the *Large Clive Album* of 6,250 GBP (96,027.49 pounds today) was considered too cheap.[141] In other words, upper-level staff members at the V&A

[136] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folio 9.
[137] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folios 3 and 4, August 28, 1962. Mr. R. C. Griffiths (H.M. treasury) to Director Richard Lowe.
[138] For a nuanced account of the US art market, see Kumar, *Of Networks and Narratives* (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2015).
[139] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folio 9, Nov. 13, 1962. Mary Loughnane to Sir Trenchard Cox, C.B.E.
[140] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folio 4.
[141] "Converter in the Past," Fxtop, accessed November 29, 2016, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=6250&C1=GBP&C2=USD&DD=01&MM=01&YYYY=1962&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21

administrators considered Indian painting folios and albums worthless because of their low monetary value. Adjusting for inflation, the *Large Clive Album* as a complete set sold for roughly nine times the price of the *Small Clive Album* (96,027.49 GBP versus 10,422.72 GBP in recent numbers). Each folio in the *Large Clive Album* was worth 923.34 pounds, whereas each folio in the *Small Clive Album* was worth 186 pounds.[142] Griffiths drew a comparison with the Stoke Edith panels, which were "worth over 201,000" in 1962.[143] In light of the price of the panels, Griffiths and the British government saw the price jump between the *Small Clive Album* and the *Large Clive Album* as being relatively insignificant.

As the price per folio from the *Small* to the *Large Clive Album* quintupled between 1956 and 1962, the price of other Indian miniature paintings between 1950 and 1963 also slightly increased. The highest price paid by the V&A for an Indian painting in 1950 was 33 pounds (984.63 GBP in 2016) for an early sixteenth-century Mughal painting.[144] By 1961, the V&A paid 71 pounds, 10 shillings (1,134.52 GBP today) for a painting classified as late Mughal, c. 1720. It has since been relabeled as Murshidabad/Bengal, c. 1760.[145] A short time later, in 1963, the V&A paid 165 pounds (2,458.24 GBP today) for a painting completed in 1779 in Calcutta in the

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This confirms Archer's statements of V&A's rejection of individual folios and refusal to buy them when they were too "cheap." Archer, *Visions of Courtly India*, xii.

[142] The price of the *Small Clive Album* in 1956 of 1,600 dollars, or 573.54 pounds, is equivalent to 10,422.72 GBP in 2016. Divided by its 56 folios, the price per folio would be 186 pounds. The 2016 price for the *Large Clive Album,* as mentioned, is 96,027.49 pounds. Divided by its 104 folios, each folio is valued at 923.34. "Converter in the Past," Fxtop, accessed July 2, 2017, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=1600&C1=USD&C2=GBP&DD=20&MM=11&YYYY=1956&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21

[143] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folios 3–4, August 28, 1962. Mr. R. C. Griffiths (H.M. treasury) to Director Richard Lowe,

[144] V&AA MA/1/M333, Feb. 13, 1950. The painting was labeled "the inn at bethlehem" and its current title is IS. 70.1950. V&A,, *The Inn at Bethlehem,* accessed Nov. 29, 2016. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O126331/the-inn-at-bethlehem-painting-unknown/

[145] V&AA MA/1/M333, May 5, 1961. Mughal. *Mounted Prince at a Well*, 1720. IS.42.1961. V&A, "Painting," accessed Nov. 29, 2016. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O434523/painting-unknown/;
"Converter in the Past," Fxtop, accessed November 29, 2016, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=71.10&C1=GBP&C2=USD&DD=01&MM=01&YYYY=1961&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21

Company style of painting.[146] This was the same year that Binney bought a *Hamzanāma* folio from the early Mughal period for 3,500 dollars, equivalent to 1,249.04 pounds in 1963 or 19,052.7 pounds in 2016.[147] Clearly, private collectors like Binney were able to outspend institutions like the V&A. Although the keepers could not match the funds of individual collectors, they did participate in elevating the price of paintings. Tracking the V&A's numbers and adjusting for inflation shows that on average the V&A spent roughly 326 pounds per painting in 1950 and 700 pounds in 1960–63. Matching the increase in value from the *Small* to the *Large Clive Album*, on average the price of Indian paintings more than doubled between 1950 and 1960–63.[148] While the price of Indian miniatures rose in general, Mughal paintings were considered the most valuable and their prices increased exponentially.

On March 26, 1964, the *Large Clive Album* was officially installed at the V&A and deposited in a special case.[149] After its arrival, Irwin intended to display the album as individual folios. Less than two weeks after the *Large Clive Album* was in the V&A, Irwin wrote,

> As the paintings are easily removable from the album, I suggest a separate number for each painting. As the paintings are quite easily detachable and replaceable, I am also considering detaching a few of them and displaying them as individual folios, stating that they are 'from the Clive Album.' This will not prevent the simultaneous display of the album as an Album.[150]

Cox replied, "On principle, I am against dismembering an album, and I think if possible that the former owners might share feelings on this point. I shall prefer that, for a while at least, we

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[146] V&AA MA/1/M333, June 13, 1963. IS.51-1963- ca. 1779. 165 pounds. V&A, *A Shawl Goat*, accessed Nov. 29, 2016. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O16889/a-shawl-goat-painting-zayn-al-din/;
"Converter in the Past," Fxtop, accessed November 29, 2016, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=165&C1=GBP&C2=USD&DD=01&MM=01&YYYY=1963&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21

[147] "Converter in the Past," Fxtop, accessed July 2, 2017, http://fxtop.com/en/currency-converter-past.php?A=3500&C1=USD&C2=GBP&DD=01&MM=01&YYYY=1963&B=1&P=&I=1&btnOK=Go%21

[148] The sample size is from the V&A. In 1950, the V&A bought 16 paintings for 171 pounds, 14 shillings, 6d. The average price per painting in 1950 was 10 pounds, 14 shillings. Between 1960 and 1963, the V&A bought 12 paintings for 409 pounds, 10 shillings. On average, the price per painting was 34 pounds, 2 shillings. V&AA MA/1/M333.

[149] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folio 13, March 26, 1964.

[150] V&AA VA/325/1 part 3, folio 14, April 1, 1964.

should show the album complete. Possibly at a later stage we may display some of the leaves."[151] Initially both the *Small* and *Large Clive Albums* were considered exceptional because of their rarity as complete albums. As Irwin noted, however, the best way to educate audiences on Indian painting in a museum setting was to disperse the album folios. Today, the *Large Clive album* has been disbound, with its album covers kept in the V&A's storage. After 1964, I am unaware of any instance in which the *Large Clive Album* was ever displayed as a complete album.

Fig. 4.13. Cover of *Large Clive Album*
104 folios
V&A IS.133:79/B-1964

Before 1964, Archer refurbished the V&A's display cases in its galleries. They were officially reopened in 1951.[152] Irwin's request to disband the album in 1964 was directly linked to the restructuring of the galleries, which were meant to highlight individual paintings and artists. According to Kavita Singh, previously the galleries had been arranged chronologically and paintings grouped according to historical events. Under Archer's revitalization, the galleries were divided by stylistic schools from Ajanta, "Mughal (with separate bays dedicated to Akbar and Jehangiri painting), Deccani, Rajput Punjab Hills (all subdivided into sub-schools or thikanas), Company School and Bazaar painting" and ended stylistically with "modern works, represented by a few watercolours by Rabindranath Tagore and other artists from Shantiniketan." In the section on miniature painting, individual artists such as "Farrukh Beg, Mansur, [and] Nainsukh" were labeled as well.[153] Singh argues that the V&A was "first western museum [that] had dignified Indian artifacts with an art historical display reserved for the arts of western Europe" since the Indian objects were treated as art rather than ethnography.[154]

[151] Ibid.
[152] Singh, "Museums and the Making of the Indian Art Historical Canon," 350.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.

As a rejoinder, I must add that the art market, in tandem with the V&A, transformed certain types of Indian paintings into art while others were relegated instead to the ethnographic and educational. Both the *Small* and *Large Clive Albums*, for instance, were earmarked for their educational value more so than their artistic merit in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, Avadhi painting was not given a separate subdivision in Archer's new gallery structure but was included under the Mughal school.

H. The dispersal of the third Clive album

Stylistic, financial, and governmental concerns that were present in the donations of the *Small* and *Large Clive Albums* to the V&A came to a head in the sale of Clive's third album. The *Auction Album* was sold at a Christie's sale on December 18, 1968, and some of its folios were resold at a Sotheby's sale in 2015. I turn to two miniatures included in both auctions, one with a provenance of early Mughal and the other Avadhi, to see how the marketing language differs for each painting. Because the educational value of the third album could not be invoked as the folios had been disbound from its book format at an unidentified date, the individual folios of the third album such as the Mughal and Avadhi painting specimens are prized solely for their aesthetic beauty.

Fig. 4.14. Christie's Auction House. Sales record, 1968

In 1968, Christie's sold parts of Clive's third muraqqa', the *Auction Album*, as detached leaves (fig. 14). In its catalogue, the auction house makes no mention of the album's covers. The sale included twenty-three miniature paintings altogether, corresponding to lots 64 to 88, but only nine "appear[ed] to come from [the third] Shujā' al-Daula's album."[155] Lot 64 was a portrait of Ibrahim Adham, King of Balkh. It was identified as the opening miniature for the third album

[155] Christie's, *Catalogue of Important Autograph Letters, Manuscripts and Drawings, Oriental Miniatures and Manuscripts: 18 December, 1968* (London: Christie's, 1968), 49.

since it bears the inscription "Court of Nawāb's Shujā' al-Daula, Bahadur Jang," which confirms that many of the miniatures were sourced from Shujā' al-Daula's private collection and later bestowed upon Robert Clive.[156] With this Christie's sale, 169 out of the 195 original miniature paintings from the four original 1766 Clive albums are accounted for.

Fig. 4.15. *Mughal Officer*. A portrait of Khan Zaman with shield and sword
Attributable to the artist Bichitr, Mughal, circa 1630
Gouache heightened with gold on paper, laid down on an album page, ruled in colours and gold leaf: 44.9 cm x 30.2 cm. Painting: 20.5 cm x 11 cm.

A *Mughal Officer* painting sold as part of the third Clive album further illuminates the role of the art market in the valuation of Clive's collection (fig. 15).[157] In the Christie's catalogue, it is described as portraying "a Mughal officer standing, wearing a red coat, his left hand on an ornate black shield" and dated to 1640. Sven Gahlin, a collector, paid 280 pounds for the *Mughal Officer* painting in 1968 (3,325.78 pounds today). Gahlin sold the painting for 75,000 pounds in a 2015 Sotheby's sale.[158] Over the span of forty-seven years, his profit on the *Mughal Officer* painting was roughly 71,674 pounds, or 2,155 percent. Because the *Mughal Officer* painting has an early Mughal pedigree, it has maintained collectors' interest and accrued financial value.

Fig. 4.16. *Chaitra.* Baramasa painting
Attributable to Muhammad Afzal
Mughal/Avadh, circa 1740–64
Painting: 23 cm x 17.4 cm; whole folio: 36.4 cm x 28.6 cm

There is a correlation between a painting's "style" and "site of production" and its presumed monetary worth. This trend is noticeable in comparing the *Mughal Officer* painting to another painting sold in the same 1968 Clive auction, the Baramasa miniature *Chaitra*. The latter painting is datable to either the late Mughal period of 1740 or Avadh in the 1750s (fig. 16). In

[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid., 53.
[158] "Sven Gahlin Collection," Sotheby's, accessed September 1, 2016, http://www.sothebys.com/es/auctions/2015/sven-gahlin-collection-l15224.html.

the 1968 sale, it was listed as lot 82 and sold for 130 pounds (1,539.47 pounds today). In the 2015 sale, the Baramasa miniature sold for 15,000 pounds, yielding a profit of 13,460 pounds, or 874 percent. In 1968, the *Mughal Officer* miniature sold for double the amount of the Baramasa miniature. The difference in their values was compounded in the 2015 sale, in which the Mughal miniature sold for five times the value of the Baramasa miniature. In the auction sales of 1968 and 2015, as was the case with countless others, selling painting albums as individual folios allowed for an ease in circulation and facilitated profit among collectors.

Aesthetics, museological linkages, and provenance are all factors that determine the economic value of Indian miniatures. The *Mughal Officer* painting had initial aesthetic interest because of its singularity as portraiture. The miniature was included in the British Museum's exhibition *Paintings from the Muslim Courts of India* in 1976.[159] Its catalogue entry for the exhibition notes that it is a portrait of "Mu'taqid Khan who was also known as Allah Wirdi Khan and was the Governor of Malwa in 1634."[160] In the Sotheby's catalogue of 2015, the caliber of the painting is augmented through its reidentification as a portrait of "Shah Jahan's distinguished officer Khan Zaman (d. 1637)," whose portrait also appears in the famous *Padshahnama* manuscript.[161] From the initial Christie's sale of 1968 to the British Museum exhibit of 1976 to the Sotheby's sale of 2015, the provenance shifts from an ambiguous "mughal officer" collected by Shujā' al-Daula to the specificity of an identifiable officer, Khan Zaman. We can trace the process of forming the painting's aesthetic significance through various art historians' attempts to resolve who the subject is and under what artist's workshop it was created.

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[159] Ralph H. Pinder-Wilson, Ellen S. Smart, and Douglas E. Barrett, *Paintings from the Muslim Courts of India: Catalogue of an Exhibition Held in the Prints and Drawings Gallery, British Museum, 13 April to 11 July 1976* (London: World of Islam Festival Pub. Co., 1976), 83, figure 153.
[160] Sotheby's, "Sven Gahlin Collection," accessed September 1, 2016, http://www.sothebys.com/es/auctions/2015/sven-gahlin-collection-l15224.html.
[161] Ibid.

In contrast, the Baramasa miniature *Chaitra* is dated to 1740 in the Christie's catalogue and is not linked to an individual persona, as *Mughal Officer* is, but to the Baramasa series, a group of poems that represent the heartbreak of lover and beloved over a twelve-month span. Within the Baramasa system, the *Chaitra* miniature is equivalent to the first month in the Indian calendar and set in spring. Because *Chaitra* operates as part of a series, the viewer and collector must draw on their knowledge of Baramasa literature and painting to appreciate the folio. Appreciation of the *Mughal Officer* folio, in contrast, does not depend on the viewer's cultural and literary knowledge, as the painting corresponds well to European models of portraiture wherein a viewer can appreciate a portrait as the work of an artist without any prior knowledge of the sitter. The composition of *Chaitra* was reduplicated many times as part of the Baramasa visual and textual narrative. As such, *Chaitra* loses financial value in the art market because, as part of a series of the twelve-months genre, it is not as compositionally unique as a portrait. Moreover, *Chaitra* cannot be easily placed either within the secularity of portraiture or in the camp of the religious. *Chaitra* visually personifies spring through *viraha,* or separation of lovers. The lovers represented in the painting (fig. 16) are generic. In some versions, Krishna would be depicted as the hero or lover figure. Following Archer's formulation, *Chaitra* would have been considered part of the "Hindu," a religious visual canon. Nevertheless, patrons from different religious sects patronized Baramasa paintings since visually they slid easily into the Indo-Persianate beloved-and-lover paradigm. *Chaitra* defies the normative art historical categories of secular and religious, and fails in producing a uniquely singular composition.

Reflecting the lower value of and lesser demand for the Baramasa miniature, it has never been included in any museum or gallery exhibition, unlike the *Mughal Officer* painting. In the 2015 Sotheby's catalogue, Sotheby's personnel attempted to individuate and arrive at greater

specificity for *Chaitra*. To that end, the Baramasa miniature is attributed to the artist Muḥammad Afzal, who was active between 1740 and 1780 and whose work spanned the courts of Delhi and Avadh.[162] By attaching the artist Muḥammad Afzal to the miniature, the dating and style of the miniature are somewhat clarified. In the 1968 sale, the Baramasa was initially dated to 1740. With the attribution to Muḥammad Afzal, the dating is confirmed but also given a wider time frame of 1740 to 1764.[163] The ambiguous site of production of Delhi or Lucknow remains. There is a language structure employed in the auction sales that moves these Indian paintings such as the *Mughal Officer* and the *Chaitra* from a generic "series" to a more specific attribution of artist/place/patron in order to elevate them as works of art. Even so, the *Chaitra* Baramasa miniature cannot be firmly attached to Avadh and remains on the cusp of late Mughal/Avadhi style, which has been assigned a lesser value in the art market since the colonial period.

The third Clive album typifies the course that many muraqqa‘ have undergone from the eighteenth century to our contemporary moment. Its folios were sold piecemeal. In that process, erotica, portraiture, and serial miniatures were further decontextualized. As individual folios, they lose the effect of residing with other calligraphic and painting folios, and are given the appearance of European painting. An album's bookness, or the folios' effect as a book, gives way to the idea and the privileging of individual folios as single paintings.

By tracing Clive's third album and its individual paintings, I have demonstrated that certain paintings were forgotten while others were praised and included in exhibitions. Archer championed Pahari painting because of its spiritual aspects versus the book arts of the Mughals,

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[162] For information on the artist Muḥammad Afzal, see Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1981), 423, figure 179; Jeremiah P. Losty and Malini Roy, *Mughal India: Art, Culture and Empire: Manuscripts and Paintings in the British Library* (London: British Library 2012), 183; Terence McInerney, "Mughal Painting during the Reign of Muhammad Shah" in *After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, ed. Barbara Schmitz (Mumbai: Marg Publications on behalf of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, 2002), 20.

[163] The end date of 1764 corresponds to the Battle of Buxar, when Lord Clive collected it.

which he considered "secular."[164] The *Mughal Officer* painting (fig. 15) fits Archer's and other art historians' clean narrative of person/place/production. As a portrait, it also can be squarely placed in the secular camp. The Baramasa painting, on the other hand, never corresponded well to Archer's criteria. It hovers between two different styles of schools, Mughal and Avadh (chapter 2), and never reaches an ideal for either secularism or religiosity or a clean break between Hindu and Muslim art production.

I. Conclusion

In the history of Clive's three extant muraqqa', different methods of collecting albums emerged. Unlike many other albums, two out of the three Clive muraqqa', *Small* and *Large*, were collected as assembled wholes. The *Small* and *Large Clive Albums* may have been initially commended for their historicity, for the ways in which they indexed and represented an ideal of British India and a traditional India; but they were immediately disbanded once they entered the V&A museum. Muraqqa' are treated today much as they were in the colonial past. For instance, in 1775 the relatives of Robert Clive framed many of his miniatures behind glass like European paintings and continually reworked the albums. They reduced the number of albums from four to three and split them up into individual folios. While this is understandable, as the muraqqa' form permits a continual disaggregation and reincorporation of new folios, as occured with the *Āṣaf al-Daula Muraqqa'*, these display practices were very new and striking in terms of how they would have been viewed and valued in Avadh. As discussed, Āṣaf al-Daula kept his muraqqa' in private storage and showed it only to a few courtiers on special occasions. Today, display practices have changed very little from how Clive's relatives first displayed the miniatures in 1775. Visitors rarely have a chance to look at an album as a whole. They rarely see a folio's back, which may contain calligraphy and/or dealer's inscriptions. Similarly, the album covers are

[164] William and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures*, 12.

rarely exhibited. The present museum-going viewer has neither a physical relationship with the album form nor political ties to the album's patron.

A review of the history of the Clive albums demonstrates how the shadows of colonialism and empire enveloped the circulation, mobility, and collection of Indian and Avadhi painting. Many early collectors such as Polier and Clive collected in an effort to understand the India they governed. Later, Indian painting became a tool of British imperialism as early as the 1850s in the Great Exhibitions and in cabinets of curiosities. The display practices of these exhibitions were, in a way, reminiscent of colonialist policies of divide and rule. Museum personnel compartmentalized India and its objects into consumable parts and into dissoluble, knowable bits. While both Avadhi elites and Europeans in the eighteenth century operated within the same economic sphere for exchanging and buying albums, they had different responses to the art form. By disfiguring the album format, colonial officers and European collectors enacted new meaning, making practices that suppressed the courtly sociality of the genre. Colonialism then was played out on a much smaller scale for these Indian paintings. In the nineteenth century, albums were sold and collected in parts: as individual folios instead of as whole albums, as a microcosm of colonial networks rather than of the nawabi court. The durability of the folio instead of the album in museums today speaks to the persistence of colonial practices in museological displays.

For the Clive albums, their Mughal pedigree was continually referenced over their Avadhi roots. This is in part owing to the stylistic issues related to what constitutes the distinction between Avadhi and Mughal art (chapter 2). While the notion that many Avadhi paintings are erotic has discouraged many art historians from studying the form more seriously, it is also a fact that Avadhi painting is devalued because of its failure to adhere to the main

principle of gallery exhibitions: representing a particular region of India through unique stylistic characteristics.

More glaringly, the monetary worth of paintings first evaluated and appraised during British colonial and imperial rule in the 1750s and the 1920s still resonates in how early Mughal art is praised over Avadhi art. As an oblique form of power, early collectors and dealers created an infrastructure and developed a conceptual vocabulary for Indian and Avadhi painting. They did so by matching the language of colonialism favoring early Mughal paintings as Indo-Persian artifacts above all else.

These issues surrounding Avadhi painting were heightened by figures such as Archer, who in his scramble to grasp Indian culture searched for "authentic" Islamicate Mughal paintings and their counterparts in an indigenous Indic style of Rajput painting. The *Auction Album* had paintings that could *not* fit into the easy binary of secular or religious, and remained on the cusp of late Mughal/Avadhi style. The Baramasa miniature, for instance, contained both "Hindu" imagery of spring and Islamicate iconography of the separation of lover and beloved. These folios lay on the transgressive borderlines of style and subject matter. As such, even if the painting folios of the Clive albums in the twentieth century were economically and aesthetically valued, they were always valued lower than other forms of Indian painting that had a cleaner narrative.

Hasty readers may assume that my analysis of the economic value of the Clive albums is not conceptually related to my discussion on erotica. They are related, as the formulation of erotica is dependent on the whims of the art market. I problematized the historical conditions that affected how the Clive albums and other Avadhi paintings were broken up and assigned value in order to show how they were continually circulated, sold, marketed, and collected. Conditions

were identical in the separation of erotic folios from their muraqqa‘. Erotic imagery was and is deployed as singular painterly folios, emphasizing the body-centrism of compositions and ignoring the corresponding calligraphic inscriptions. If erotic folios were read through the muraqqa‘ book format, in what new ways could we interpret them? Is it merely the paradigm of style that has financial and intellectual import? Or can a single painting be read through its association with and affect as part of an album, which would reinstate how the nawabs initially collected and valued these paintings? I would posit that erotica folios, like other painting folios, were “jewels” because they were able to construct social relationships in court ceremonies of gift giving and in viewing contexts. To reengage erotica folios through the muraqqa‘ genre, they must be thought of as economically and socially precious.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EROTICS OF SOVEREIGNTY: THE *'ISHQNĀMA* AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Earth is love, sky is love.[1]

During the eighteenth century, the East India Company and its merchants adopted Mughal symbols and customs to legitimate their administration while also accommodating "Indian forms of rule."[2] With the consolidation of British imperialism in the nineteenth century, however, a discursive shift occurred. During this time, the British increasingly justified their political intervention by establishing themselves as a moral and judicial counterpoint to Indian power structures and court culture. In this political strategy of differentiation, the British undertook the project of "civilizing" indigenous courts such as the nawabs of Avadh, India.

Fig. 5.1. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh (r. 1847–56)
Oil portrait, circa 1880
Hussainabad Picture Gallery, Lucknow

This new imperial turn is evident in the historiographical and artistic reception of the last nawab of Avadh, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh was continuously earmarked as an alien "other," and his artistic practices have been scrutinized in accordance with this view. He reigned for only a short time, from 1847 to 1856. He shepherded the nawabate to its closure in 1856 after refusing to sign a demeaning treaty with the British government, which responded by officially annexing Avadh, forcing Wājid ʻAlī to abdicate and driving him into exile. In part stemming from his decision not to engage in a physical confrontation with the British during his dethronement, Wājid ʻAlī is remembered as little more than an "oriental prince" who prioritized his sexual pleasures over proper governance.

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[1] Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, *'Ishqnāma*, Windsor Castle, RCIN 1005035, folio 2v.
[2] Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8–9, 16.

Visual substantiation of this narrative is provided by an infamous oil painting of Wājid ʻAlī, where he appears grossly corpulent and baring his left nipple (fig. 1).[3] His body in this image has been read as twinning the notion of excess corpulence with excessive sexuality.[4] This image has been deployed as part of the colonial narrative that Wājid ʻAlī transgressed proper bodily regulation to express his deviant subjectivity and, by extension, establish a deviant government.[5] Besides the charge of notable decadence, the painting also speaks to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's sponsorship of the arts as he patronized oil painting and miniature painting during his reign. In particular, he was interested in theatrical performances, devising musical dramas, and writing plays both in Lucknow, where his court was located when he was officially king, and in Calcutta, where he relocated during his exile.[6] Wājid ʻAlī wrote his own poetry under the *takhallus* (pen name) of Akhtar. Forty-three books are attributed to him.[7]

Wājid ʻAlī Shāh is therefore remembered in two ways: as an oriental prince and as a devotee of the arts. These two facets come together in the *ʻIshqnāma* manuscript, completed in 1849, which was a versified semi-autobiography of Wājid ʻAlī's life.[8] Over the course of 131 *dastans* (episodes) and 103 accompanying miniatures, the *ʻIshqnāma* manuscript recounts how Wājid ʻAlī maintained his lovers, how he wisely disposed of them, and the lovesickness wrought by his affairs. The *ʻIshqnāma* also delineates important ceremonial rituals such as the

[3] Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 219.
[4] To understand the "representational contract" of fatness with transgression, see Michael Moon and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Divinity: A Dossier a Performance Piece a Little-Understood Emotion," *Discourse* 13, no. 1 (1990): 12–39.
[5] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire*, 219.
[6] Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire,* 220; Syed Masood Hasan Rizvi Adeeb, *Lakhnau ka Shāhi Stej* (Lucknow: Kitab Nagar, 1968).
[7] The estimate is between forty-three and sixty; see Victoria Memorial Hall, *Musammi Ba Banni*, Mansucript C. 898 as quoted in Ranbir Sinh, *Wājid ʻAlī Shāh: The Tragic King* (Jaipur: Publication Scheme, 2002), 142–43; Kaukab Qadr Sajjād ʻAlī Mīrza, *Intikāb-i Vājid ʻAlī Shāh Akhtar* (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdū Akādmī, 1984), 19.
[8] Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, *ʻIshqnāma*, folio 445r.

enthronement of his father, Nawab Amjad ʻAlī Shāh, and provides information on everyday household governance such as the role of eunuchs in the court.[9]

Historians have perpetuated the idea of the *ʻIshqnāma* as a perverse text by quoting it by way of a so-called Urdu translation known as the *Parīkhāna*, which elides the *ʻIshqnāma*'s original Urdu poetic structure and its 103 images by transforming the *masnavī* (narrative poetry) format into prose.[10] These authors purport to translate the *ʻIshqnāma* from Persian into Urdu. In actuality, the *ʻIshqnāma* is written in Urdu and contains Persian chapter titles with some Persian lexicon. Because the *ʻIshqnāma* is almost never viewed in its original manuscript format, and is instead read through the *Parīkhāna*'s simplified prose, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh has been read as decadent, sexually excessive, and in a state of moral decay.[11] Such a reading is dependent on colonial formulas of how sexuality ought to be expressed and "what constitutes sexuality."[12] From a colonial vantage point, the expression of sexual desire is taken to be a private affair. Because the *ʻIshqnāma* was widely circulated, the manuscript can be taken as a sign of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh "confessing" his private matters to a public audience.[13] Such an analysis adds a layer of social stigma both to the *ʻIshqnāma* and to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh.

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[9] Muhammad Isa Waley summarized the *ʻIshqnāma* in "Islamic Manuscripts in the British Royal Collection: A Concise Catalogue," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 6 (1992): 15–16. Waley also numbered the miniatures, which corresponded with the folios' older page numbers written in Persian. I have found his numbering to be slightly off, so I have renumbered the textual folios. I have retained his numbering system for the paintings but not for the text so that art historians can still refer to his catalogue for reference.

[10] Historians have actually utilized two alternate texts that are translations of the *ʻIshqnāma*, the *Parīkhāna* and the *Mahal-i Shāh-i Khana*. Both texts purport to translate the *ʻIshqnāma* from Persian to Urdu. Since both the later translated texts and the *ʻIshqnāma* are in Urdu, the authors are only translating the *ʻIshqnāma*'s poetry and images into a simplified prose.

[11] Even Karl Marx in 1853 famously argued that these princely states in India, including Avadh, were in state of decay. Karl Marx, "The East India Question," *New York Daily Tribune*, July 25, 1853, in *Collected Works, 1853–1854*, Vol. 12, by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (London, England: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979), 25: 148–156. For an overview of the decadence paradigm and a rejoinder to this historiography see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Introduction," in *The Mughal State, 1526–1750* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[12] Shad Naved, *The Erotic Conceit: History, Sexuality and the Urdu Ghazal* (PhD diss., UCLA, 2012), 19.

[13] Historian G.D. Bhatnagar even considers this book to be a "private diary." G.D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh Under Wājid ʻAlī Shāh* (Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1968), 6. See Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), for an interrogation of the public-private distinction in in a pre-modern context of India.

The title, *'Ishqnāma*, is derived from an attached Persian label located on the front of the manuscript. It reads "nazm 'Ishqnāma hindi ba tasvirat," which translates to "verses of the *'Ishqnāma* in Hindi with images."[14] As bookends, the first dastan in the *'Ishqnāma* opens with Wājid 'Alī's first love affair, which commences at the tender age of eight, while one of the *'Ishqnāma*'s final half-verses also harkens back to the title, stating, "This love, a story of women, has concluded."[15] This arc is central to understanding the texts and images within. Contrary to present criticism that disparages the *'Ishqnāma* and its author as obscene, as a whole the manuscript projects Wājid 'Alī's sovereignty. For instance, it discusses Wājid 'Alī's sexual affair within a palace setting, placing the space and the spatial arrangements of the household at the center of the narrative. Titles of rank and ancestral ties are important details included throughout the manuscript. Wājid 'Alī also reflects on his ability to control and punish his sexual partners. By doing so, his lovers' bodies and the space of his sexual encounters act as symbols of his power. I call this "the erotics of sovereignty," which is a cornerstone of Wājid 'Alī's kingship and his artistic practices. This is evident once scholars engage with the orginial manuscript with its visual imagery rather than the reworked versions. Before this chapter, the *'Ishqnāma* had remained untranslated: all the translations are my own.[16]

This chapter reorients the *'Ishqnāma* into its vernacular intertextual and intervisual context, which ranges from European painting techniques to Sufic (Islamic mysticism) messages, in order to recover how Wājid 'Alī Shāh imagined his manuscript. First A, I provide a brief history of the *'Ishqnāma* and its relationship to other historical manuscripts from India. Second

[14] The *'Ishqnāma* has also acquired the English title "Customs of the Court of Oudh."
[15] *'Ishqnāma*, 444r: "kyā 'ishq niswān ka nāma tamām."
[16] I would like to thank Umar Anjum for reading large sections of the *'Ishqnāma* with me in Pakistan in 2015. Saad Ayub was also of a great assistance by providing me with a rough translation of the *Parīkhāna*, which I used as a guide to read the *'Ishqnāma.* In this chapter, all the translations are my own, including the excerpts from the *Parīkhāna*.

B, I turn to the internal logic of the *'Ishqnāma*, studying the stylistic characteristics of its miniature painting and its border design. Third C, I chart how the *'Ishqnāma* exhibits qualities of the masnavī literary genre through its structure, visual imagery, and courtly ethics (*adab*). Section D pivots to the ways in which the '*Ishqnāma* abides by the vaqa'i (biography) genre. Wājid 'Alī's courtly self-image was connected to his mastery of Indo-Persianate literary genres such as the masnavī and vaqa'i, and his methods of managing his lovers. By encompassing various Indo-Persianate visual and vernacular literary genres such as the masnavī, the *'Ishqnāma* reveals that Wājid 'Alī's mentality on love was a foundational epistemology that furthered his political legitimacy and projected his embodied sovereignty.[17]

The last two sections are about the discursive constraints placed on the '*Ishqnāma* since it has been read mostly through its print and lithograph copies, produced from 1848 to 1965, which are colloquially known as *Parīkhāna*. In section E, by turning to the copies of the '*Ishqnāma*, I trace the various textual and visual transformations in the *Parīkhāna*, which include the complete removal of the '*Ishqnāma*'s miniature paintings. Section F assesses how the '*Ishqnāma* was received in academic discourse and popular culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

A. Brief historiography of the *'Ishqnāma*

Wājid 'Alī Shāh was not ashamed of his sexual history: he unabashedly circulated copies of the *'Ishqnāma* during his exile in Calcutta. Copies were completed in both lithograph and handwritten forms, and news of the *'Ishqnāma*'s production likely traveled to other neighboring

[17] There was precedent for an Indian ruler to sponsor a semiautobiography in the masnavī genre. See the recent work on the Duval Ranı va Khizr Khān masnavī and its connection to Prince Khizr Khān of the Delhi Sultanate. Michael Boris Bednar,"The Content and the Form in Amır Khusraw's Duval Ranı va Khizr Khān," *JRAS*, Series 3, 24, no. 1 (2014): 17–35; Sunil Sharma, "Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 22, no. 1 (2002): 112–18.

courts through word-of-mouth transmission.[18] A parallel can be drawn with the *Akbarnāma*, produced during the Mughal period as an official semi-autobiographical manuscript for the ruler Akbar. The *Akbarnāma* manuscript was executed to be a single elaborate copy; as the manuscript was also a costly enterprise intended to bolster Akbar's imperial ideology, however, the life of *Akbarnāma* had a public dimension beyond Akbar's private consumption. Similarly, Wājid 'Alī Shāh spared no expense, and the *'Ishqnāma* was the most extravagant manuscript completed during his reign.

The *'Ishqnāma* contains no trace of artists' or calligraphers' signatures. Wājid 'Alī Shāh did not permit any vestige of worker accreditation, suggesting that the manuscript's production be credited directly to his own hand and his rule. Unlike the *Akbarnāma*, completed under Abu'l Fazl's guidance, the *'Ishqnāma* can be attributed only to Wājid 'Alī, allowing him total authorial presence. Because he is the final and only traceable authority, it is reasonable to assume that he actively promoted this manuscript as a self-aggrandizing symbol, affirming his distinctive right to power.

Even so, the *'Ishqnāma* has not been seen as a prestigious manuscript with an imperial doctrine akin to Akbar's *Akbarnāma*. Rather, because it centers on specific sexual episodes from throughout Wājid 'Alī's life, contention arises over whether Wājid 'Alī 's carnal knowledge is a shameful or a generative symbol for his sovereignty. Throughout the *'Ishqnāma*'s publication and distribution, historians have taken the former position and have largely read the dastans in the *'Ishqnāma* as merely signifying sexual decadence and as a kind of truthful sexual biography. This is in part because historians have quoted from the *'Ishqnāma* through the *Parīkhāna*. The *Parīkhāna* in prose has been seen as a more useful archival document, as the *'Ishqnāma*'s

[18] Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 1, special issue: *How Social, Political and Cultural Information Is Collected, Defined, Used and Analyzed* (1993): 229–51.

allegories give way to *Parīkhāna*'s direct narrative account, which has more of a sheen of verisimilitude.

I contend that the courtly significance of the *'Ishqnāma* is discernible only by taking into consideration the entire manuscript, which includes both the visual and textual devices. Otherwise, read through *Parīkhāna*'s prose, the *'Ishqnāma* seems only to be asking: What can be more corporeal than sex? By returning to the original manuscript, we see that Wājid 'Alī Shāh weaves in Sufi and religious elements alongside older Indo-Persianate genre structures to create bonds of affiliation and affection for his rule.

The first dastan serves as a striking example of both the erotic nature of the manuscript's text and the ethical and political message of its paintings. In this first dastan, Rehiman, a forty-four-year-old servant in the nawabi court, becomes enamored with the eight-year-old Wājid 'Alī. He describes her as security guard (*kafīl*) and blackmailer. Rehiman continues to pursue a physical relationship with Wājid 'Alī until one day he finally acquiesces to her perseverance (*iṣrārī*). An Urdu line that embodies their relationship is "phaṅsāyā falk ni mujhi jāl main," which translates to "heaven captured me in a net." The text goes on to state that from an early age Wājid 'Alī has been afraid of her physical advances and concedes to the affair only after Rehiman threatens him (*ḍarāyā*) with revealing information to his private tutor (*atālīq*). The relationship between them continues until Wājid 'Alī turns ten years old, at which time Rehiman departs from the palace without informing him. He speculates that she may have run off or may have passed away ("Zamīn ko diyā. Āsmān ko gaye").

Because Wājid 'Alī Shāh states that he had a sexual relationship at age eight with Rehiman, scholars have concluded that he must have done so. Historian Rosie Llewellyn-Jones

describes this Rehiman incident as "child abuse."[19] Literary or visual analysis has been set aside, and instead these dastans have been taken at face value as absolute truths reflecting Wājid ʻAlī's sexual reality.

Fig. 5.2 *ʻIshqnāma*, dastan 1, folio 4r
Rehiman on a bed calling Prince Wājid ʻAlī
1251/1835–36

What does it mean to take the *ʻIshqnāma*'s miniature paintings seriously? Figure 2 shows the first miniature, which seemingly reinforces the lyrical narrative of the Rehiman dastan, depicting her beckoning a young Wājid ʻAlī Shāh to her bedside. A closer inspection, however, shows that emotions disclosed by the text, such as Wājid ʻAlī 's timidity, are not visible within the miniature's solemn depiction. Wājid ʻAlī's face harbors no hint of fear. He seems quite placid and serene. The contrast between painting and text is an important element of the adab—the ethical sensibilities—of the masnavī genre, and thus of the *ʻIshqnāma*. Reconsidering the *ʻIshqnāma* images as adab formulations offers a new way of understanding the manuscript.

In actuality, the *ʻIshqnāma* aligns with Mughal precepts of kingship, a concept that was also tied in with an expression of sexuality in courtly literature such as the *Bāburnāma*, the *Akbarnāma*, and masnavī stories. In the Mughal courtly tradition, sexual prowess is seen as representing a king's legitimacy and power. The account of Wājid ʻAlī and Rehiman is working within that framework, affirming his kingship from an early age. Wājid ʻAlī is therefore not such an exceptionally sexually perverse figure, as he was operating with a different set of parameters for expressing desire in his early modern world. *ʻIshqnāma*'s account does contain some facts of the historical figure of Wājid ʻAlī's's life but these facts are exaggerated and implemented in the service of Wājid ʻAlī to assert his political authority. The root of the title *ʻIshqnāma* is the word

[19] Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *The Last King in India: Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, 1822–1887* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2014), 129–30. She further describes the *ʻIshqnāma* as a "straightforward" account rather than "spiritual" or "religious."

'ishq, which is defined "as comprising a number of feelings, both sacred and profane, and a complex of emotions centering on madness and violent obsession."[20] The word has a Persian and Arabic etymology and is a frequent theme in mystical Sufi literature. Wājid 'Alī's love affairs, even those initiated at age eight, were thus tapping into an erotology that has Indo-Persianate connections with courtly literature and mysticism. By studying the various intertextual markers within the *'Ishqnāma*, it becomes apparent how Wājid 'Alī's courtly self-image was connected to the ways in which he could manage various Indo-Persianate literary genres such as masnavī, and the ways in which he could manage his lovers.

B. Style in the *'Ishqnāma*

The *'Ishqnāma*'s formal qualities offer alternative ways of reading and interpreting this text beyond the obscenity paradigm. The border design of the folios and the use of European painting techniques in the miniature paintings emphasize Wājid 'Alī Shāh's authority. Furthermore, there are visual pauses in the manuscript. For example, although childbirth is textually described, it is never illustrated with an accompanying miniature. Unpacking these visual choices reveals how, both visually and textually, Wājid 'Alī Shāh oriented the manuscript for his political advantage.

The *hashiya* (border) of the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript provides important information on the dating of the manuscript and visually hints at the rationale behind its production (fig. 3). One border motif that is prevalent throughout the *'Ishqnāma* is a pair of fish (*matsya*). Khusrau II, the Sassanian king who reigned from 590 to 628, was the first to utilize this design of two golden fish.[21] Following the Sassanians, the Mughals employed a similar fish symbol, dubbed the *mahi-i*

[20] Aditya Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379–1545* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 71.
[21] There is still debate about whether the the nawabs of Avadh devised their fish motif from Khusrau II's design or from a regional folk symbol. Stephen Markel, "'This Blaze of Wealth and Magnificence': The Luxury Arts of

maratib (fish of dignity), to bestow rank upon their courtiers. Under the Mughal administration, the first nawab of Avadh, Sa'ādat 'Alī Khān, received this royal fish symbol. The fish motif eventually became synonymous with nawabi power and their Mughal lineage, and it was ubiquitous throughout nawabi architecture.[22] Wājid 'Alī Shāh later augmented the design: he merged the matsya with the body of an angel to create a mermaid-like figure.[23]

Fig. 5.3. *'Ishqnāma*, 1v–2r

In the borders of the *'Ishqnāma*'s pages, other symbols of royalty such as a *chattar* (royal parasol) and crown also appear. The chattar was once a Hindu-Buddhist symbol appearing on Buddhist stupas throughout the subcontinent and was appropriated by many rulers of India as symbol of power. Fisher has shown that the crown entered the nawabi aesthetic lexicon through the English artist Robert Home, who employed it in a design for the seventh nawab, Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar. After a ceremony in 1818 in which Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar pledged his loyalty to the British, the nawabs of Avadh were no longer technically nawabs, which was an honorific title for a principality under the protection of the Mughals; but, they were now kings who had severed their allegiance to the Mughals.[24] When writing letters to the English, Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar even employed the English term "king" and not the Persian term, "pādshāh." In a similar aesthetic move to Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar's ceremony, Wājid 'Alī Shāh fashioned a pictorial language in the *'Ishqnāma*, embracing Indian, Persianate, and English kingship motifs such as the chattar, fish, and crown insignias to legitimate his rule. In the *'Ishqnāma*'s hashiya, Wājid 'Alī Shāh shows

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Lucknow," in *India's Fabled City: the Art of Courtly Lucknow* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2010), 199–225.

[22] Examples of fish in nawabi architecture appear in the Machi Bhavan, Great lmambara, Rumi Darwaza, and Chaulakhi Darwaza as well as on the arches of the Qaisarbagh palace.

[23] Angels are a frequent motif in Indian aesthetics. Ebba Koch's work has shown that the angel motif in the Mughal visual repertoire had connections to the ruler Solomon and was regarded as a symbol of a heavenly mandate to rule.

[24] Michael H. Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, the British and the Mughals* (Riverdale, MD: Riverdale Co., 1987), 134–35.

his sovereignty by literally stamping every page with his variegated, cross-cultural motifs (fig. 3).

Fig. 5.4. *Dīvān* of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, 1v–2r
Nasser Khalili Collection, London, acc. no. MSS916

This repetitive border design, present on every folio of the *ʻIshqnāma,* is almost unique, known to only one other manuscript: the *Divan* of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh (a collection of poems). Both the *Divan* and the *ʻIshqnāma* are dated to 1849 in their respective colophons. Both manuscripts are physically quite large: the *ʻIshqnāma* is approximately 17 ½ x 11 inches, while the *Divan* measures 16 ¼ x 10 inches. In addition, they both have the same cream-colored paper and hashiya design of gold and red (fig. 4).[25] Given their similarities, the *ʻIshqnāma* and *Divan* manuscripts were most likely produced simultaneously. The *Divan* even includes a miniature of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh sitting on his throne that bears an uncanny resemblance to throne scenes in the *ʻIshqnāma* (figs. 5 and 6).[26] Because of their visual resonances, the *ʻIshqnāma* and *Divan* should be seen together as part of Wājid ʻAlī's early imperial message. That both manuscripts are written in a poetic register speaks to the fact that Wājid ʻAlī considered poetry to enhance of his sovereignty and the perfect means to conveying his authority.

Fig. 5.5. Throne scene in the *Dīvān*
Khalili collection, accession no. MSS916, folio 1

Fig. 5.6. Throne scene in the *ʻIshqnāma*, folio 357r

Only two years into his reign, 1849 marked an important year for Wājid ʻAlī Shāh. He not only completed these immensely elaborate manuscripts, the *ʻIshqnāma* and the *Divan*, and minted a new coin but also witnessed the death of one of his sons by smallpox. That same year also saw the arrival of a cantankerous British resident, William Henry Sleeman, who within his

[25] In both manuscripts, Wajid ʻAlī Shāh uses his takhallus, or pen name, Akhtar. Unlike the *ʻIshqnāma*, the *Divan* provides the name and details of its calligrapher.
[26] Khalili collection, MSS. 916, *Divan* of Wajid ʻAlī Shāh*,* folio 1v; *ʻIshqnāma*, folio 41v.

first five weeks as acting British resident had pushed for Wājid ʻAlī's removal.[27] Sleeman traveled through the Avadhi countryside collecting information for his report, which ended up accusing Wājid ʻAlī Shāh and his administration of devastating Avadh financially and socially. In his two-volume memoir, Sleeman states that he witnessed a proliferation of crime, bribery, and extortion throughout Avadh. Wājid ʻAlī was described as "a crazy imbecile who is led like a child" by the hands of a few "fiddlers, eunuchs, and poetasters."[28] Sleeman suggested, in other words, that Wājid ʻAlī Shāh was more interested in poets, eunuchs, and dancers than in running a responsible administration. The British government would later use Sleeman's report to justify its complete absorption of Avadhi territory.

While it would be tempting to suggest that Wājid ʻAlī created his manuscripts to provide a direct counterpoint to Sleeman's account, manuscript production was too intensive a process to have been completed in the span of a few months. Given the high quality of the images and the elaborate hashiya, the *ʻIshqnāma*'s production must have started at least a year before Sleeman's arrival, though Wājid ʻAlī Shāh could have expedited the process once news circulated that Sleeman planned to submit such an antagonistic report. In either case, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh commissioned two manuscripts in a poetic register that espoused intimacy and intimate bonds as foundational to his rule, which was at odds with Sleeman's account. While Sleeman saw the members of his court as a liability, Wājid ʻAlī himself saw these dancers, musicians, and lovers as an asset to his power.

The style of the miniature painting also reveals Wājid ʻAlī's imperial message of the power of transgression by negotiating the incorporation of European motifs into a local style of

[27] Sleeman even declared that "the King's [i.e. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's] ambition seems to be limited to the reputation of being the best drum-beater, dancer, and poet of the day. He is utterly unfit to reign." Sleeman, *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude in 1849–1850*, vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), 386.
[28] Ibid., 369.

painting. The nawabs regularly refashioned European aesthetics and representations.[29] In folio 66v of the *'Ishqnāma*, the anonymous artist employed European perspective (fig. 7). Offset by light pinks and greens, against an approaching dawn, Wājid 'Alī and a young woman sit on an open platform whose sides recede diagonally to the back wall. He and his companion are dwarfed by the surrounding architecture. This composition is clearly borrowed from European vista scenes. There was an underlying precedent in Mughal visuality for incorporating regional and foreign elements into miniature painting; what differentiates folio 66v from Mughal precursors is the number of European devices employed. Besides linear perspective, there is also a devotion to shading to create a three-dimensional quality to the painting, as exhibited by the detail on the top of the cornice and along the architectural roof.

Fig. 5.7. *'Ishqnāma*, folio 66v

When compared to vista scenes produced under the Mughal ruler Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–48), folio 66v appears even more realistic. Paintings completed under Muḥammad Shāh's patronage between 1719 and 1748 had a flat quality, achieved through an absence of shading and an emphasis on symmetry. Early art historians such as Mildred Archer disparaged the *'Ishqnāma*'s depiction of architecture, stating that the "tawdry Europeanized palace" and "garish stucco building with its shoddy woodwork and frescoes, its carpets, furniture and wall lamps" were "in the worst British taste." Archer was comparing the *'Ishqnāma* to earlier Mughal antecedents such as Muḥammad Shāh's compositions, and to British visual culture.[30] Similarly, she found the framing of European prints and portraits along the palace walls to be objectionable.

[29] In another paper, I track the eroticization of European females in the Avadhi visual canon and their reinscription as Persianate beloveds.
[30] Mildred and W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770–1880* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 62–63.

By doing so, Archer denies Wājid ʻAlī Shāh and his artists the agency to borrow from European aesthetics.

My contention is that the power of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's kingship arose from his ability to appropriate motifs and make them his own. This could be termed a "politics of transgression" that encapsulates Wājid ʻAlī's appropriation and adoption of European objects and motifs. Take, for instance, the same folio, 66v (fig. 7). The horizontal format of the composition stands in strong contrast to the vertical compositions of most Indian miniatures; also, unlike other miniatures in the *ʻIshqnāma*, this folio does not have accompanying calligraphic text on the top of its folio to act as a descriptive heading for the painting. The visual narrative in this miniature thus unfolds slightly differently than in the rest of the *ʻIshqnāma* miniatures. However, 66v does retain the same border design of the golden frame, which is utilized throughout the manuscript and provides visual continuity. This frame acts as a horizontal line that is echoed in the miniature's composition. The horizontal band is repeated on the top of the wall, on the interior of the palace wall, in the line of the platform, and also on the crease of the folio page. There is thus a visual interaction between the book format and the miniature, which is indexed by the relationship between the frame and the image. Moreover, because of the golden frame, the "realistic" technique of perspective is flattened. When the miniature is taken as a whole folio, European perspective is only one part of the visual story. Perhaps Wājid ʻAlī embraced new European pictorial techniques such as perspective in his miniatures to show the versatility of the Indo-Persianate book form.

Within the narrative context, folio 66v represents the moment following Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's reunion with his lover Vazeeran. During his separation from Vazeeran, in the throes of a malady of desire, Wājid ʻAlī hastily (*taʴīl*) runs to the balcony of his house (*bālāy k̲h̲āna*) and

attempts suicide.[31] A servant, Najam al-Nisā Bēgum, hears of his intention and prevents him from completing this act.[32] After Wājid ʻAlī decides against suicide, he directs his employee Sheikh Ghulām ʻAlī to travel to Vazeeran's house and bring her back to the nawabi court.[33] In the meantime, Wājid ʻAlī decides to "decorate" (*nisār*) his surroundings for her return. He notes that he has arranged a bed (*ćādar*) among canals and fountains (*ćashma*; *fawwāra-ābshār*) while perfuming the area with fragrant flowers. This is visible in the miniature, where the fountain holds a prominent position. The rest of the night, he is filled with "intense desire" (*ātish ishtiyāq)* and "eagerness" (*dil bāg bāg*) in anticipation of Vazeeran's return. When she finally arrives, they spend the night together, which he likens to a moth finally finding the flame of a candle.[34] Their union draws to a close the next morning (*sahar*) when they hear the call to prayer (*muʻazzin ki avāz*). In the miniature, the morning after is represented through the streaks of pinks and oranges on the horizon. For this vignette, rather than depicting himself under duress during his suicide attempt or in the throes of his fevered night of passion with Vazeeran, Wājid ʻAlī picks a serene moment, in the midst of conversation with Vazeeran as dawn approaches. These visual choices must be considered in order to understand Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's intention for the manuscript's narrative impact.

Fig. 5.8. *A Palace Complex with Harem Gardens*, 1770
Artist Faizuallah
David collection. Inv. nr. 46/1980

Much like throughout the *ʻIshqnāma*, the spatial architecture of 66v serves to emphasize the didacticism of the miniatures. In 66v, the imposing architecture dwarfs Wājid ʻAlī Shāh to emphasize his young age. The buildings and interior spaces are impressive in scale in the first

[31] He never employs the word "suicide" (*k̲h̲ud-kushī*), but alludes to the act by suggesting that "the door [of his life] was shut forever," and more vividly he later suggests that the "ground would be stained by blood [by his fall]."
[32] *ʻIshqnāma*, folio 64v.
[33] Ibid., folio 65r.
[34] Ibid., folio 66r. "rahā sham' 'āriz pe shab bhar nisār/ dil-so k̲h̲ta merā parwāna vār."

third of the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript. These earlier scenes, which are depicted on open verandas with exteriors that have three huge columns, are reduced to one-column spaces in the latter half of the *'Ishqnāma,* when Wājid 'Alī is much older. The *'Ishqnāma,* as in 66v, also utilizes one-point perspective as a compositional device. Other Avadhi miniatures, such as *A Palace Complex with Harem Gardens*, employ an aerial view that accommodates multiple vanishing points (fig. 8).[35] In *A Palace Complex with Harem Gardens*, each receding plane stages a multitude of activities such as playing music, flying kites, collecting clean water, and battling sea monsters. In contrast, with their single vantage points, the *'Ishqnāma* miniatures are spatially more controlled and contained. The architectural space and one-point perspective of the *'Ishqnāma* miniatures depict Wājid 'Alī's court and zenana as if nothing existed outside of that world. The style of the miniature shows his control over a microcosmic space, acting as a pictorial metaphor for how he controlled his court and his state.

Besides the internal space of the miniatures holding significance, the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript has unarticulated visuality within crucial narrative acts. There are 131 dastans and only 103 images in the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript. The dastans and miniatures do not have a one-to-one correspondence. A single dastan may have one, two, or three accompanying images depending on the length of the *ḥissa* (section), while other narrative junctures are completely unillustrated. The *'Ishqnāma* defers to a visual silence in scenes of childbirth and of death. In later copies such as the *Parīkhāna*, a moment of visual rest is not possible since none of the copies contain any miniature paintings.

In dastans that contain information on childbirth and reproduction, there is no visual accompaniment. In dastans 7 and 9, Wājid 'Alī Shāh's wife, Naik Akhtar, gives birth to three sons, Mirza Nosherwan Qadar Bahadur, Mirza Falak Qadar Bahadur, and Mirza Kaiwan Qadar

[35] There is another copy of this miniature in the CBL ln 69.6.

Bahadur.[36] These scenes are not visually depicted in the *'Ishqnāma*. In dastan 11, when Wājid 'Alī Shāh is nineteen years old, his wife gives birth to his daughter, Murtaza Bēgum.[37] This daughter soon dies after only forty days. In the same dastan, Wājid 'Alī Shāh's father, Āmjad 'Alī Shāh, is appointed as the nawab of Avadh, and Wājid 'Alī continues his affair with a singer, Sahiba Khanum. Dastan 11 is juxtaposed with a miniature painting of Sahiba Khanum and Wājid 'Alī Shāh together, which actually illustrates a scene from dastan 10. Āmjad 'Alī Shāh's enthronement visually accompanies a subsequent dastan.[38] As a result, the emotions of Wājid 'Alī Shāh's wife are visually and textually suppressed within dastan 11 so that Wājid 'Alī can express his control over his other lover, Sahiba Khanum.

The filial relationship between mother and child is visually nonexistent in the *'Ishqnāma*. In dastan 69, another lover, Mahak Parī, gives birth to Wājid 'Alī Shāh's other son, Mirza Barjees Qadar; and in dastan 70, a woman referred to as Fizza the Black gives birth to a daughter, Jahan Ara.[39] Once again, these scenes are not made visually present. Wājid 'Alī visually silences the pain and heartbreak of motherhood, not wanting his story to be emotionally usurped by the intimate, filial attachments between mother and child. He refuses to decenter his narrative away from his courtly conduct, and will not permit his lovers to overshadow him with their emotionally charged relationships.

Fig. 5.9. *'Ishqnāma*, folio 188r
Prince and Razi Al Dawalah sit weeping by a river
1261/1845–6

For dastans that narrate death and childbirth, Wājid 'Alī Shāh is visually represented neither in a state of duress nor in a state of elation. In dastan 50, he textually elaborates on his bereavement over the death of Najam al-Nisā Bēgum, who was the superintendent (*dārogā*) of

[36] '*Ishqnāma*, 22r–29v.
[37] Ibid., 33r.
[38] Ibid., 41v.
[39] Ibid., dastan 68, folio 222v; dastan 69, folio 224r–v.

his living quarters and who was like a "sister" (*ham-shīra*) to him.[40] She and Wājid ʻAlī had a close relationship after she saved his life when he was so lovesick over one of his lovers, Vazeeran, that he attempted suicide.[41] However, the *ʻIshqnāma* does not illustrate her death nor does it visualize Wājid ʻAlī in grief over her death.[42] In only one miniature, accompanying dastan 54, is Wājid ʻAlī depicted shedding tears. In the miniature, which is reproduced above (fig. 9), Wājid ʻAlī cries over the demise of another close friend (*ham-shīra*), Amāman. Amāman is introduced in dastan 15 as a singer who works in Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's court and is one of his key supporters in establishing his theater school.[43] She also brings potential lovers to Wājid ʻAlī on multiple occasions. Amāman's death occurs immediately after Najam al-Nisā Bēgum's passing. Perhaps reflecting the extraordinary pain of the loss of two close friends, Amāman's death is the only scene in the *ʻIshqnāma* in which Wājid ʻAlī visually breaks his composure. Textually, then, Wājid ʻAlī narrates his suicide attempts and the deaths of his lovers and children, but these scenes are never illustrated. Amāman's death is only obliquely represented. Rather than celebrating Amāman, the miniature of figure 9 redirects Amāman's death back to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh. Compositionally, the miniature shows Wājid ʻAlī crying with one of his courtiers. The viewer's attention is directed to him. Her funeral arrangements are never depicted. Rather, it is Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's grief and not Amāman's death that is emphasized.

When Wājid ʻAlī elects to represent an intimate moment visually, he does so by repositioning himself as the focus of the pictorial, emotional, and courtly space. From the hashiya motifs with royal insignias to the spatiality of the miniatures, visually the *ʻIshqnāma*

[40] Ibid., 51v, 58r.
[41] Ibid., 64v.
[42] Ibid., 171r–73v.
[43] Ibid., 57r, 112r.

exerts Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's control and power. The connections between visuals and text are lost in *ʻIshqnāma* copies such as the *Parīkhāna* since these later copies lack any visual representations.

C. Masnavī

Outside of the *ʻIshqnāma*, Avadhi literature has already been marked as dialogical with multiple genres including Sufi and Hindavi literature.[44] While performing such an analysis would seem to be a simple proposition, the *ʻIshqnāma* has not been considered beyond the framework of a "truthful" historical biography and needs to be studied against and in dialogue with the masnavī romance genre.[45] The literary mechanisms that differentiate a masnavī from an autobiography are not discernible in the *Parīkhāna* copies, but are apparent when reading and viewing the *ʻIshqnāma* manuscript. By creating a manuscript that is both intertextual and intervisual, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh was relying on the reader to be well versed in genre markers in order to understand the subtle transformations he was creating within his manuscript. Through this dialogue, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh created a literary genealogy to justify his rule.

The *ʻIshqnāma* abides by masnavī genre structures that offer alternative ways of reading and interpreting the manuscript. The masnavī is a distinctive form of narrative poetry. One of its distinguishing traits is that the meter divides each couplet (*bayt*) into two hemistiches or half-verses (*misraʻ*). These hemistiches rhyme. The rhyme scheme for every two lines is *a-a*, *b-b*, *c-c*; the *ʻIshqnāma*'s structure is in this rhyme scheme. Moreover, thematically, like most other masnavīs, love with connotations of sacrality is the median pulse of the *ʻIshqnāma* narrative. The opening of the *ʻIshqnāma* is in alignment with these masnavī genre markers, as it abides by these two commitments of structure and the theme of sacred love. The manuscript begins:

[44] Thomas de Bruijn, "Dialogism in a Medieval Genre: The Case of the Avadhi Epics," in *Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture*, ed. Francesca Orsini (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010), 121–42.
[45] For an unpacking of the signification of Urdu literature to the "romance" genre see Pasha Khan, *The Broken Spell: The Romance Genre in Late Mughal India* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013).

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate,
May I first praise [*hamd*] the Most magnificent God / Who is all-knowing, omnipotent and forgiving and merciful
After this *hamd*, may I praise [*na't*] the prophet Muḥammad peace be upon him / And praise (*sanā-ḵẖwānī*) the descendants (*āl*) of aḥmad, peace be upon him
Aḥmad who is a beloved of God / is attentive to all rights
If love ['ishq] was not a necessary right / Then the Messenger, peace be upon him, would not have been a beloved of that right
If the loveliness of God who is without beginning or end had not been revealed / Then this pen could not have acted in this manner
Hence to the adventures that are love's wonders / Many are caused by His love's amorous gestures
No one is deserted (*ḵẖālī*) from the Lord's life (*ẓī ḥayāt*) / He is in every atom, soul, and creature (*kā'ināt*)
It may be said that He is the light in the candle's sun / He is the mountain in the torch's flame
In the teardrop (*sirishk*), in the pain of the heart / He is the rose in the garden and a society's (*anjuman*) light
It may be said that [He] is the soil for a grain's harvest / He electrifies a bird's song
He is the curls (*girih-gīr*) of Laylī's hair / Which shackle Majnūn's feet
Sometimes he pours out sparks (*sharer-rez*) that break the mind (*ḵẖātir shikan*) / Like when the ax (*tesha*) of a mountain digger (*koh-kan*) strikes
He is in every color, even occult (*nihān*) ones / In every oyster shell, he is the pearl. The ruby in every stone
In each stone, he ignites a spark of fire / So that, in the sky, he can place the stars
Sometimes he is the thing desired in the pupil of the eyes / Sometimes he is the beloved for the mirror's entertainment
He appears to the eye, and magic is conjured / He comes to the desert, and a gazelle appears
Sometimes His locks are the rolling waves / Sometimes he turns around in the eye of the whirlpool (*gird-āb*)
Sometimes He is the mark of sorrow's arrow / Sometimes He is the comb in a beautiful person's (*shāhid*) hair (*zulf*)
Hence for every house of love, He is its splendor / [He is] love in the earth, and love is in the sky
He is every tree (*shajar*) in a garden / He is the fresh fruit in every young tree (*naḵẖl*)
He thinks of every thing agreeable / He is the taster (*ćāshnī-gīr*) of every fruit

Masnavīs typically begin with a *bismillah* (introductory formula), followed by *hamd* (praise to Allah), *na't* (eulogy of the prophet Muḥammad), and *madh* (laudation to a particular ruler or donor).[46] The *'Ishqnāma* follows this standard masnavī opening by retaining the bismillah,

[46] Anna A. Suvorova and M. Osama Faruqi, *Masnavī: A Study of Urdu Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

hamd, and na't. The madh is not present because Wājid 'Alī Shāh is both the supposed author of this text and also its patron. He does not praise himself, but praises the rights of 'ishq and of God.[47]

The opening also alludes to two poetic couples from two of Nezāmī Ganjavī's famous masnavīs. The first is Laylī and Majnūn, arguably the ultimate lovers in Persianate literature, who are mentioned by name in the *'Ishqnāma*'s introductory lines. The second couple is Farhād and Šīrīn, who are only briefly alluded to in the term ax (*tesha*), an object associated directly with Farhād, who cuts the rocks of Bīsotūn with an ax in order to win the love of Šīrīn. The beginning of the *'Ishqnāma* thus aligns itself allegorically with one of the most famous masnavī authors, Nezāmī Ganjavī. It is worth mentioning that the later *'Ishqnāma* copies in lithograph and print form excised this opening poetry because it did not translate well into prose.

There are also Sufi themes present within the masnavī genre convention.[48] The aims of its practitioners are "not just to understand God, like theological discourse, or to obey God, like legal discourse, but also to love and be loved by God."[49] Wājid 'Alī Shāh invokes the Sufi cosmic worldview of an all-pervading love throughout the *'Ishqnāma*. This is an important element in the manuscript, which also has an "entwined articulation of erotics and asceticism in the service of an ideal of mystical love."[50] This is most visible in the initial invocation of the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript. In one of the first hemistiches, Wājid 'Alī engulfs his life and the entire

[47] In contrast, because it is of a different genre, the *Divan* of Wājid 'Alī Shāh does not have a hamd, a na't, or a madh.
[48] See Aditya Behl's work on the Madhuyamati masnavī. Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic*, 218–63.
[49] Scott Alan Kugle and Carl W. Ernst, eds., *Sufi Meditation and Contemplation: Timeless Wisdom from Mughal India* (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, 2012), xv.
[50] Aditya Behl, "The Magic Doe: Desire and Narrative in a Hindavi Sufi Romance, circa 1503," in *India's Islamic Traditions, 711–1750*, ed. Richard M. Eaton (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 205. See also Julie Scott Meisami,"Mixed Prose and Verse in Medieval Persian Literature," in *Prosimetrum: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, ed. Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), who states that "poetry is central to Persian mysticism, and plays an important role in the teaching of disciples, in popular preaching and especially in the sama', the Sufi ritual of 'listening' to mystical poetry performed in a musical setting for the purpose of arousing mystical love, even divine ecstasy, the core experience of mysticism" (298).

world with ‘ishq: “[He is] love in the earth and love in the sky.” Throughout the beginning verse, the earth, sky, past literary lovers, and other elemental objects are relationally connected through ‘ishq and through God’s love. The line could also be translated as “Earth is love. Sky is love,” which is a standard trope in mystical Islam and its “all-embracing notion of love.”[51] Thus, the poetry in the *‘Ishqnāma* is deeply connected to Sufi principles of God’s all-encompassing love. Mirroring the *‘Ishqnāma*’s textual indebtedness to Sufism, Avadh itself was a traditional stronghold of the Sufi doctrine of Wahdat-ul-Wujud (Unity of Being), which promoted a “belief in the essential unity of all phenomena, however diverse and irreconcilably conflicting they might appear”; Wahdat-ul-Wujud was an “ideological support” of Islam and “remained generally the most acceptable Sufi doctrine in Avadh.”[52]

Another vignette that encapsulates the elements of Sufism in the *‘Ishqnāma* is dastan 89, in which Wājid ‘Alī becomes spiritually entranced in one of his gardens.[53] He begins the dastan by ruminating on the equal status between mendicants (*faqīr*) and the rich. Shortly thereafter, he reveals that he could transform himself and become a dark (*adham*), poor (*gadā*) Brahmin (Hindu religious priest). Throughout dastan 89, Wājid ‘Alī and some of his lovers celebrate and feast in the Hazoor Bagh, a garden in Lucknow, Avadh. The place is so “wondrous” (*‘ajab*) that he is overcome with “dread” (*waḥshat*). He tears off his clothes, and in a state of undress (*‘uryān*), he walks along a path in the garden like a hermit (*jogī*). In the light (*tanwīr*) of the morning, he wears the sacred thread of a learned Hindu teacher (*panḍi pe saritā*) across his bare body while his exalted countenance (*ruḵẖafrāḵẖt*) is covered with the ashes of burnt pearls

[51] C. M. Naim, *Zikr-i-Mir: The Autobiography of the Eighteenth-Century Mughal Poet Mir Muḥ ammad Taqi Mir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 193.
[52] Muzaffar Alam, “Assimilation from a Distance: Confrontation and Sufi Accommodation in Awadh Society,” in *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honor of Romila Thapar* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 174, 191.
[53] *‘Ishqnāma*, dastan 89, folio 289. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh, *Parīkhāna*, tr. Tehsēn Sarwari (Rāmpūr: Kitābkār, 1965), dastan 87, 116.

(*ḵẖākistar soḵẖt gauhar*). After his lovers smell Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's rich scent (*ʻaṃbar ʻitr*), they tear off their clothes and cover themselves with ashes. They are all intoxicated by pleasure (*nashā ʻaish*) and become "out of control/drunk" (*mast*). The language in this dastan reveals its engagement with Sufism. For instance, the word "mast" is repeated multiple times, which suggests a mystic intoxication that was present in both the bhakti and Sufi literary worlds. Wājid ʻAlī even states that the Hazoor Bagh is transformed from a "garden" (*bāgh*) into a place of "enchantment" (*tilasm*): reality in the garden has been augmented, shifting it into a mystical terrain. This intoxicating moment is like a Sufi epiphany in that God (*ḵẖudā*) seems to be everywhere in the garden. Wājid ʻAlī ends the story by noting that this jogī event is held every year in commemoration of his first transformative experience.

In this dastan, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh undergoes a loss of control and attachment, which acts as a kind of Sufi renunciation. He does not fully commit to these Sufi antinomian practices, as he still needs to govern and rule as a nawab. Thus, he expresses his Sufi allegiances in brief moments such as the Hazoor Bagh experience and its subsequent celebrations.

The *ʻIshqnāma* also culls visual motifs from older Avadhi masnavīs that contain Sufi messages. Take for instance the *Chandayan*, the first Hindavi verse romance, "a distinctive Sufi story" completed in 1379 in Avadh.[54] The author, Maulana Daud, "developed a narrative formula in *Chandayan* for representing the play of desire between God, the Sufi, and the world as an erotic relationship between a man and two women."[55] In one famous scene, the hero, Laurak, separates his two lovers, Chanda and Maina, after they have quarreled (fig. 10).[56] This exact scene is repeated in the *ʻIshqnāma*, when Wājid ʻAlī stops a fight between his two lovers,

[54] Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic*, 59–109. It was completed in Dalmau's court in Avadh.
[55] Behl, "The Magic Doe," 183.
[56] For more information on the Manchester manuscript, see Qamar Adamjee, *Strategies for Visual Narration in the Illustrated Chandayan Manuscripts* (PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts: New York University, 2011).

Sarfarāz and Māh-i ʻālam (fig. 11). Like Laurak in the *Chandayan*, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh literally pulls the women apart. Stylistically these two images differ: in the *ʻIshqnāma* miniature, the figures are modeled with more shadows, and the overall aesthetic of the *Chandayan*'s Manchester manuscript tends to flatten its figures. Yet these aesthetic differences give way to literary congruencies. In reweaving *Chandayan*'s literary motifs back into the *ʻIshqnāma*, this scene of quarreling lovers becomes more than merely a historical moment between Wājid ʻAlī Shāh and his royal women: it is also shaded with literary meaning from older Sufi stories. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, I contend, was setting up visual and literary resonances with older Sufi masnavīs such as the *Chandayan*. He thereby demonstrates not only his control over his lovers such as Sarfarāz and Māh-i ʻālam, but also his control over the masnavī storytelling past.

Fig. 5.10. Chanda and Maina fighting at the temple
Manchester *Chandayan,* folio 214r

Fig. 5.11. *ʻIshqnāma*, folio 275r
Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, Sarfarāz, and Māh-i ʻālam on terrace overlooking a garden
1262/1846–47

Wājid ʻAlī Shāh claims to uphold the tenets of Islam as a guiding moral doctrine throughout his reign. In dastan 101, he weaves religiosity into his courtly and political life. Wājid ʻAlī instructed Mirza Hussain, an esteemed (*muqrab*) master (*aḵẖwānd*) of speech (*suḵẖun*), to educate the women of his palace (*parī*) since he was extremely well-bred and learned (*mu'addab*). Hussain taught them how to read and write by establishing a school. He states that all of the women were fortunate (*baḵẖtyāwar*) to acquire this wondrous knowledge of urbanity and etiquette (*adab*) and Islamic religious law (*sharīʻat*). The women were further along the path of exaltation (*sar-farāz*) when Wājid ʻAlī arranged for another teacher (*mulāzim*) to stay in his court. Nanhī Begam, a servant of Wājid ʻAlī, suggested this new teacher. As compensation, he

was given an annual salary of five hundred rupees until he passed away (‘*ahd jannat makān*).[57] In contrast to dastan 89, here Wājid ‘Alī does not denounce the world like a Sufi dervish. Instead, he supports Quranic legal theologians. In this manner, he balances multiple strands of Islam within his *‘Ishqnāma* narrative. For Wājid ‘Alī, his sexual expression was in alignment with religious thought. He did not find it contradictory to support both Quranic teachers and his sexual partners. As a result, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s sexual life in the *‘Ishqnāma* was not outside of Islam. He was only stretching existing elements of Sufism and Indo-Islamic literary convention to express his desires.

The *‘Ishqnāma* similarly taps into the literary component of adab in the masnavī genre by textually mentioning the term frequently and through the manuscript’s visual imagery. In the context of literature and social behavior, adab is an ethical and aesthetic form of comportment.[58] Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have discussed how adab is present in the *Nal-Daman* masnavī text by suggesting that for the author, Faizi, “love (‘ishq), and especially love in the milieu of kings, can be meaningful only when it is tempered; when love becomes excess, it can only lead to disaster.”[59] One of the “hallmarks of Faizi’s treatment of the *Nal-Daman*” comes when he balances this delicate line “between love and excess (or frenzy), with the intellect being the only means of preventing the one from degenerating into the other.”[60] Similarly, within the *‘Ishqnāma*, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh is quite explicit in providing details of his interactions with his

[57] This is a summary from *‘Ishqnāma*, dastan 101, folio 350r–352r. *Parīkhāna* (1965), dastan 98.
[58] Mana Kia has mined texts such as Sa‘dī’s Gulistan to exemplify the ways adab was transmitted beyond literature and guided expectations for cultural codes and practices. She defines adab as “not just proper social conduct, but also the attitudes and sensibilities.” Mana Kia, “Adab as Ethics of Literary Form and Social Conduct: Reading the Gulistān in Late Mughal India,” in *No Tapping around Philology: A Festschrift in Honor of Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.’s 70th Birthday*, eds. ‘Alī Reza Korangy and Daniel J. Sheffield (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2014), 281–308.
[59] Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Love, Passion and Reason in Faizi’s Nal-Daman,” in *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History*, ed. Francesca Orsini (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 116.
[60] Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Afterlife of a Mughal Masnavi: The Tale of Nal and Daman in Urdu and Persian,” in *A Wilderness of Possibilities: Urdu Studies in Transnational Perspective*, eds. Kathryn Hansen, David Lelyveld, and C. M. Naim (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 61.

lovers. There are passages of *sarapa*, a description of a lover from head to toe. Because of the explicitness of the *'Ishqnāma*'s text, the images become the conveyors of asceticism to create an adab balance within the manuscript.

Fig. 5.12. *Muḥammad Shāh Making Love*
Inscribed: "work of the house-born Chitarman"
Mughal, Delhi, c. 1735
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper
39 x 30.8 cm
BL Prints and Drawings Album J.66, folio 1

Fig. 5.13. *'Ishqnāma,* dastan 75, folio 241v
The prince holds Sarfaraz, who has been taken ill
1262/ 1846–7

As in Faizi's masnavī, the frenzy of 'ishq in the *'Ishqnāma* is articulated through the dastan narrative, but it is also tempered in its visual elements. Sexual penetration, for instance, is never depicted, although such depictions were not unheard of in the Indo-Persianate visual world. The most famous example is the painting *Muḥammad Shāh Making Love*, ca. 1735. The artist of this miniature, Chitarman, masked Muḥammad Shāh's back leg behind his robe so that his erect penis would be more clearly visible (fig. 12). Purposefully, the *'Ishqnāma* does not portray such sexual imagery, as the miniatures abide by a more ascetic formulation of adab. The miniature in figure 13 is one of the most explicit examples in the *'Ishqnāma*, showcasing Wājid 'Alī Shāh comforting one of his lovers, Sarfarāz. Unlike other miniatures in the *'Ishqnāma*, Wājid 'Alī Shāh is shown in actual physical contact with his lover, in an amicable embrace. In contrast to *Muḥammad Shāh Making Love*, the physical intimacy portrayed in the *'Ishqnāma* is very chaste indeed. None of the miniatures in the *'Ishqnāma* portray any hint of sexual intercourse. Thus, like Faizi's masnavī, the *'Ishqnāma* strikes a balance between the destructive qualities of love, which are conveyed in the text, and love's ability to govern and temper a court, which is conveyed through the images.

Literary sensibilities of adab were not, however, antithetical to sexual desire. For instance, even in Sa‘dī’s *Kulliyāt*, his last section contains *latifas*, couplets of bawdy humor. Sa‘dī is considered one of the greatest Persian poets, and to this day he is quoted extensively in Iran and India and has remained a touchstone for Persian literature. But even Sa‘dī’s *Kulliyāt* was excised to exclude the latifas and sexual innuendoes. Sa‘dī first constructed his *Kulliyāt* much like the *‘Ishqnāma*. He made his text abide by adab sensibilities by having the passages that contained excessive passionate revelations be constricted by the rules and protocols of the genre in which he wrote. Adab was more about beautiful modes of being and expressing oneself than about eliminating types of speech: refined speech was about not the suppression of desire, but the beautification of its language. Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s corpus is in alignment with these older Persianate forms, including Sa‘dī’s work, that accommodated both literary and aesthetic desire. As the *‘Ishqnāma* exemplifies, ‘ishq, which is usually characterized as a state of frenzy, can also accommodate the restraint of adab.

Following this adab formula, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh shares his emotional states textually, but tempers them visually to reorient the colonial political discourse. In a revealing instance, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh suffers from a venereal disease in 1849 after contracting syphilis (*ātishak*) from one of his lovers.[61] The word “fire,” usually reserved to speak about the pain of heartbreak and sexual desire, is continually employed to discuss the burning pain wrought by the disease.[62] He describes how his body sometimes unexpectedly trembles from the feverish heat (*ḥarārat*) of the disease (*‘āriẓa*), causing him to be rendered unconscious (*be-hosh*). He simultaneously suffers ill treatment at the hands of the bēgums, who are unsympathetic to his plight. This account may seem confessional and devoid of political motivation. Colonial officers cited Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s

[61] The word for syphilis is translated as gonorrhea (*sozāk*) in the later *Parīkhāna* copies.
[62] *‘Ishqnāma*, folios 424r–427v.

syphilis to show that he was ineffective to rule.[63] Their position was that because he was bedridden by his sexual passion, he could no longer control his court.

Fig. 5.14. *'Ishqnāma*, folio 428v
Wājid ʻAlī Shāh forces Ūmraō Bēgum Sahibah to vomit after she ate opium and felt ill
1265/1849–50

The *'Ishqnāma* betrays a different perspective according to which Wājid ʻAlī is disciplining his sexuality and household during his syphilis outbreak in the service of his sovereignty. The dastan on syphilis continues and the narrative pivots to the question of opium. For instance, one of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's lovers, Ūmraō Bēgum, leaves after refusing to take care of him. During her absence, she consumes too much opium. After ignoring Wājid ʻAlī in his hour of need, he proves his benevolence and justice by taking care of her. In the accompanying miniature, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh is hunched over Ūmraō Bēgum in the throes of her poisoning, forcing her to physically expel the opium (fig. 14). In figure 14, they both seem quite stoic. They are almost expressionless, in contrast to the servant in the background, who partially smiles. This image again abides by the concept of adab, visually balancing the narrative with its emotional restraint. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's appearance is also slightly different in this miniature compared to the other paintings in the *'Ishqnāma*. He is slender, wearing a cap but no crown, and his hair is unkempt because of his sickness. In this dastan, Wājid ʻAlī invokes both textually and visually his weakness and fragility in the face of disease, but perhaps more importantly, he also demonstrates his ability to take care of and manage his household during his sickness. Even in the face of illnesses, visually represented by his weakened body and textually expressed through allusions to fire, he still has the strength to be at the helm of his affairs.

Fig. 5.15. *'Ishqnāma*, folio 430r
Mughal sahibah having burned her thigh; the king inspects it and sympathizes

[63] Llewellyn-Jones, *Last King in India*, 98.

In the other image that accompanies this dastan on syphilis, the anonymous artisan depicts another lover, Mehbooba ʻĀlam. She has burned (*gul*) her left thigh with a hot seal (*muhr*) in an act of repentance for her excessive neglect (*ġaflat*) of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh in his hour of need (fig. 15).[64] Once again, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh is depicted taking care of his lover when he is sick and unwell. He could have shown himself in bed and in a state of total despondence, but instead chooses to portray two of his lovers (Ūmraō Bēgum and Mehbooba ʻĀlam) in their weakness and pain, and paints himself as their savior. This is the last illustrated dastan in the *ʻIshqnāma,* and these are the manuscript's final two images, making this is the last visual impression left for the viewer.

Especially in these last images, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's political ethics are conveyed through adab. In the dastans, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh shows he is in possession of adab by balancing the manuscript in terms of text and image. His adab extends from the manuscript to his personality, in which he balances the unequals of frenzied desire in the case of his syphilis and the restraint of the imagery and his just actions.[65] Justice is not the absence of love. Justice is visible in the ways Wājid ʻAlī Shāh dispenses love and balances the order in his home and in his world. Together, the harmonious balance of text and image creates a path for Wājid ʻAlī Shāh to project his sovereign justice (*ʻadl*), which was a fundamental duty for rulers explicated in older Persianate genres such as in the "mirror for princes" and in the *Shāhnāma*.

Various historians have noted that the masnavī genre is not merely relegated to the realm of romantic fantasy but is also socially and politically reflective.[66] The three authors of *Textures of Time* have called upon South Asian historians to move beyond the genre of *tārīkh* (history),

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[64] *ʻIshqnāma*, folios 427v–29v.
[65] Thanks to Dr. Mana Kia for this suggestion in October 2016. As a result, I expanded the role of justice in the vaqa'i section of this chapter.
[66] Kumkum Chatterjee, "The Persianization of Itihasa: Performance Narratives and Mughal Political Culture in Eighteenth-Century Bengal," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 2 (2008): 513.

stating that "history possesses no fixed genre."[67] To prove this, Sanjay Subrahmanyam and his long-time collaborator Muzzafar Alam have demonstrated that other textual genres have history by looking specifically at the historical dimension of a masnavī text from the Mughal period, the *Nal-Daman*, which centers on a king, Nal, who falls in love with Princess Damayanti.[68] They begin their investigation of the *Nal-Daman* text by studying Abu'l Faiz's Persian translation.[69] They then turn to the narrative structure of the *Nal-Daman*, which dates back to the construction of the *Mahabarata*, roughly around 1315–1316, to study the transformation of the *Nal-Daman* with its themes of Vaishnavism (a branch of Hinduism) into Persian and later into Urdu.[70] Subrahmanyam and Alam argue that over the course of these various translations, the *Nal-Daman*'s Vaishnav themes were gradually secularized. Subrahmanyam and Alam's findings apply well in an investigation of the *'Ishqnāma,* whose textual foundation of the sacrality of love gives way to a more secular tale of sex through each successive translation and lithograph copy. According to the argument of the authors of *Textures of Time*, the *'Ishqnāma* does not have to forgo history; rather, by aligning itself with the masnavī genre, the *'Ishqnāma* presents the new avenues in which Wājid 'Alī Shāh engaged with social and political changes.

Composed in an earlier Islamicate period in India, during the Delhi Sultanate, the *Duval Ranī va Khizr Khān* masnavī text yields interesting parallels to the '*Ishqnāma* manuscript. Khusraw authored the *Duval Ranī* masnavī around 1315–1316, and the masnavī revolves around

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[67] Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Dean Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600–1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 221.
[68] Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Love, Passion and Reason in Faizi's Nal-Daman"; Alam and Subrahmanyam, "The Afterlife of a Mughal Masnavi of the Tale of Nal and Daman in Urdu and Persian," in *A Wilderness of Possibilities: Urdu Studies in Transational Perspective*, eds. Kathryn Hansen, David Lelyveld, and C. N. Naim (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 46–73; Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 204–48.
[69] Abu'l Faiz was a Mughal poet during Akbar's reign.
[70] Bhagwant Rāi Kakorwī, whose pen name was Rāhat, composed the Urdu version of the *Nal Daman* during the time of Wājid 'Alī Shāh's reign.

the love of Duval Ranī and Khizr Khān.[71] Khizr Khān was a historical figure, a son of the reigning sultan, Ala'al-dīn Khaljī (r. 1296–1316). He approached Khusraw and commissioned the text to shine a spotlight on his upcoming marriage to the Hindu princess Duval Ranī. Khusraw wrote "a poem for the prince" that would ensure the poet's "place in the future sultan's court."[72] Michael Boris Bednar, who has examined the text in depth, states that in the *Duval Ranī*, Khusraw "combined two forms of masnavī (narrative poetry) in one text: the historical masnavī format," which allowed Khusraw to "praise Delhi sultans," and "the romantic masnavī in the vein of Neẓāmī Ganjavī's Khamsa," which "Khusraw rewrote a decade earlier" and which is visible in his emphasis on the amorous characters.[73] In essence, the *Duval Ranī* is the textual grandfather of the *'Ishqnāma*.[74] Their respective rulers commissioned both these masnavīs during their royal transitions from prince to king. Both texts also skirt the line between romance and "source-based historical biography." The *'Ishqnāma,* like the *Duval Ranī,* utilizes the genre of the masnavī to project a ruler's sovereignty through an erotic and a historical language.

By harkening to the storytelling past of the masnavī and texts such as *Duval Ranī*, *Chandayan*, and *Laylī u Majnūn*, the *'Ishqnāma* imbues its narrative and visuals with Sufism and with the beautification of speech (adab). The *'Ishqnāma* text reveals intimate sexual details of Wājid 'Alī Shāh, but the images are quite banal and stylized. The miniature paintings act out

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[71] Sharma, "Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse," 113.
[72] Michael Boris Bednar, "The Content and the Form in Amır Khusraw's Duval Ranı va Khizr Khān," 17–35; Bednar, *Conquest and Resistance in Context: A Historiographical Reading of Sanskrit and Persian Battle Narratives* (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2007).
[73] Bednar,"The Content and the Form in Amır Khusraw's," 17.
[74] Outside of India, Shah Isma'il, the ruler of Safavid Iran, commissioned a poetic epic in 1510 to "celebrate his own heroic deeds in the versified form of the *Shāhnāma.* Appropriately, it was called *Shāhnāma-yi Isma'il* (The Shāhnāma of Isma'il)." While not necessarily as biographical as the *'Ishqnāma*, "Shah Isma'il performs the role of the quintessential epic hero who was more than a match for the Iranian champions of yore" (141). Because the text centers more on fantastical creatures as in the *Shāhnāma* and dastan epics, I have not discussed this story in depth. Ahmed Azfar Moin, *Islam and Millennium: Sacred Kingship and Popular Imagination in Early Modern India and Iran* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010), 38–142; Barry Wood, *The Shāhnāma-i Isma'il: Art and Cultural Memory in Sixteenth-Century Iran* (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2002). Various rulers across the Persianate world readapted and modified the Shāhnāma. See Fath 'Ali Shah's *Shahanshāhnāmeh.*

adab, serving as a counterpoint to the "excessive" elements of the text. Textually and visually, the *'Ishqnāma* defies the easy colonial reading of the *'Ishqnāma* as a mere expression of Wājid 'Alī Shāh's deviant sexuality.

D. Vaqa'i

The *'Ishqnāma* also has formulaic principles similar to those of another genre category, the vaqa'i. A vaqa'i chronicles the life and events of a historical person. As such, the word is often translated into English as *autobiography*. The *'Ishqnāma*, as mentioned throughout this chapter, has been read as an autobiographical text and has been taken as a chronicle of the true events of Wājid 'Alī Shāh's life. While the veracity of the dastans is debatable, the *'Ishqnāma* is similar to previous Indo-Persianate vaqa'i memoirs such as the *Akbarnāma* and *Bāburnāma* since all of the texts accommodate personal and political details.[75] By reweaving the vaqa'i genre into a reading of the '*Ishqnāma*, the '*Ishqnāma*'s narrative and visuals are realigned with a courtly politics of the personal. Wājid 'Alī Shāh reveals details of his life at court that abide by the storytelling elements of the vaqa'i such as the enforcement of social and courtly hierarchies, the aggrandizement of his masculinity vis-à-vis his heterosexuality, and the discipline and punishment of members of his court.

In the Indo-Persianate context, the archetypal example of the vaqa'i genre is the *Bāburnāma*. Bābur established the Mughal dynasty in India in 1526. While conducting his military expeditions in present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan, he penned his memoirs, which are remembered today as the *Bāburnāma*. The text is considered the first autobiography in Islamic

[75] This is in alignment with Lal's *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, which discusses the zanana as both a personal and a political space. For more on this argument on the politicization of "personal" and "feminine" spaces, see Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

literature.[76] In actuality Akbar, Bābur grandson, assembled the *Bāburnāma* long after Bābur had passed away. While doing so, he organized the *Bāburnāma* to include prose and poetic passages along with miniature illustrations. When discussing the *Bāburnāma* in contrast to the '*Ishqnāma*, questions of author intentionality arise.

An important detail that these two texts share is that both authors share anecdotal accounts of their servants' physical appearances as a means to reinforcing their dominance. Bābur carefully remarks on the bodies and personalities of the members of his household and military. He describes 'Umar Shailkh Mirza, a solider in his employ, as "a short and stout, round-bearded and fleshy-faced person," and notes that "his disposition was amorous, and he bore many a lover's mark."[77] The qualities that Bābur assigns to 'Umar do not necessarily have to do with his prowess on the battlefield. They are intimate and revealing. Wājid 'Alī Shāh in the '*Ishqnāma* also surveys the bodies around him, stating, for example, that one lover, Rehiman, "is not beautiful, nor is her face salty (unlovely)."[78] In the vaqa'i genre, the ruler is permitted to disclose personalized descriptions to both create and evince intimate bonds with his courtiers.

As part of the vaqa'i genre, the '*Ishqnāma* furnishes intimate details of the historical women in Wājid 'Alī's court while visually representing them in a strict social hierarchy that reinforces the centrality of Wājid 'Alī's power. Throughout the '*Ishqnāma*, Wājid 'Alī Shāh is the one of the few figures who is depicted with a halo. There is also a clear hierarchy among the females in his zenana. Wājid 'Alī mentions that the stipends and allowances he gave to the women in his court were distributed according to rank. At times, women received "hundred

[76] Bābur, *The Bāburnāma: Memoirs of Bābur, Prince and Emperor*, tr. W. M. Thackston (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 9.
[77] Bābur, *Bābur-Nāma: Memoirs of Bābur*, tr. Annette Susannah Beveridge (London: Luzac & Co., 1922), 14, 16.
[78] '*Ishqnāma*, 3v: "jamāl ūskā har cand āīsa nathā/ magar bi namak uskā cherā nathā."

rupees monthly allowance."[79] In one dastan, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh provides a full list of his lovers' names and the new names he conferred on them after his enthronement. Their names vary slightly, but the appellation affixed at the end is always *bēgum*, *parī*, or *sahiba*, which indicate their place within his court.[80] For exalted women in the ʻ*Ishqnāma*, their faces are hidden behind screens and plants. Take, for instance, the miniature of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's grandmother Maryam Markānī, whose face is shielded by a halo (fig. 16).[81] This is one of many images in which women of high stature are given license to shield their face from the painter's brush.

Fig. 5.16. ʻ*Ishqnāma*, folio 12r
The Prince falls in love with a visitor, Hājjī Khānum, who has an infant child, while in the company of Maryam Markānī
1250/1834–35

When Wājid ʻAlī introduces a new woman or lover in his manuscript, he includes information about her rank and social status. If she is a servant, he lists the family that she is employed under. Social and filial relations are stressed. For one of his servants, Bandi Umda Wali, Wājid ʻAlī mentions that he met her before he was crowned king (*takht shāhī pe*), when she worked in the house of Jahān [Numa].[82] He later decides to give Bandi Umda Wali the proper name (*riẓā*) of Matlūb Sultān Hazrat Bēgum and to pay her a monthly salary of two thousand five hundred rupees.[83] For another servant, Wājid ʻAlī states he caught a glimpse of Amēr Baksh while she was living in Hazoor Bagh. Through the intercession of Chote Khan, one of the drummers in Wājid ʻAlī's theater, Amēr Baksh is able to communicate with Wājid ʻAlī and to be given signs of his faith (*ʻaqīdat*).[84] After that, Wājid ʻAlī finally is able to meet Amēr Baksh in person. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh emphasizes these social and filial relations to show that these

[79] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, 410v.
[80] ʻ*Ishqnāma,* dastan 101, folio 350r–351r.
[81] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, folio 12r.
[82] ʻ*Ishqnāma,* folio 374v; *Parīkhāna* (1965), 156.
[83] *Ishqnāma,* 377r–379v.
[84] Ibid., 348v, 350v.

women are vetted and that they have some kind of preexisting relationship with members of his court before he allows them into his home.

In an effort to preserve a genealogy with his father's and grandfather's courts, Wājid ʻAlī retains members of their staffs.[85] Because of this, Wājid ʻAlī decides to marry some of his late father's servants while freeing others. One such servant is, Paro, who was employed in an exalted (*k̲h̲alad*) house in Faizabad, enters Wājid ʻAlī's protection and is addressed thereafter as Arghawān Parī. In the later *Parīkhāna* copies, scribes suggest that Paro was the servant of none other than the Mirza Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar's late mother, Nawāb Badshah Bēgum.[86] In the ʻ*Ishqnāma*, the name of Nawāb Badshah Bēgum is never evoked. Through this act of employment, Wājid ʻAlī positions himself closer to the nawabi bloodline and its past courtly structure. In another instance, a courtier, Mīr Muḥammad Mehdī, recommends Ūmraō Bēgum as the new superintendent officer (*ʻahd-dāroga*) for Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's palace. Wājid ʻAlī accepts Mīr Muḥammad Mehdī's request because Ūmraō Bēgum is the sister of Nāṣir al-dīn Ḥaidar's wife, Qudsīa Bēgum, and her brother is Wafā Bēg.[87] Despite her impressive lineage, Wajid Ali is dismissive of her as his servant because of her corpulent (*farbih*) physique and the large number of moles on her face. Against his own sexual desires, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh keeps Ūmraō Bēgum in his employ because she preserves the relationship between his great-great-grandfather and his elite courtier. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh even mentions that he permitted some of the female servants who were in his late grandfather's zenana to go to Karbala.[88]

In contrast to the ʻ*Ishqnāma*, the *Bāburnāma,* like most vaqa'i texts, is written in prose, not in a poetic format. There are, however, moments in the *Bāburnāma* where Bābur expresses

[85] Ibid., 408r–411v.
[86] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, 410v; *Parīkhāna*, 170.
[87] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, 317v–318v.
[88] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, 409r.

intense emotional moments poetically. In one instance, Bābur includes a piece of Persian poetry that resonates with his feelings of anguish and despair at his separation (*gurbat*) from his homeland and his beloved, Baburi.[89] The switch between poetry and prose is even more striking in the *Bāburnāma* because the prose was completed in Chagatai Turkish, the language of Turco-Mongols, and the poetry was often written in Persian.[90] This language shift shows that Bābur's poetic moments have been included with forethought. Bābur is not erupting in careless bursts of emotions. Rather, these poems demonstrate that his emotional effusions are contained within an already existing poetic formula. When Bābur is struck by Baburi's physique, he ruminates upon this young man's beauty through poetry.[91] For Bābur, such moments of intense desire require the poetic rather than prose form. Bābur is careful to show that his intimate emotions were within the bounds of poetic and proper comportment.

The '*Ishqnāma* pivots the sexual intimacies present within the *Bāburnāma* and brings them to the forefront. One could say that the '*Ishqnāma*'s entire narrative is about Bābur's one moment of desire for Baburi. In either case, both the respected authors of the *Bāburnāma* and the '*Ishqnāma* utilized poetry to index their connection to a Persianate past and to align themselves with Persianate rules of proper comportment. Pleasure and desire in both manuscripts were not disavowed but contained within the bounds of Persian and Urdu poetry.

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[89] For a good description of Bābur's infatuation with Baburi, see Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Garden of the Eight Paradises: Bābur and the Culture of Empire in Central Asia, Afghanistan and India, 1483–1530* (Leiden: Brill 2004), 108; to see how the moment is located within the larger manuscript, see Bābur, *Bābur-Nāma: Memoirs of Bābur*, 120–21. Dale also was the first scholar to tie the concept of ghurbat to Bābur's poetry, 269.
[90] Bābur, *The Bāburnāma*, tr. W. M Thackston, 10n6.
[91] Instead of reading queer back into the archive and creating a telescope with our own contemporary notions of sexuality, I rather pay attention to how Bābur is couching his sexuality in poetry. Moreover, later on in the *Bāburnāma*, Bābur expresses his disgust for men who sleep with other men. See his description of Sayydim Ali: "His fault was that he practised vice and pederasty" (*Bābur-Nāma: Memoirs of Bābur,* Beveridge, tr., 307). Bābur thus had complicated ideas of how morality/immorality lined up with sexual desires that do not line up well with contemporary liberal ideals.

Throughout the ‘*Ishqnāma,* Wājid ‘Alī Shāh positions only females as objects of desire. The heterosexualization of the pictorial motifs in the ‘*Ishqnāma* was a response to the colonial discourse that sought to undermine Wājid ‘Alī Shāh and previous nawabs through the accusation of homosexuality. This is even more striking when compared to the *Bāburnāma*. In a different context, Afsaneh Najmabadi has argued that during Iranian nationalism there was a disappearance of the young boy as the site of romantic and mystical desire in a cultural context as a direct result of contact with Europeans. The case of the ‘*Ishqnāma* and Wājid ‘Alī Shāh reinforces Najmabadi’s argument. Because of the colonial discourse surrounding previous nawabs such as Āṣaf al-Daula (r. 1775–1797), Wājid ‘Alī Shāh selected only females as his lovers not only out of his personal predilection but also to combat the colonial discourse of effeminization and homoeroticism (chapter 1). The only males who figure predominately in the ‘*Ishqnāma* are eunuchs. Unlike the females in his zenana, the eunuchs continue to swear their loyalty to Wājid ‘Alī Shāh. They are never desired and they are highly trusted.

Fig. 5.17. ‘*Ishqnāma*, folio 32v
Sahiba Khanum, a singer, shows the prince the burn on her thigh and receives sympathy
1257 (1841–42)

Through the genre convention of the vaqa’i, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh in the ‘*Ishqnāma* performs his political sovereignty by emphasizing and idealizing his heterosexuality. This is perceptible in the dastan featuring Sahiba Khanum, an older servant in the employ of the nawabi court.[92] At this point, Wājid ‘Alī Shāh is nineteen years old and is married to his first wife, Naik Akhtar. A love blossoms between Wājid ‘Alī Shāh and Sahib Khanum as she sings ghazals to him and dances for him and they revel in their shared affection for ganjafi cards.[93] During the course of his love affair with Sahib Khanum, his wife suffers a miscarriage of their daughter, Murtaza Bēgum. The

[92] The text also mentions that Sahiba Khanum has two daughters.
[93] ‘*Ishqnāma*, 30v.

section, which directly follows the news of Murtaza Bēgum's death, is a matla' ghazal that is devoted neither to his wife nor to his deceased daughter but to Sahiba Khanum. Wājid 'Alī Shāh actively silences his wife's sorrow within the '*Ishqnāma*'s narrative structure in order to center the narrative on himself and his sexual prowess. According to Wājid 'Alī Shāh's account, after his daughter's death, his wife, Naik Akhtar, acquiesces to his affair with Sahiba Khanum and decides Wājid 'Alī Shāh's desires (k̲h̲wāhish) should become hers as well.[94]

The miniature of folio 32v shows Sahib Khanum displaying her thigh. Sahib Khanum heated a part of a *sitar* (guitar) and struck her left thigh multiple times, causing fresh wounds (*zak̲h̲m*). In the dastan, she dresses the wound herself and then proceeds to limp toward Wājid 'Alī Shāh so that he can tend to her maimed (*lang*) leg (fig. 17). This narrative of branding oneself is repeated a few times in the '*Ishqnāma*. As a motif, it allows Wājid 'Alī Shāh to gain complete control over his lovers' submissive bodies and showcase the intensities of his own emotions. As mentioned, Wājid 'Alī, in the Sarfrāz Parī dastan, burns himself out of despair. The physical act of disfigurement is reinforced by the '*Ishqnāma*'s poetic vocabulary. In the case of Sahiba Khanum, her state is described as heated (*garm*) from her eyes to her physical well-being, which becomes fatigued (*ta'ab*) under her inflamed passion. Instead of reading the Sahiba Khanum dastan as a mere expression of Wājid 'Alī Shāh's poor behavior to his wife and daughter, the narrative structure is in place so that the emotional ties between him and his lovers become synonymous with the dependency of a court on their king and a king on his court.

As in the Sahiba Khanum dastan, throughout the '*Ishqnāma*, Wājid 'Alī Shāh is accompanied by females. He is usually the only man in each pictorial scene. In this folio and in many others scattered through the '*Ishqnāma*, Wājid 'Alī constructs his sovereign subjectivity as an individual who longingly pines after love. As in the Sahiba Khanum account, he is rarely

[94] Ibid., 31v–32r.

pictorialized as actively engaging in bureaucratic matters. Expressing desire is not inimical to or an escape from rational governance. By reconsidering the '*Ishqnāma* as vaqa'i, we see that Wājid 'Alī's governance occurs through his control of women such as Naik Akhtar and Sahiba Khanum. His household, which includes his lovers, serves as a reflection of his state and his right to rule.

The *Akbarnāma*, completed in 1596, is a history of Akbar's life and reveals personal details regarding Akbar's sexual history. Unlike the '*Ishqnāma,* the narrative of the *Akbarnāma* centers on Akbar's austerities. Moreover, unlike the *Bāburnāma* and the '*Ishqnāma*, the *Akbarnāma* was accompanied by an expansive appendix, "the *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*—an administrative and statistical report on Akbar's government in all its branches, written by Abu al-Fazl 'Alami who was Akbar's minister."[95] Ruby Lal has discussed how Abu al-Fazl included the many "inward and outward austerities" in the "manner in which" Akbar "spent his time." In the *Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*, Abu al-Fazl describes Akbar as exercising "wisdom" in his day-to-day affairs, and states that his "Majesty [Akbar] abstains much from flesh, so that whole months pass away without his touching any animal food, which, though prized by most, is nothing thought of by the sage. His august nature cares but little for the pleasures of the world."[96] Fazl also mentions Akbar's short sleep schedule. By providing these details, Abu al-Fazl showcases Akbar's restraint.[97] In the case of *Akbarnāma*, pleasure is tempered. Although the *Akbarnāma*, *Bāburnāma,* and '*Ishqnāma* have different ways of expressing pleasure and desire within their texts, all of them officially discuss this aspect of a ruler's life to enhance his political power. To adopt an adage, the personal was

[95] Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 54.
[96] Abū al-Fazl ibn Mubārak, *Ā'īn-i Akbarī*, vol. 1, tr. Henry Blochmann (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873), 155.
[97] Even in the *Akbarnāma*, Abu al-Fazl writes about Akbar's sexual practices. For an analysis of Akbar's controlled sexuality, see Lal, *Domesticity and Power*, 153.

political. This is especially true for rulers like Wājid ʻAlī Shāh whose sexuality needed to be mastered since it translated to an "idealized masculinity of kingship."[98]

Much like Akbar, by incorporating different bedfellows from a range of classes and races into his court and zenana, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh stages his marriages and sexual affairs to showcase his virility and imperial power.[99] Each lover adds to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's power since "symbolically the world, like his lovers," is considered "under his protection."[100] In the ʻ*Ishqnāma*, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh is clear to differentiate between mut'a, short-term marriages, and nikah marriages, which are permanent.

He discusses when the people in his household are connected to the Prophet or to Quranic and noble ancestors. In describing his first nikah marriage, to Naik Akhtar, who would later be titled Nawāb Khas Mahal, Wājid ʻAlī notes that she was from the noble (*ashraf*) and exalted (*buland*) household of al-Daula ʻAlī, also known as Ahmad ʻAli Khān. Jānī Khānam, the grandmother of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, was the first to introduce Naik Akhtar as a possible match for Wājid ʻAli because of her lineage (*nisbat*).[101] In another dastan, Wājid ʻAlī mentions that his uncle-in-law, ʻAli Naqī Khān, was a Sayyid, a title that suggests he was descended from the prophet Muḥammad.[102] Wājid ʻAli extends these spiritual connections to his servants. He states that Insha Allah Khān, who was a great poet (*shāʻir*) of the imagination and an eloquent poet (*sukẖun-dān*) with intelligence (*sukẖun-fahm*) and a sweet voice (*shīrīn-maqāl*), had three happy daughters. The eldest was Hēderī Bēgum Muba Husain, the middle child was Muḥammadī Bēgum, and the youngest (*kẖurd-tar*) was Nanhī Bēgum. They were escorted into the service of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's mother, where they recited marsiya during Muharram and the Urdu play of the

[98] Dr. Mana Kia, conversation, Oct. 2016.
[99] This idea is borrowed from Lal, *Domesticity and Power,* 173.
[100] Ibid.
[101] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, 18v.
[102] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, 108r.

Hindu god, Indra.[103] Thus, these three sisters and their connection to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's court are first connected to Insha Allah Khān, a famous polyglot poet in Lucknow with ties to the Mughal court. Through his marriages and by employing household servants, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh links himself to Islamicate symbols of power such as descendants of the Prophet, which bolsters his sovereignty with sacrality.

In the narrative, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's wives have some degree of power. When one of Wājid ʻAlī servants, Umda Bēgum, attempts to leave the court, Naik Akhtar argues that Umda cannot quit of her own volition because she is as a "servant for the house of paradise" (*jannat*) and as such must abide by different rules.[104] Although Naik Akhtar appears to have some agency, her actions ultimately benefit Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, as Umda Bēgum is his lover. To this end, various lovers physically display their devotion to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh through their suicide attempts, displaying their frenzied love for him. These macabre displays of affection evince how some of these women operated with a bit of agency. They are rewarded with more money and freedom after each unsuccessful attempt.

In another reading, however, the *ʻIshqnāma,* like other vaqa'i texts, has shades of truthfulness about self-harm in the interest of aggrandizing the principal hero figure, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh. The emotions of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's lovers are the most exaggerated. There are multiple instances in which his lovers become so jealous that they attempt suicide. For instance, at his Chatterwālā palace, one of his lovers, Nanhī Bēgum, goes to the top of a tower (*burj*) to end her life because she is jealous (*rushk*) of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's other lovers. Before she can commit suicide, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh arrives and lectures her on her "irrational" decision (*ʻāqil dūr*).[105] He

[103] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, 36v–37r. In the ʻ*Ishqnāma* it states they were Mir Insha's daughters (dukhtar). In the *Parīkhāna*, the author says they were his granddaughters (nawāsīān). *Parīkhāna*, 29.
[104] Ibid., dastan 13, folio 36v.
[105] *ʻIshqnāma*, 44r.

claims suicide is born out of ignorance (*jahālat*) and brings "disgrace" (*ruswā*).[106] She decides not to jump. Previously, Wājid ʻAlī did attempt suicide. He never labels his actions as against God. Rather, he reserves such contradictory judgment only for his lovers. In another dastan, the servant Hēdarī Bēgum attempts suicide (*jān apnī dēnī pe ḥāẓir*) by eating crushed (*kūtā*) glass because her desire (*ārzū*) for Wājid ʻAlī Shāh is unrequited.[107] In the *ʻIshqnāma*, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh possesses such charisma that his lovers are bound to him and willing to sacrifice their lives. Unlike other vaqa'i texts such as the *Akbarnāma* in which the ruler and his courtiers abide by self-discipline, in the *ʻIshqnāma*, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's lovers are so enchanted by and in thrall to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh that they no longer operate according to an austere "strategy of conduct."[108] His magnetism is what binds his lovers, courtiers, and court to his rule.

In the *ʻIshqnāma*, even when his wives disobey him, the bedroom still remains an extension of Wājid ʻAli's rule and power, akin to the ways in which they function in the narrative structure of the *Akbarnāma*. Throughout the *ʻIshqnāma*, it appears that Wājid ʻAlī Shāh is overwrought with emotions. He is jealous. His lovers deceive him and run off with other men. In dastan 75, this exact scenario plays out with one of his lovers, Sarfrāz Parī, who betrays him by seeking the company of other men. As a result of his heartbreak (*dard-e jigar*), he becomes melancholic (*shiddat ġam*).[109] His emotional pain manifests itself onto his body. He is afflicted with (*satānā*) buboes (*ḵẖiyārak*), which are huge blisters on the lymph nodes. He is unable to stand properly and is extremely helpless (*maʻẓūr).* Through the course of his lovesickness for Sarfrāz Parī, he is driven to such a state of grief that he loses (*farāmosh*) his physical and

[106] Her suicide attempt was also connected to her grief over the passing of her daughter (44v).
[107] ʻ*Ishqnāma*, 140r–v.
[108] Daud Ali, "Anxieties of Attachment: The Dynamics of Courtship in Medieval India," *Modern Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2002), 138.
[109] *ʻIshqnāma*, 253v.

emotional senses.[110] Shortly thereafter, he strikes his left thigh with a heated hookah pipe (*qaliyān*), which in effect duplicates the behavior of his lovers who underwent similar trials and burned themselves out of love. When Wājid ʻAlī Shāh reveals his scars (*dāg*) to Sarfrāz Parī, she frivolously (*ʻabs*) laughs at his pain.[111] As this dastan illustrates, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's management of his household is not devoid of emotions. He expresses deep anguish at having to part with his lovers. They, in turn, are not always in compliance with his desires.

According to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, his effusive emotions are not a sign of weakness. Through the affective language of ʻishq, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh positions himself as the most esteemed *ashiq*, lover, for his court and his household. Further along in the *ʻIshqnāma,* Sarfrāz Parī becomes jealous, attempts suicide, and undergoes a self-imposed exile from the palace.[112] She returns to Wājid ʻAlī Shāh after a short period of time and apologizes (*ʻuẓr*). As a result, their ardent love (*ātish shauq*) resumes once again.[113] Wājid ʻAlī Shāh uses this incident of Sarfrāz Parī in which he seemingly loses control of his emotionsby burning hismelf to showcase his emotional investment in his lovers and other courtly relationships. In addition, unlike some of his lovers, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh always recovers from his passion. In a later dastan, Sarfrāz attempts suicide by consuming a diamond (*almās*) from a ring (*nigīn*).[114] In the narrative, Sarfrāz suffers more than Wājid ʻAlī. She even miscarries. The exact line is: "She fell out of pregnancy. And I [Wājid ʻAlī Shāh] suffered."[115] In the end, Wājid ʻAlī regains control over Sarfrāz by showcasing her misfortunes (*muṣībat*) and shifting the story back to his own emotions. Through narrative plot points such as his attempts at suicide and deep depression, Wājid ʻAlī shows that he grieves

[110] Ibid., 254v–55r.
[111] Ibid., 264v–66r.
[112] Ibid., 272r–78v.
[113] Ibid., 279v.
[114] Ibid., 387v–88v.
[115] Ibid., 390r. "Girāḥ aml un kā huā. Mujh ko ranj."

while at the same time these moments show his resilience. Through it all, he remains the central figure on which the entire narrative and household pivots. Ultimately, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's suffering is part of his moral advancement that allows him to become a more just ruler, while the women are mere narrative devices so that he can attain emotional mastery over the emotions of others.

Dastan 66, which was excised from later *Parīkhāna* lithograph copies, speaks to the ʻ*Ishqnāma*'s congruence with the vaqa'i genre through measured acts of discipline, which shows Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's equitanmity or adab. In this dastan, Wājid ʻAlī doles out punishment to one of his lovers. His jurisprudence and measured response are symbolic of how he governs his court and his people.[116] Similarly, in the *Bāburnāma*, Bābur punishes those who stray from social protocols. He has one warrior "clubbed" and in another instance shoots at his troops.[117] Earlier on in the ʻ*Ishqnāma*, Wājid ʻAlī narrates that he created an army of women to protect himself, which consisted of mostly "turk" females. Previously, Wājid ʻAlī had attempted to reform his regular army, constituted of male soldiers, by introducing new disciplinary techniques. The East India Company put an end to his reforms and forced him to reduce the army.[118] By employing women, Wājid ʻAlī circumvents the colonial decrees meant to undermine his rule. Because of colonial regulation, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh could not display his authority over a touring army as Bābur could. He could discipline only his intimate familiars.

In dastan 66, a member of his special troop is accused of deceitfulness (*dagā*). When he inquires after her (*taḥqīq kiyā*), members of his court reveal her relationship with a bath attendant (*ḥammāmī*). Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's anger quickens at "her spreading lies" (*jhūt bātil*), and

[116] Another story excised from the ʻ*Ishqnāma* in the copies is dastan 89, 317r. In this account, under the guidance of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, one of his lovers, Māh-i ʻAlam, strikes a watchman with a golden whip as penalty for making a false accusation. 1262/1846–47.
[117] Bābur, *The Bāburnāma*, W. M. Thackston, tr., 167, 319.
[118] G. D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh under Wajid Ali Shah*, 193–99.

he decides to use her as an example (*ibrat*) for his zanana. He consults sharī'a law (*sharī'at*) and decides to punish her by shaving her head (fig. 18).[119] In the miniature, the scene of punishment appears tranquil. Wājid 'Alī Shāh surveys her punishment with cool detachment.

Fig. 5.18. *'Ishqnāma*, dastan 66, folio 233r

In another instance, Wājid 'Alī Shāh punishes a household servant (*kanīz)* named Hēdarī. At the beginning of her service, she continued to seek solitude away in her living quarters. Wājid 'Alī Shāh demanded an investigation (*āzmāyish talab*) into the matter. In response to his threatening (*tahdīd*) inquiries, which include the threat of a flogging with a rope (*sabab*), she reveals that she had relations with Sābit 'Ali Khān and is pregnant. He considers Sābit 'Ali Khān a thief (*duzd-e shātir*) for impregnating her. In a direct sense, Hēdarī's body is Wājid 'Alī Shāh's property. Because of her crimes (*taqṣīr* and *quṣūr*), he calls Hēdarī's brothers to stand trial on her behalf.[120] In response, they throw themselves at his feet, trembling in fear. They argue that only Hēdarī should be punished for her sins and state she should have her skin struck (*nafḥ*) and cut (*ṣaur*) as a result. Wājid 'Alī Shāh's decision is to forgive (*'afw*) the brothers and expel Hēdarī from the palace (*ba-dar*).

By punishing his lovers such as the Turk solider and Hēdarī, Wājid 'Alī demonstrates his ability to discipline those in his zanana. These scenes symbolically demonstrate how he treated his other courtly relationships. He was just and ethical by following the rules of sharī'a law, as in the case of the solider, and by punishing only the guilty parties, as in the case of Hēdarī.

In reading the *'Ishqnāma* through the vaqa'i genre, we see the text and visuals positioned to showcase Wājid 'Alī Shāh's sovereignty through the depiction of truthful events such as the punishment of his lovers and management of his estate. Factual events are only one feature of the

[119] *'Ishqnāma*, 232r–33v.
[120] '*Ishqnāma*, 228v–31v.

vaqa'i, as the genre always already allowed for intimate relations to be included. Wājid 'Alī Shāh weaves intimate sexual moments into his narrative, which is in keeping with the genre's parameters, to emphasize how his management of his household reflects his handling of the Avadh state. The future copies such as the *Parīkhāna* are more aligned with European notions of autobiography and with nineteenth-century conceptions of sovereignty and employ a more direct language register. The switch from poetry to prose in the copies also severs the connections the *'Ishqnāma* has with older vaqa'i texts such as the *Bāburnāma*.

E. *Parīkhāna* and the other copies

Scribes first copied the *'Ishqnāma* in 1848, prior to the manuscript's completion in 1849. This copy will hitherto be referred to as the *Lahore Manuscript*. It was the first copy to transform the *'Ishqnāma*'s poetry into prose. After that, there are scattered references to now missing copies that were printed in poetic verse during Wājid 'Alī Shāh's exile in Calcutta from 1856 to 1887. Two other lithographed copies titled the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* (the Royal King's House) and *Parīkhāna* (Fairy House) followed. These later copies make a number of narrative and linguistic changes over the course of their publication from 1914 to 1965. By following this chain of transmission, the elisions of some of the '*Ishqnāma* manuscript's dastans along with the removal of the poetic structure and the images can be interrogated more thoroughly.

The *Lahore Manuscript* was crafted as a handwritten facsimile in 1848 and is currently located in the Punjab University Library in Lahore. It is the earliest datable copy of the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript, the only one to be completed purely in Persian, the first to transform the *'Ishqnāma's* verse form into prose, and the first to remove all visual material. The *Lahore Manuscript* is identifiable as the first reproduction because of its textual contents. First, it contains the following poetry on its last folios: "To history, the hemistiches of Akhtar are spoken.

From my opportunity [to observe] the conditions of women." [Be tārīkh in guftah misra-i akhtar. Az ahval naswan kardim furzat].[121] These four lines do not appear in the '*Ishqnāma*. They are found only in the *Lahore Manuscript*. The lines were later reprinted in the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* (1914) and the *Parīkhāna* (1965) with minor edits.[122] Since the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* and *Parīkhāna* retain these lines, it is clear that the respective authors of the *Parīkhāna* copies had access to either the *Lahore Manuscript* or some version of it like the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī*.[123]

The *Lahore Manuscript* contains a dastan found in the '*Ishqnāma* that was excised in the future lithograph copies of the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* and *Parīkhāna*. The dastan describes Wājid 'Alī Shāh ordering that one of his lovers be whipped and her hair shaved. Because of this inclusion, the scribes of the *Lahore Manuscript* must have read the original '*Ishqnāma,* where this dastan is illustrated and narrated. A subsequent copyist—for instance, the author of *Mahal Khāna Shāhī*—must have committed an error by not copying this dastan. Another possibility is that the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* author deliberately chose to excise this story.

Besides structural clues to the dating of the *Lahore Manuscript*, there is also an exact date on one of the folios, which reads 1265/1848. The year 1849 is what is inscribed in the colophon of the '*Ishqnāma*. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the '*Ishqnāma* was, at the latest, initiated in 1848 and completed in 1849, during the first two years of Wājid 'Alī Shāh's rule. This means that either the scribe of the *Lahore Manuscript* obtained a version of the '*Ishqnāma* before the calligrapher could finish the manuscript in 1849 or he copied the date in error. This date of 1265/1848 also travels to future copies, including the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* and *Parīkhāna*.

[121] Lahore copy, Punjab University Library, folio 433.
[122] For instance, the verb guft is changed to guftam. These lines further authenticate Wājid 'Alī Shāh's authorship by incorporating his takhallus, Akhtar.
[123] Wajid Ali Shah and Mirzā Fidā 'Alī Khanjar Lakhnavī, *Mahal Khānah-yi Shāhī* (Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu, 1914), 125. <https://rekhta.org/ebooks/mahal-khana-shahi-wajid-ali-shah-akhtar-ebooks>; Wajid Ali Shah and Mirzā Fidā 'Alī Khanjar Lakhnavī, *Mahal Khānah-yi Shāhī* (Lucknow: Nami Press, 1926), 160; Tehsēn Sarwari, *Parīkhāna* (Rampur: Delhi Printing Press, 1965), 190.

In the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī*, the lithograph bears the date of 1914, when it was completed, and the Hijra date of 1265, which aligns with the *Lahore Manuscript* and not the '*Ishqnāma*.

The inclusion of elements of the *Lahore Manuscript* in future reproductions such as *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* and *Parīkhāna* bears witness to Wājid 'Alī Shāh's history of rebellion and exile. After the illustrated '*Ishqnāma* was completed in 1849, Wājid 'Alī Shāh kept it in his possession until 1858, when soldiers allied with the British raided his Lucknow palace. The soldiers subsequently gave the manuscript to their commanding superior, Sir John Lawrence, who later presented it to Queen Victoria in 1859.[124] In a letter addressing the '*Ishqnāma* manuscript, Sir John Lawrence states:

> This book is curious and interesting from two circumstances. It was prepared in the Palace of Lucknow under the direction of the King of Oude, and is of course a faithful illustration of the life and dress of the highest Mahomedan families in India. Secondly, it was taken by some Seikhs [Sikhs] of one of the Punjabee Regiments at the time the Palace of Lucknow was stormed—they gave it to their commanding officer, who was good enough to present it to me, as the Corps was raised under my orders.[125]

In 1859, Sir John Lawrence already designated the '*Ishqnāma* a "faithful illustration of [Wājid 'Alī Shāh's] life." He underscored the idea that the '*Ishqnāma* had historical veracity. To this day, the manuscript resides in the Queen's library in Windsor Castle. Unlike some of the other Indian manuscripts housed there, this manuscript was never intended to be given to the English.[126] Since the '*Ishqnāma* was taken from India in 1858, the only means for its story to continue circulating after 1858 was through an already extant copy such as the *Lahore Manuscript*. Later scribes thus utilized the *Lahore Manuscript* rather than the '*Ishqnāma* because it was the only source of reference available in India.

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[124] Muhammad Isa Waley, "Islamic Manuscripts in the British Royal Collection: A Concise Catalogue," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 6 (1992): 16.
[125] Ibid., 16; Archer, *Indian Painting for the British*, 62.
[126] In contrast, Lord Teignmouth in 1799 donated a few manuscripts to the Queen, which were gifted by the Nawāb Āṣ af al-Daula to the English. Windsor Castle 1005091.a and 1005091.b.

The *Lahore Manuscript* is the only reproduction to be handwritten and not in a lithograph format, and its composition resembles an *akhbarat* (a proto-newspaper) containing a number of Persian scripts by different scribal hands with varying degrees of legibility. The visual aspect of this copy was an afterthought. It is completed in the shikasta and naskh script, which expediate writing, rather than the neat, clean nastaliq script used throughout the '*Ishqnāma*. Given its perfunctory appearance, the *Lahore Manuscript* was most likely produced simultaneously with the '*Ishqnāma,* serving as a kind of rough draft for Wājid 'Alī Shāh's artisans in his kitāb-khāna. Hence, it has an early date of 1265/1848. In the *Lahore Manuscript*'s colophon, a title, "A Piece of History [qita' tārīkh]," is included, a phrase that concludes both the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* and the *Parīkhāna* copies. Unlike these future copies, the *Lahore Manuscript* does not end there. Three additional dastans follow. The appearance of these added dastans suggests that the scribe copied the colophon too quickly before completing the correct order of the dastans. This reinforces the notion that the *Lahore Manuscript* served as a draft form of the '*Ishqnāma*. The commentary along the margins of the *Lahore Manuscript* points to another possible point of circulation. The presence of the marginalia means that various readers had access to the *Lahore Manuscript* and spent enough time studying it to make commentary. In many cases, akhbarats were not only distributed textually in a bound book form but also orally disseminated. As for akhbarat, the appearance of the *Lahore Manuscript* was secondary because the orator would have read it out loud to a group of listeners who could not visually perceive the text. Wājid 'Alī Shāh may have elected to have two types of texts produced: one a handwritten copy that would have gained a wider audience through oral transmission and a luxurious manuscript copy for his own private use.

There were also political and technological reasons for Wājid ʻAlī Shāh decision to disseminate both the ʻ*Ishqnāma* and the *Lahore Manuscript* in a handwritten form and not through a lithograph press. By 1820, Nawāb Ghāzī al-dīn Ḥaidar (r. 1814–1827) had established a lithograph printing press in Lucknow.[127] Aloys Sprenger, who catalogued the Lucknow Palace Library, noted that by 1830 there was an active printing press, which increased the availability "of periodical and light literature."[128] By 1849, seven hundred books had been lithographed in Lucknow and the nearby city of Cawnpore.[129] After a series of events, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh abolished both the lithograph and printing presses from 1849 until 1857. He also closed down the Lucknow Observatory in 1849.[130] In his official statement on the matter, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh argued that his court could no longer bear the expense and upkeep of both presses and the observatory. Yet British Resident Sleeman accused Wājid ʻAlī Shāh of shutting down the press because it had printed and distributed an unflattering text, *Qaisar ut-Tawārīkh*. The author of *Qaisar ut-Tawārīkh*, Sayyid Kamāl ud din Haidar, happened to be a "superintendent of the Avad observatory office."[131] According to Sleeman, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh closed down the press and observatory to take a stand against those who undermined his authority. In either case, with the press no longer operational, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh elected to transcribe and circulate the ʻ*Ishqnāma* as the handwritten *Lahore Manuscript* instead of reversing his earlier decree.

The question becomes: why did Wājid ʻAlī Shāh transform the ʻ*Ishqnāma*'s Urdu poetry into Persian prose in the *Lahore Manuscript*? To take it from a different angle: as a poet himself,

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[127] Katherine S. Diehl, "Lucknow Printers, 1820–1850," *Comparative Librarianship: Essays in Honour of Professor D. N. Marshall* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1973), 115; Graham Shaw, "Calcutta: Birthplace of the Indian Lithographed Book," *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 27 (1998): 106.
[128] Aloys Sprenger, *A Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Hindustani Manuscripts of the Libraries of the King of Oudh*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1854), vi–vii.
[129] Diehl, "Lucknow Printers," 119.
[130] National Archives in Delhi F(P)C No. 130–36, 6 October 1849, cited in S. M. Razaullah Ansari, "Early Modern Observatories in India 1792–1900," in *Science and Modern India: An Institutional History, 1784–1947*, ed. Uma Das Gupta (Delhi: Longman Pearson Education, 2011), 361; Diehl, "Lucknow Printers," 118.
[131] G. D. Bhatnagar, *Awadh under Wajid Ali Shah*, 73n21.

why did Wājid ʻAlī Shāh elect to summarize the ʻ*Ishqnāma* in Persian prose? I propose that the dissemination of the *Lahore Manuscript* was somewhat accidental. Wājid ʻAlī Shāh intended the *Lahore Manuscript* to be a rough draft of his ʻ*Ishqnāma* manuscript, and only after the ʻ*Ishqnāma* manuscript was carried off in 1858 did he rely on the *Lahore Manuscript* as his only means of recalling the story. This would explain the *Lahore Manuscript*'s sloppy appearance and its haphazard assembly. It is unclear whether Wājid ʻAlī Shāh circulated the *Lahore Manuscript* in an akhbarat style of transmission before or after the ʻ*Ishqnāma* was forcibly removed from India in 1858.

After the rebellion and while in exile in Calcutta, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh was given a sizable pension of about "hundred thousand rupees." He spent some of his funds constructing a housing complex in Garden Reach (Matiya Burj), Calcutta, and reestablishing a printing press, Maltba Sultani, in the area. Maltba Sultani literally translates to "royal printing press." Many of the books published by Maltba Sultani were distributed free of charge from 1860 to 1885.[132] Wājid ʻAlī Shāh thereby enabled a wider audience to gain access to his library collection and his writings.[133] Reversing his earlier order on the printing press, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh published many of his poetry collections and novels through lithography during his exile in Calcutta.[134]

The lithograph format allowed Wājid ʻAlī Shāh to dispute many of the colonial myths that circulated about him. In one of his printed poems, titled "From Lucknow to Kolkata," Wājid ʻAlī Shāh comments directly on the unfair treatment he has received from the British. He cites the toxicity of the Bengal landscape and the inescapable ecology of exile as his evidence. In one line, he ruminates, "Bengal is hot, it is charmingly barren [*lūn*] and it intensely [*tapish*] eats up

[132] Kaukab Qadir Sajjad Ali Mirza, *Wajid Ali Shah ki Adabi aur Saqafati Khidmat* (New Delhi: Taraqqi-yi Urdu Bureau, 1995), 122; Chatterjee, *Black Hole*, 220.
[133] A. Sprenger notes, "One of the most remarkable results of the progress of printing is the rapid increase of periodical and light literature" in *A Catalogue of the King of Oudh* (vii).
[134] Sinh, *Wajid Ali Shah, the Tragic King*, 141.

everything."[135] He further elaborates that "to whoever was alive [*jānwar*], he/it opened its mouth to it."[136] In this poem, bodies both animal and human in the barren landscape of Bengal function as testimonials, bearing witness to the trauma, injustice, violence, and pain of exile. He dramatizes the inherent otherness of Bengal, suggesting that his own body is being transformed by the new landscape. He is "eaten up" by Bengal. Noticeably, in the poem, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh has no qualms about using his press to comment on politically charged topics in the poetic register.[137]

ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar (1860–1926), who lived in the same area of Calcutta as Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, attests to the fact that ʻ*Ishqnāma* copies circulated in the city in poetic verse.[138] As part of the "Muslim education and reform movement," Sharar had a very low opinion of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh and his ʻ*Ishqnāma* text since it provided a very little educational value.[139] In a series of articles written around 1913, Sharar penned his response to reading the ʻ*Ishqnāma*, stating:

> The trouble was that the language of his [Mirza Shauq's] masnavīs was so beautiful, frank, pure, and clean in spite of its erotic allure (*āshiqāna jaẓbāt*), that even honorable and decent people could not abstain from reading and enjoying it. Wajid Ali Shah also read these masnavīs, and because he was a poet himself, he adopted this style and versified (*mauzūn*) his love affairs and hundreds of the amorous escapades (*rindāna ĕʻtidālin*) of his early youth. He made them public throughout the country and became to a conventional, moral, world a self-confessed sinner (*mujrim*). Few ministers and nobles in their early youth have not given full rein to their sexual desires (*shahwat-parast*).[140]

Sharar states that he read a text of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's "love-affairs and hundreds of the amorous escapades (*rindāna ĕʻtidālin*) of his early youth" that was completed in the "[masnavī] style and

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[135] Kaukab Qadar Sajjād ʻ Alī Mīrzā, *Intikhāb-i Vājid ʻAlī Shāh Akhtar*, 62. "Voh garmi voh lun aur voh xaur ki tapish."
[136] Ibid. "Jo tha jā nwar munh ko kho le tha voh."
[137] The larger social arrangements that were put in crisis during Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's exile were metaphorically represented by the reorganization of the Bengal landscape into risk/safe limits.
[138] ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar*, Lucknow, the Last Phase of an Oriental Culture* (London: Elek, 1975), 66; Sharar and Muḥammad Ikrām Cughāī, *Guzashtah Lakhnaū: Hindustān men Mashriqī Tamaddun kā ākhirī Namūnah* (Lahore: Sang-i Mīl Publications, 2006), 96–97; Sayyid Masud Hasan Rizvi, *Lakhnau ka Shahi Stej*, 33, 74, 76. This last text includes poetic verses from the *ʻIshqnāma* that do not correspond with the manuscript. Rizvi could have therefore accessed a different copy that was versified that I did not have access to. A similar phenomenon occurs in Kaukab Qadar Sajjād ʻAlī Mīrzā, *Intikhāb*, 46.
[139] Christopher Ryan Perkins, *Paritioning History: the Creation of an Islāmī Pablik in Late Colonial Inida, c. 1880–1920* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2011), 4.
[140] Sharar*, Lucknow*, 63; Sharar and Cughāī, *Guzashtah Lakhnaū*, 96.

versified (*mauzūn*)" form. These versified copies, as of yet, have not been located. Because of which, it is difficult to assess when exactly the '*Ishqnāma* copies forsook the poetic register and were exclusively printed in prose. Besides the charge of obscenity, Sharar's response also makes evident that the lithograph press afforded Wājid 'Alī Shāh the opportunity to recover his voice and distribute his poems and books to a large reading audience during his exile.

After the *Lahore Manuscript*, the next extant '*Ishqnāma* copies are from 1914 and 1926. Both are titled *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* and are printed in Urdu, not Persian. They were circulated during the rise of vernacular print in India and under the auspices of the new obscenity laws that passed in the Indian Penal Code. Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code banned the distribution and sale of obscene books. Administrators began to enforce the code in 1862 but had the law only wide-reaching effects after the 1940s. This was also the period of British Repression in India that spanned 1907 to 1947. These laws had very little effect on the distribution of the '*Ishqnāma* copies since British administrators did not disapprove of it. Only a handful of readers such as 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, not government officials, considered the text obscene (*ashlil*).

During the same time that the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* was published, obscene materials in Hindi were part of the "publishing boom" in the area around Uttar Pradesh.[141] According to Chadra Gupta, "The number of presses in Uttar Pradesh had risen from 177 in 1878–79 to 568 in 1901–02 and 743 in 1925–26."[142] He states, "By the early twentieth century, wide-ranging pulp and popular literature—semi-pornographic sex manuals and romances in colloquial Hindi, thin tracts and small formats of songs and poems in Braj, flooded the market in Uttar Pradesh."[143] The *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* operated within a slightly different public audience than these Hindi

[141] Charu Gupta, *Obscenity, Sexuality and the "Other": Gender and Hindu Identity in Uttar Pradesh, 1880s–1930s* (PhD diss., SOAS, 2000), 29–39.
[142] Ibid., 30.
[143] Ibid., 31.

tracts because it was completed in Urdu. Nevertheless, Gupta's observations stand. Obscenity laws did little to curb the publication of erotic texts since the term "obscene" encompassed such a vast amount of literature. Only a few books were publicly vilified at the time. In 1927, Pandey Becan Sharma 'Ugra's *Chaklet* was published, a story that "dealt with issues of sodomy, sexual acts between adult males and adolescent boys, and other aspects of male homosexuality."[144] It garnered the most public and governmental ire. While readers of *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* such as Sharar might have disapproved of it, the text was never under state surveillance.

The *debacca* (introductions) of the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* editions contain further information on their public reception. Abdahkar Mirza Fiza Ali Khanjar, who created the first *Mahal Khana Shahi* copy in 1914, states in the foreword:

> First off, 'Ali Janāb Sheikh Muḥammad Yusuf Hussain Khān Sāhab Bahādar, who is a barrister of law in the noble city of Lucknow, should be thanked since he presented me with the gift of the 'History of the Parikhana,' which was in his library. And through this celebrated (*mamdūḥ*) man's kindness, I was able to preserve and affirm my vision and desire for this book. From this in my heart a special type of excitement was born. And I picked up my pen on behalf of my translation. . . . I translated this disorganized (*bē-tarattub*) book and words completed in the shikasta script with little delicacy or excellence (*faḵẖr*).[145]

Like other future copyists, Khanjar names the space in which he initially discovered the '*Ishqnāma* text. He found a lithograph copy in the library of lawyer, Muḥammad Yusuf Hussain Khān Sāhab Bahādar, which speaks to the fact that the book had currency in middle- and upper-class Urdu-speaking circles. Khanjar further states:

> This history (*tārīḵẖ*) of a society (*ṣuḥbat*) is not a society of a respectful lineage (nisbat). A word will be given to represent [this sentiment] of your house (*bait*) is not the house (*bait*) of the world (*jag*). In that, this man's [family] tree (*wāqāt*) was full of pleasure loving (*'aish pasand*) people. In this manner, my pen closed upon these events since the official (*manṣab*) duty (*farẓ*) of a historian (*muwarraḵẖ*) is to be faithful (*rāst-bāz*).[146]

[144] Ibid., 36.
[145] *Mahal Khāna Shāhī*, tr. Mirzā Fidā 'Alī Khanjar Lakhnavī (Lucknow: Nami Press, 1926), 3.
[146] Ibid., 4.

Khanjar positions himself as a historian whose duty (*farẓ*) is to honestly translate Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's text. Khanjar's analysis of the ʻ*Ishqnāma* as a truthful history veers slightly from Sharar's earlier position of the ʻ*Ishqnāma* as a history but also as a poetic descendant of Urdu poets such as Shauq. Sharar, unlike Khanjar, may have seen the ʻ*Ishqnāma* as part of Lucknow's Urdu repertoire because he read the text in the poetic format. By 1914, Khanjar had access only to a copy in prose, and he states as much in his introduction. He read "History of the Parikhana" in the shikasta script, a type of script that appears only in the *Lahore Manuscript* and not in the ʻ*Ishqnāma*. Because Khanjar only had access to the prose copies, he considered the book a truthful representation of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's royal family and judged them obsessed with sex and pleasure (*ʻaish*).

Thanks to *Mahal Khāna Shāhī*'s popularity, Nami Press in Lucknow published a second edition in 1926 under the same title, and Abdahkar Mirza Fida Ali Khanjar is still credited as the author. The *Mahal Khāna Shāhī* copies of 1914 and 1926 mark the moment when the ʻ*Ishqnāma* copies came to be distributed exclusively in a legible prose format. Many historians writing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries utilized these two editions of 1914 and 1926 as a source of reference when researching and completing their books on the nawabate of Avadh.[147]

In 1965, the writer Tehsēn Sarwari undertook the next ʻ*Ishqnāma* edition, titled *Parīkhāna.* In his text, he made a number of linguistic edits.[148] First, as in the introduction of the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī*, there is a narrative of discovery to justify his translations. Tehsēn Sarwari states,

[147] See for instance Afroz Taj and Amānat, *The Court of Indar and the Rebirth of North Indian Drama* (New Delhi: Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu (Hind) 2007), 31n16. He states that his translation of "Wajid Ali Shah's Persian Ishq Namah" is "taken from an Urdu translation with references."
[148] The *Parīkhāna* in the 1980s was also printed in devangari. See Iqbal Bahadur Devsare, *Parīkhānā* (Ilāhābāda: Sāhitya Bhavana, 1982), and Wajid Ali Shah, *Parīkhānah*, tr. Śakīla Siddīqī (Mumbaī: Paridṛ śya Prakāśana, 1998).

> One day, I went [to the house] of the Urdu author (Mulana Mufti Intizam Allah Sahib). There I saw a large (*ḥajm*) manuscript (*qalamī kitāb*) that needed new (*jadīd*) writing (*k̲ẖatt*). However, the writing was written clearly and was in good shape. I took the book to privately study (*mutāla'a*) it. After which, I knew that this was a rare (*nā-yāb*) manuscript copy (*nusk̲ẖa*) of the Persian language and that its name was the *Parīkhāna* written by the king (*tāj-dār*) of Avadh Wājid 'Alī Shāh Akhtar. As I continued to the read the book, my interest in it increased. An idea came to mind: this book should be in the Urdu language to respect its subject matter. Wājid 'Alī Shāh was attached to the Urdu language and manners (adab). In this regard, he composed a memorial of the Urdu language [in his writings]. Considering this, one has to ask why did Wājid 'Alī Shāh write and present [this manuscript] in Persian? No special reason came to mind. Perhaps by doing so, Wajid Ali Shah could transmit a state of royalty.[149]

Like Khanjar before him, Tehsēn Sarwari feels compelled to translate this text from Persian into Urdu. Later in his introduction, Tehsēn Sarwari reveals that he was not translating from a pure Persian text as in the *Lahore Manuscript* but was in fact reading a later Urdu copy: "In Wājid 'Alī Shāh's book, he dispersed and mixed in short Persian poetic couplets that were not from Iran. Rather, in this manner, he wanted to reserve the Persian only for personal pronouns and verbs. The rest of the sections (ḥissa) are in Urdu. For this reason, I did not feel like I spent a lot of time translating the manuscript."[150] Tehsēn Sarwari thus worked from some version of the *Mahal Khāna Shāhī*. He did not translate between languages but modified the Urdu linguistic register from a florid Persianized Urdu into a simplified Urdu with a few Persian verbs. The simplification in Tehsēn Sarwari's translation implies that there must have been a shift in audience and audience expectations for Urdu novels by the 1960s. The *Mahal Khāna Shāhī*'s literary Urdu, which includes Persian terminology and metaphoric speech, gives way to *Parīkhāna*'s accessible Urdu register, which is very plain and direct.

Much like his prose, Tehsēn Sarwari's analysis of the '*Ishqnāma* is quite dry. He states, "From studying this book, I definitely knew that this was a story (*dāstān*) about an individual who became sick from engaging in and thinking about sex (*jinsi marīẓ*) for two years. Despite

[149] Tehsēn Sarwari, *Parīkhāna*, 5.
[150] Ibid., 6.

being king (*bādshāh*), he was a slave (*gulām*) to his desires (*k̲h̲wāhishāt*), and he was a weak (*majbūr*) and powerless (*be-bas*) person."[151] By the 1960s, as Tehsēn Sarwari's introduction testifies, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh and his text were disparaged for concentrating on the subject of sexual pleasure.[152]

By focusing on the form of the ʻ*Ishqnāma* copies, we can better understand why Wājid ʻAlī and his book were considered deviant. Many of the translators of the ʻ*Ishqnāma* copies in their introductory remarks describe the ʻ*Ishqnāma* as historical nonfiction. Such a claim bolsters the idea that during his tenure as nawab, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh was so consumed by love and sex that he neglected statecraft. Even as I have been renarrativizing the history of the ʻ*Ishqnāma* and its copies, it has been difficult to distinguish Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, the historical figure, from Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, the literary persona of a masnavī and vaqa'i manuscript. Such a conflation occurs more easily in the copies since the literary components of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's character are concealed by the prose format.

F. Discomfort with the ʻ*Ishqnāma* manuscript

Historically and art historically, the ʻ*Ishqnāma* manuscript has received very little scholarly attention. The amount of work done on similar texts such as the *Akbarnāma* and *Bāburnāma* makes that neglect even more striking. A few cultural figures have remarked specifically on the ʻ*Ishqnāma* manuscript and not on the *Parīkhāna* copies, including ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar (1860–1926), Mildred Archer (1911–2005), and the director Satyajit Ray (1921–1992). Although they all operated in different historical moments, they all conflate the ʻ*Ishqnāma* and perversity and decadency.

[151] Ibid., 10
[152] Tehsēn Sarwari's *Parīkhāna* text was reprinted as Wājid ʻAlī Shāh Akhtar, *Parīkhāna* (Karachi: Collection Books, 2000).

After annexation, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh settled permanently in Calcutta, where he sought to recreate the former glory of his Lucknow court. One of the many inhabitants who resided in Garden Reach (Matiya Burj) was ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar. Sharar was a historian, novelist, and reformist. His opinions about morality and state governance are quite visible in his literary output. The premise of one of his novels, *Firdaus-i Birin* (Paradise on earth), for instance, centers on the dangers of superstitions to show the virtues of reason. Along these same lines, ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar criticized Wājid ʻAlī Shāh for his lack of rationalism.

Sharar was the first author to link Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's debauchery with the ʻ*Ishqnāma* manuscript. In "Hindustan Men Mashriqi Tamaddun ka Akhri Namuna," originally printed as a series of articles around 1913, Sharar reserves his most scathing remarks for the last nawab, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh, stating he was a "sinner (*mujrim*)" for engaging in sexual affairs and publishing details on them.[153] He further explains his revulsion for the ʻ*Ishqnāma*, stating:

> Wājid ʻAlī Shāh has made public his sensuous transgressions (*be-sharmi ki jarā'im*). Wājid ʻAlī Shāh could not outdo Nawāb Mirza [Shauq] in the realm of poetry, so he decided to surpass him by proclaiming to the world his unchaste predilections (*jaẓbāt*), thoughts, and deeds. He even had no hesitation in showing shamefully (*bāzāri mizāq*) low taste (*mubtaẓal*) and in using obscene language (*fāḥish alfāẓ*). He would fall in love with female palanquin-bearers, courtesans (*raṇḍī*), domestic servants (*k̲h̲awās*) and women who came in and out of the palace, in short with hundreds of women, and because he was heir to the throne, he had great success with his love-affairs, the shameful accounts (*sharm-nāk dāstānin*) of which can be read in his poems, writings and books. His character, therefore, appears to be one of the most dubious (*nā-pāk*) in all the records of history.[154]

Because the ʻ*Ishqnāma* manuscript was already in England by the time Sharar penned his scathing review, Sharar had to have read a lithograph copy of the ʻ*Ishqnāma* that was completed in a poetic format and with no accompanying images. After reading one of these ʻ*Ishqnāma* copies, Sharar states that Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's book transgressed both taste and morality. Wājid

[153] Sharar*, Lucknow*, 63; Sharar and Cughāī, *Gu̲zashtah Lakhnaū,* 96.
[154] Sharar, *Lucknow*, 66; Sharar and Cughāī, *Gu̲zashtah Lakhnaū*, 96–97.

‘Alī Shāh is deemed a sinner (*mujrim*) and unchaste (*na–pak*). Sharar takes the ‘*Ishqnāma* copy as an accurate reflection of reality and accepts the claim that Wājid ‘Alī Shāh fell in love with hundreds of women. As a fellow writer, Sharar could not forgive Wājid ‘Alī Shāh for debasing poetry with his “obscene” (*fāḥish*) language.

The charge of obscenity against the ‘*Ishqnāma* did not disappear during the formation of the discipline of Indian art history. Rather, it continued to animate discussions on Wājid ‘Alī Shāh’s literary and artistic patronage. Mildred Archer, former curator of the India Office Library in London, catalogued and curated exhibitions on Indian miniature paintings. She was the first to review the ‘*Ishqnāma* based on its art historical merit. In 1955, she stated that within the ‘*Ishqnāma*,

> [t]he paintings reveal the tawdry Europeanized palace to which the journals and memoirs constantly refer. We see the garish stucco building with its shoddy woodwork and frescoes, its carpets, furniture and wall lamps in the worst British taste. The rooms are decorated with Indian portraits and British sporting prints, and the ruler of Oudh, now a king with a golden halo, is portrayed throughout his regal routine avidly seeking with monotonous regularity the tedious company of unhappy women. . . . The style of the painting is even more revealing. . . . The original Lucknow manner which had still persisted under Asaf ud-Daula is now dead. . . . In this volume the pleasure of the zenana, its feats, music, dancing and embracings, formerly portrayed with voluptuous line and fevered colour, are now so feebly rendered that dignity is lost and nothing remains but a sense of all-pervading squalor.[155]

Archer’s emotive vocabulary such as “pleasure,” “voluptuousness,” “fever,” and “squalor” devalues the literature and aesthetics of the *‘Ishqnāma*. To turn Archer’s interpretation on its head, the *‘Ishqnāma* painting style could be considered refined rather than voluptuous. “The fevered color” could be described as subdued. A sense of royalty rather than squalor could be all-pervading. I reverse Archer’s language here so that one can more easily notice that Archer’s discussion of the *‘Ishqnāma* is not objective and is conditioned by colonial paradigms of decline and decay and of excessive sexuality. For Archer, this manuscript reifies the logic of colonialism

[155] Mildred and William Archer, *Indian Painting for the British* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 62–63.

according to which, by surrounding himself with women, Wājid ʻAlī Shāh became one. Believing that Wājid ʻAlī Shāh was an oriental despot, Archer dismissed the artistic merit of the *ʻIshqnāma*.

Such an attitude has persisted in contemporary reception of the *ʻIshqnāma* too. While directing the 1977 movie *Shatranj ke Khilari* (The Chess-Players), which centered on Wājid ʻAlī Shāh's court, the filmmaker Satyajit Ray notably refused to read the *ʻIshqnāma.*[156] *Shatranj ke Khilari* has been studied as a postcolonial film that "critiques both colonialist and nationalist constructions" (fig. 19).[157] To achieve this, Satyajit pulled from a number of resources including British documents and the expertise of Urdu historians to create a semi-historical film. Since Satyajit drew from local sources, the film not only reflects Satyajit's personal feelings toward the nawab but also highlights the myths of Wājid ʻAlī Shāh circulating within the Indian public sphere. While undertaking research on his film, Satyajit states, he encountered a manuscript detailing Wājid ʻAlī's sexual exploits beginning at a very young age. The manuscript in question was most likely a copy of the ʻ*Ishqnāma*. Refusing to read this text, Satyajit remarked to one of his researchers, Manikda, "don't tell me all this [about the ʻ*Ishqnāma*] because then I'll dislike him [Wājid ʻAlī Shāh] even more." Satyajit wanted to complete the film as an impartial party; and for the director, Wājid ʻAlī's overt sexuality only reinforced colonial historiography claiming that a decadent king needed to be overthrown. As Satyajit notes, "He [Wājid ʻAlī Shāh] even had no hesitation in showing shamefully low taste and in using obscene language." Eventually, Satyajit stated that after further research he gained greater sympathy for Wājid ʻAlī

[156] Andrew Robinson, *Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye* (London: A. Deutsch, 1989), 242–43. Satyajit's *Shatranj ke Khilari* was completed in 1977 and was based on writer Premchand's 1924 novel.
[157] Reena Dube, *Satyajit Ray's Chess Players: The Discourse of British Colonial Enterprise and Its Representation of the Other through the Expanded Cultural Critique* (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2001), i.

Shāh, but this research did not include reading the *'Ishqnāma*.[158] After *Shatranj ke Khilari* was distributed, a debate erupted over Satyajit Ray's construction of Wājid 'Alī's gender.[159]

Fig. 5.19. Actor Amjad Khan playing Wājid 'Alī Shāh
Still from the movie *Shatranj ke Khilari*

These recent assumptions by art historians and filmmakers throughout the twentieth century show the resilience of the association between Wājid 'Alī Shāh and the *'Ishqnāma* and opprobrium and disrepute. Archer and Satyajit had access to different versions of the *'Ishqnāma*. While in England, Archer mostly likely saw the original *'Ishqnāma* manuscript, as she remarks on the miniature paintings, which are available only in the manuscript format. Mildred Archer's disgust for the *'Ishqnāma* may have stemmed from the fact that Archer did not have the capacity to read the Urdu text, and therefore could not understand the subtleties between text and image. She could only make a superficial analysis based on the miniature paintings. For his part, Satyajit Ray most likely read the *'Ishqnāma* as an Urdu lithograph copy. In that format, the *'Ishqnāma* reads more like a factual biography, which helps explain why Satyajit, in his quest for objective documents and historicity, refused to engage with a text filled with passion that seemingly did not have any political valence. Mildred Archer and Satyajit Ray are among the few figures to actively reflect and comment on the *'Ishqnāma*.

There has been a general amnesia about the art historical, historical, and literary significance of the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript. When it does enter academic discourse, historians have drawn from the Urdu copies and not from the original manuscript. Historian Bhatnagar's careful study of Wājid 'Alī Shāh's court, completed in 1968, uses a version of the lithographed copies. Rosie Llewelyn-Jones's recent monograph on Wājid 'Alī Shāh, published in 2014,

[158] Andrew Robinson, *Satyajit Ray*, 240–51.
[159] For more on this debate, see Ashis Nandy, "Beyond Oriental Despotism: Politics and Femininity in Satyajit Ray," *Sunday*, Annual No. (1981). Reprinted in Ashis Nandy, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 209–16.

primarily utilized the *Parīkhāna* copy.[160] Recently, art historian Tushara Bindu Gude in 2011 commented on the *'Ishqnāma* manuscript in a short catalogue entry.[161] Though abbreviated, the entry is a much-needed rejoinder to previous scholarship.

The *'Ishqnāma* has long carried with it the stigma of its historical period. In alignment with Allison Busch's argument on Riti poetry and its relationship with Indian courts, there are three main reasons why Wājid 'Alī Shāh's literature and his courtly culture are earmarked as decadent. First, there is an assumption that the culture of the court of the nawabs, especially Wājid 'Alī Shāh, led to colonization. This is apparent in the colonial discourse on the nawabs' sexuality, which was a means to discrediting native right to rule so that they could be replaced with a more rational colonial system. Second, the literature by these "emasculated" courtly rulers looked backward to Islamicate motifs instead of forward to so-called modern European tropes. As such, Wājid 'Alī's gender and sexuality served as a symbol of non-normativity and backwardness for Indian nationalists and colonialists alike. This attitude is encapsulated in Sharar's reaction. Third, during Indian nationalism, these texts were measured against new moral criteria. In this sense, Wājid 'Alī's sexuality was considered a blight for the nation of India and was a site of moral disavowal.[162] Sharar was the first to push this sentiment regarding the *'Ishqnāma,* and his position was inadvertently reinforced by Satyajit Ray. This history cannot be eradicated from the current reception of the *'Ishqnāma* and helps explain the text's absence in

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[160] Llewelyn-Jones, *Last King of India*. She states that she is using the '*Ishqnāma,* but in her footnotes she cites the *Parīkhāna*. She describes the '*Ishqnāma/Parīkhāna* as a "straightforward case of a child who was sexualised at an early age and spent the rest of his life seeking fulfillment by marrying vast numbers of women, but not finding much real satisfaction" (130).

[161] Stephen Markel, Tushara Bindu Gude, and Muzaffar Alam, eds., *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2010), 98–99; Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London: British Library, 1982), 146, 151. Like Gude, Losty provides a short catalogue entry. He argues that the text and images of the '*Ishqnāma* represent "lovely ladies" who care for Wājid 'Alī Shāh "far from affairs of state," which positions proper state governance as antithetical to Wājid 'Alī Shāh's relationship with his household.

[162] For a more in-depth study on the heterosexualization of the Indian nation in the wake of India's independence, see Ruth Vanita (ed.), *Queering India* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

literary studies. The active silencing of *'Ishqnāma* in current media productions such as *Shatranj ke Khilari* and the art historical amnesia surrounding the *'Ishqnāma*'s miniatures and the text's literary merit also stem from its colonial reception.

Conclusion

To recast the current understanding of the *'Ishqnāma*, I have unraveled its various textual and visual investments. Much like his Mughal and Deccani predecessors, Wājid 'Alī Shāh was able to a craft a poetic self-image through his sponsorship of poetry, literature, and the arts. For instance, in the *'Ishqnāma*, during a musical celebration Wājid 'Alī Shāh makes note of historical figures who have influenced his courtly practices. He states:

> If I heavily drink red wine / Then the foundation of pleasure (*'ishrat*) has been laid
> The heart of desire is prepared in this world / Through the beautiful agreeable Parīkhāna
> Bygone (*sābiq*) sovereigns (*salātīn*) are celebrated / Because of their customs and manners
> Such as Muḥammad Shāh of Delhi / Barāhīm 'Adil Shāh [of Bijapur], who were renowned
> Even though they were both kings (*bādshāh*) / By holding celebratory parties (*maḥfil*), they had a path of pleasure (*'ishrat*)
> . . . Every year they continuously gave their gifts (*'atā*) / Thousands of gifts (*bilak*) they gave. A hundred thousand.
> To the beautiful women who were cheerful and enchanting / They gave them an education in the sciences ('*ilm*) of dance and other riches (*ganā*)
> They titled these women "envy of the moon" / They were all notable (*mushtahar*) singers.[163]

Here Wājid 'Alī Shāh is creating a historical lineage by recalling Indo-Muslim rulers who favored the arts, such as Ibrahim Adil Shāh II (r. 1580–1627) and Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748). These citations validate Wājid 'Alī Shāh's artistic and courtly investments in pleasure and support his creation of the music school, the Parīkhāna.

Through a poetics of vision, combining both image and text, Wājid 'Alī Shāh promoted a worldview, one that was rhythmic and one that allowed him to decenter the fact that he was

[163] *'Ishqnāma*, 337r; *Parīkhāna* (1965), 136–37.

losing territory to the British by emphasizing instead his erotic relationships with shades of sacrality. The *'Ishqnāma* is intertextually related to the "romance" masnavī both thematically and structurally. This relationship moves the *'Ishqnāma* beyond the framework of a factual biography and makes it a text that mediates between subjective desire and the wider realm of a world imbued with a metaphysical character. Through its connection to the masnavī and by integrating the tenets of mystical Islam, the *'Ishqnāma* is able to harness the metaphysical powers of love. In the *'Ishqnāma*'s introduction, Wājid 'Alī Shāh states that God has bestowed love on man, and as a result love manifests in everyone and everything. Since Wājid 'Alī Shāh positions himself as the ultimate lover, he claims to have the power to harness love—a force that governs everything in the sky and on the earth. Through referencing the *'Ishqnāma* via the masnavī genre, Wājid 'Alī Shāh's reconstructs his sovereignty within the mystical realm of Sufism and provides his rule with a mystical and cosmic dimension.

By reading pleasure as productive in the vaqa'i genre, I see Wājid 'Alī Shāh's efforts as creating an "ishq" philosophy, one that places affective relations within a literary history. 'Ishq was an aesthetic and social concept that allowed Wājid 'Alī to reimagine, relive, and reconstitute his sovereignty through intimate bonds. At the end of the *'Ishqnāma*, near the colophon, Wājid 'Alī Shāh stresses the importance of loyalty and fidelity (*wafā*) in his interpersonal relations. He provides a list of his lovers who have been loyal and those who have not. For Wājid 'Alī Shāh, the intense attachments that were forged erotically and sexually were symbolically mapped onto the attachments courtiers should have expressed for his own rule. In his erotics of sovereignty, loyalty becomes a foundational emotion not only for his individual sexual relationships but also for his dominion as a ruler.

The overarching theme of the '*Ishqnāma* is *'ishqbazi*, the play of love, which in a sense can be used to substantiate the colonial argument of oriental despotism.[164] By studying the original manuscript, this chapter overturned this conflation and provided detailed analysis of some of the dastans in which 'ishq was aligned directly with politics. Although it was not possible to analyze every single one of the '*Ishqnāma*'s 131 dastans, my provocations shed new light on the '*Ishqnāma* and provide an opening for future scholarship.

[164] Ishqbazi can also be translated as "amorous speech."

CHAPTER SIX

PEDOPHILIA IN THE ARCHIVE: THE GAYER-ANDERSON TWINS AND THEIR INDIAN PAINTING COLLECTION

The Gayer-Anderson twins, Robert Grenville Gayer-Anderson and Thomas Gayer-Anderson, collected art objects during the height of the British Raj in the 1920s. They were born in Listowel, Ireland, in 1881, and during their childhood they traveled throughout Ireland, the United States, and England.[1] In adulthood, they both joined the British military and their careers spanned various wars and imperial projects from Egypt to India. For their retirement, both returned to England, where they personally dispersed and donated their painting and object collections to various international museums and libraries. For ease of reading, I will refer to them by their first names, Robert and Thomas.

Fig. 6.1. Robert Gayer-Anderson in his Cairo apartment in 1924[2]

Both Thomas and Robert came onto the collecting scene in the 1920s and the 1930s, when Indian painting was burgeoning into an art form. Later, in the subsequent donation of their collection to major museums such as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Gallery of Art, Australia, the brothers actively participated in conceptualizing miniature paintings as an Indian and British national art form by writing letters, creating catalogues, and assisting and arguing with curators. Unlike early British colonial officers in the eighteenth century, local Indic rulers never gifted paintings or objects to the Gayer-Andersons (chapter 4). Rather, the brothers collected based on the premise of "taste," which was inflected by their sexual desires. They

[1] Louise Foxcroft, *Gayer-Anderson: Life and Afterlife* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2016), 20.
[2] Image reprinted in Sulaiman al-Kretli, Robert Grenville Gayer-Anderson, Abd al-Aziz Abdu, Theo Gayer-Anderson, and Ahmed Sultan Gabriel, *Legends of the House of the Cretan Woman* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001), 5.

collected a range of miniature paintings including Avadhi, Mughal, Kalighat, and Rajput styles.[3] Rather than miniature painting manuscripts, they preferred loose-leaf miniatures, a form that allowed them to select imagery that specifically fulfilled their ideals of beauty. They also never bound their miniature paintings into book albums as earlier colonial collectors had. Their paintings were kept as loose folios and at times displayed on walls of their estate. In Figure 1, for example, an Indian miniature painting of a flower hangs behind Robert as he sits and reads.

While the formal qualities of their Indian miniature paintings are of note, in this chapter I discuss the Gayer-Anderson twins to investigate how museum personnel have either suppressed or heralded the figuration of desire within their Indian miniature painting collection and within their drawings. The first section A provides an overview of their Indian painting collection by detailing how the Gayer-Andersons invoked British imperialism to justify their collecting practices and the liberties afforded by their imperial positions to collect said objects. Afterward, in section B, I turn to how Thomas and Robert collected Indian painting to match their sexualized drawings and poems, blurring the line between taste and fetish. For this shared interest in erotica in their Indian collection and in their pictorial and verbal sketches, they coined the term "twinning." I unpack this twinning concept beyond image and text by looking at their fascination with children and animals in section C. This preoccupation with erotic children and animals bled into their collecting practices for Indian painting. Section D investigates how at home and abroad the twins were able to prey on young children. The final section E details the brothers' donations to the Bodleian Library, revealing how such institutions affirm or disavow the sexual element in the Gayer-Andersons' collection. In section F, a summary is provided of

[3] Four paintings once in the Gayer-Andersons' possession have been linked to the Avadhi artist Mihr Chand. The Gayer-Andersons bought some of these illustrious examples of Avadhi paintings from the Fremantle album when it was put up at in auction in London. Chester Beatty collected many of the other folios from the Fremantle album, and they are currently housed in the Chester Beatty Library.

how the twins were invested in erotica not only in Avadhi painting but across all Indian painting styles because the aesthetic fed into their own sexual desires.

The history of the Gayer-Anderson twins' collection highlights the ways in which their sexual desires have been suppressed and forgotten in order to valorize their Indian painting collection. In the process, the erotic imagery found in their Indian paintings has been displaced or deferred back onto India and its peoples. Through comparing their Indian miniature paintings with the brothers' "doodles" drawings, I question colonial and national discourses that have linked erotica and decadency to Avadhi and Indian miniatures and to their respective rulers more generally, but not to individual European collectors and agents of empire such as the Gayer-Anderson brothers who participated in a sexual and racialized economy while in service.

A. Collecting during imperialism

The Gayer-Anderson brothers, identical twins, were active collectors of Indian paintings throughout their military careers as British army officers in India and Cairo from roughly 1911 to 1952 and throughout their retirement in England, where they would undertake "antique crawls."[4] Colonel Thomas Gayer-Anderson, C.M.G., D.S.O., served in the Boer War in 1900–02, was in Egypt from 1911 to 1914, and was in Pune, India, from 1926 to 1930. Thomas collected the bulk of the twin's collection Indian paintings and drawings during this time period of 1927 to 1930. He travelled to Udaipur, Jaipur, Ajmer, and Puna to gather paintings.[5] His brother, Major Robert Grenville Gayer-Anderson, had a long military and medical career in Egypt. While there, he assembled a collection of Indian paintings and Egyptian and Chinese objects, some of which

[4] Norman Sören Lynravn, "Indian Art: The Gayer-Anderson Gift to the National Library," *Meanjin* 14, no. 1 (1955), 85. Victoria and Albert Museum, Gayer Anderson V&A catalogue, Foreword, iv.
[5] V&A Gayer-Anderson V&A catalogue, 13.

remain in Egypt today in Cairo's Gayer-Anderson Pasha Museum.[6] In 1943, King Farouk of Egypt bestowed the title of Pasha on Robert, which is reflected in the name of his museum.[7]

Fig. 6.2. Thomas Gayer-Anderson with his beloved cat Zookie in 1948.[8]

For all of their art donations to major international museums, the Gayer-Andersons as collectors have been understudied and are rarely mentioned in South Asian art historical scholarship. The brothers began collecting Indian and Persianate painting while in Cairo. The collection started with a modest dozen paintings. By the time of their deaths, in the 1950s, it had burgeoned to six hundred and fifty.[9] The brothers' personalities were central to their collection and their collecting practices. They believed their collection to embody the concept of "twinning," a turn of phrase they coined to demonstrate that they were a cohesive unit with shared interests in animals, erotica, and love poems.[10] Even though the two brothers collected in different countries and in different moments, they argued that they shared a similar aesthetic taste, which created cohesiveness across their collection. Robert wrote that their "tastes in most intellectual and all sensuous matters were and always had been identical."[11] They regularly imparted an anecdote to reinforce their alleged aesthetic bond, recounting how one of the brothers had bought an "androgynous Greek sculpture of Aphrodite" while the other, in another

[6] NAA 705409, T. G. Gayer-Anderson, "The Gayer-Anderson Hostel for Art Students, Lavenham (Suffolk): A Short History and Guide in Two Parts," (1956), folio 11.
[7] Nicholas Warner, *Guide to the Gayer-Anderson Museum Cairo* (Cairo: Minsitry of Culture, Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2003).
[8] Bodleian Library (BLOU), Mss. Eng. Misc c.846, Ms. Res. b.44, *Childish Nudes*, vol. 1, no.7, folio 1v. Zookie died in 1955 at the age of seventeen.
[9] Victoria and Albert Museum, Gayer-Anderson V&A catalogue, Foreword, iii; NAA A2910, 430/5/135 Part 1, March 16, 1954, folios 62, 65. Transcript of BBC talk with Gayer-Anderson.
[10] NAA A2910, 430/5/135 Part 1, folio 63. Moreover, on that same folio, Gayer-Anderson remarks that "identical twins to all intents and purposes are two halves of the same being and that, for some mysterious reason, they are liable to experience amazingly similar happenings throughout their lives even when separated by great distances." Bill Hamilton, in "A Stream of Stories: Indian Miniatures from the National Gallery of Australia: The Gayer-Anderson Collection," *ArtonView* 13 (Autumn 1998), defines twinning thus: "They were intensely conscious of their relationship and thought of themselves as a unity: thus they were able to acquire miniatures independently yet build and hold the collection in common with untroubled unanimity." National Gallery of Australia, "Paper Conservation," accessed Nov. 1, 2016, http://nga.gov.au/conservation/Paper/IndianMiniatures.cfm.
[11] Foxcroft, *Gayer-Anderson: Life and Afterlife,* 211.

part of the world, was buying that same sculpture's missing "foot."[12] This story shows their felicitous unity in the realm of aesthetics: they were able to procure objects from opposite ends of the earth and still derive objects that were visually related. Moreover, this narrative shows their preoccupation with sexualized objects such as sculptures of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. They would later donate a number of these "twinning" objects to the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Wellcome Collection, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, the Bodleian Library, and the Canberra Museum in Australia.

In many ways, the Gayer-Andersons are representative of many of the active collectors during the British Raj. They functioned during a time with few international legal restrictions that would have prevented the export of Indian objects and paintings. Thomas, like many collectors before him, adopted a moralizing language to justify his collection. He stated that he rescued Indian paintings from disrepute:

> [Indian] drawings seem never to have been much considered by their Indian owners and few are to be found in most collections. The sellers I met in India would not even have brought them to me had I not asked them to do so. I also routed out many drawings from the neglected leavings in the houses of artists of former generations. . . . As a rule, they were in very bad condition and required such careful first aid attention. . . . The result is that this collection is particularly rich in drawings, mostly from Rajputana.[13]

Much like the rhetoric of the British Empire, Thomas argued that he operated in the spirit of education and salvation. He felt that his native informants were neglectful and ignorant of the worth of Indian art. To remedy this, both brothers would later institutionalize and thus canonize Indian painting as an art form by donating Indian objects to European and British museums. Through such practices, they permanently removed Indian aesthetic objects from native hands.

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[12] BL National Life Stories Audio Collection, C466/101/08 F8795B. In the transcript of the audio recording, it appears on page 168.
[13] NAA A3211, 1960/2488 Part 3, 1955, folio 8; NAA A2910, 430/5/135 Part 1, March 16, 1954, folio 62. Transcript of BBC talk with Gayer-Anderson.

The power dynamics involved in collecting Indian painting are similar to those of imperialism.[14] As explored by other scholars, the British exerted their imperial power through the armchair activity of art education and art collecting. Similarly, Thomas explicitly makes this link between empire and collecting, placing him, his brother, and their collection in dialogue with British politics:

> Though few determining dates or places are recorded throughout the voluminous "literary remains," on which these works are based, it may be taken that most were written between the years 1900 and 1935, a period that saw our supreme achievement of Empire, cultivating in a structure seemingly so vast and secure as to be "built for time," that none the less was taken to its very foundation by the four years war of 1914 to 1918, from the after effects of which it, as the world in general, had hardly recovered where the whole of our tottering civilization is again plunged, into chaos, by the present appalling conflict.[15]

Thomas viewed his "doodles," sketches, and his Indian painting as part of his imperial duty to educate others. He, like his brother, felt that his native informants and dealers were ignorant of an image's worth. For the sake of the public good, Thomas needed to educate them about Indian culture and arts. Across the landscape of wars and conflicts, he continued to champion the arts as a bridge between imperial powers and their colonies.

Beyond monetary value, the Gayer Andersons argued that they collected objects based on the premise of artistic merit.[16] N. S. Lynravn, a liaison officer in London for the Commonwealth National Library in Canberra in 1955, wrote a short catalogue on their Indian painting collection, stating that "drawings on their own merit seem to have had a special fascination for the Colonel

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[14] Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 76–105.

[15] BLOU Ms Eng Post. d. 242, Ms Res. d. 369, folio 352.

[16] R. G. Gayer-Anderson operated in a similar manner to T. Gayer-Anderson. He argued that he salvaged paintings, what he termed "beauty in distress." His brother explains: "In these curious cases he [R. G. Gayer-Anderson] would seem to have been directed by a paranormal influence to some lovely antique object 'in distress' on account of neglect or of not being appreciated, or of being in danger of destruction. In each such instance he experienced what he has described as a 'meant feeling.'" NA 705409, "The Gayer-Anderson Hostel for Art Students," 1956, folio 32. See also Victoria and Albert Museum, Gayer-Anderson V&A catalogue, Foreword, vii: "I have derived an immense amount of pleasure, long drawn out, from collecting, first aiding, sorting, mounting, and looking at these paintings and drawings; a pleasure often shared with my twin brother."

[Thomas]."[17] During the opening of the brothers' exhibition of Indian painting in London a year earlier, Lynravn had again stated that both brothers "loved and revered art purely for its own sake."[18]

Because of the advantages of late imperialism, the Gayer-Anderson brothers had the ability to collect art objects from British colonies. Robert was considered an Egyptologist and scoured Cairo's fresh digs for antiquities.[19] For his Egypt collection, Robert had the luxury of urban proximity and was able to collect small objects such as sculptures at his leisure from countless dealers.[20] For their Indian collection, however, the brothers collected mostly miniature paintings, the form of which allowed them to buy and collect without having to worry about transportation costs, a gnawing concern for them with their Egyptian objects. This was undoubtedly a worry for Thomas as he collected his paintings in India while traveling the area, whereas Robert had a permanent home in Cairo. Robert and Thomas also bought Indian paintings in Egypt, and dealers in Cairo, too, might have preferred painting to sculpture because of its transportability. Moreover, representation in miniature painting in South Asia and especially in British-populated cities in India shifted a great deal toward realism in a style known as "Company style." As such, the genre of miniature painting was now better able to capture the brothers' interest in young boys, with the form accommodating portraits of children being brought to life.

[17] NAA A3211, 1960/2488 Part 3, 1955, folio 8.
[18] NAA A2910, 430/5/135 Part 2, folio 139.
[19] Nicholas Warner, "Collecting for Eternity: RG Gayer-Anderson and the Egyptian Museum in Stockholm," (Gothenburg: Världskulturmuseerna National Museums of World Culture, 2016), 22.
[20] Salima Ikram, "Pasha's Pleasures: R. G. Gayer-Anderson and his Pharaonic Collection in Cairo," in *Offerings to the Discerning Eye: An Egyptological Medley in Honor of Jack A. Josephson*, ed. Sue D'Auria (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 177–85. With the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, there was a resurgence in global interest in Egyptian portable wares.

B. Twinning erotica in image and text

Thomas and Robert's relationship with India has been viewed as one of artistic appreciation much like how many British imperial officers valorized Indic culture. This perspective has eclipsed discussion of their sexual desires, which play an important role in their conception of India and their collection of Indian art. I argue, moreover, that discussing their collecting practices in concert with their desires is crucial to analyzing the history of European collecting in India. It helps us unpack the ways in which the eroticization of race, art, and imperialism are linked.[21] To untangle these threads, I discuss Thomas and Robert's Indian painting collection, which was donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum, and their sketches and poems, which are currently housed in the Bodleian Library. Together in all of these art forms, the brothers eroticized India as an exotic place. They were allowed to do so, at least in part, because of the structures of British imperial power.

The twins collected objects that reflected their own personal interests such as literature, sketches, and erotica. Robert was a writer and penned *Legends of the Bait al-Kretliya* before his death in Lavenham in 1945.[22] Extending from their love of books, Robert and Thomas collected Persian manuscripts such as Firdausi's *Shahnama*.[23] The brothers even quoted from Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, a thirteenth-century Persian poet—"Be drunk in love for love is all that exists"—to explain conceits in their own love poetry.[24] In their day-to-day affairs, Thomas drew more often than his brother, and Robert more often wrote poems. They favored their respective medias to express their love for children, India, and animals.

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[21] Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).
[22] Sulaiman al-Kretli and Robert Grenville Gayer-Anderson, *Legends of the Bait al-Kretliya* (Ipswich: East Anglian Daily Times, 1951). Before he begins his narrative in *Legends of the Bait al-Kretliya*, R. G. Gayer-Anderson opens on his life in Egypt.
[23] J. Arberry, *A Second Supplementary Hand-List of the Muhammadan Manuscripts in the University and Colleges of Cambridge* (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), 28–30. Manuscript numbers: Or. 1354(15) and Or. 1356(10).
[24] BLOU Ms. Eng Poet d.240, Papers of T. G. and R. G. Gayer-Anderson, *Obsessions*, folio 17.

Both brothers favored the underdrawings of Indian paintings and sketches because they were reminiscent of their own drawings.[25] In their donation to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1952, over a third of the items were sketches and unfinished miniature paintings. Figure 3 was among the works donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is an ink drawing completed with a brush on paper. The native artist rendered the figure's hand multiple times in an effort to perfect the drawing, giving the drawing an overall transitory and unfinished quality. These multiple strokes give the image a masturbatory appearance. The Indian artist of figure 3 may have been influenced by chronophotography, an early stage of photography that captures multiple movements. Copies of Eadweard Muybridge's photographs, which show naked young boys and men jumping and playing, could have made their way to the subcontinent. Since chronophotography was popular in the 1860s and onward, the dating of the miniature would have to be moved to a later date than its current designation of the 1820s. Figure 3 also encapsulates the brothers' preference for drawings of nude individuals, as the figure's flaccid penis is clearly visible in the composition. While the style of the drawing is of interest, so is the subject matter. Thomas himself, in 1954, argued that it was the human element and form of Indian painting that captivated his interest, stating: "I have my favorites [of Indian pictures]. They are chosen entirely for their artistic and human appeal to me."[26] In figure 3, the fleeting nature of the medium of drawing reinforces the subject's "human" element: the multiple brushstrokes enhance the idea of movement as if the figure were really a person in the world and not merely a static representation.

[25] N. S. Lynravn, "Indian Art: The Gayer-Anderson Gift to the National Library," *Meanjin* 14, no. 1 (1955), 85. Narmada Prasad Upadhyaya writes, "Being a practicing artist himself the colonel has special interest in Indian drawings, regarding them as an indispensable clue to technique," as quoted in "Indian Miniature," accessed March 12, 2014, http://www.indianminiature.org/gayer-anderson-collection.html.
[26] NAA A2910, 430/5/135 Part 1, March 16, 1954, folio 66. Transcript of BBC talk with Gayer-Anderson.

Fig. 6.3. *Drawing*
Rajasthan, India. c. 1820
V&A IS.530-1952

Fig. 6.4. BLOU Mss. Eng. Misc b.398, *Childish nudes*, volume 2, no. 8
"Doodle," folio 26

This human appeal is visibly present in Thomas's own sketches, which were bound in fourteen volumes and which he labeled as "doodles." Each volume has approximately fifty-seven leaves of drawings, watercolors, and poetry.[27] They are bound in grey cloth with gold lettering on their covers, with titles such as *Obsessions*. Four of these fourteen volumes were exclusively dedicated to the subject of "child nudes." The "doodle" sketches contain images of nude boys bathing, playing sports, and in various amorous states, such as kissing and engaging in sexual intercourse. The "doodle" images consistently sexualize infants.[28] Beyond the human form, Thomas and Robert sketched fantastical drawings of human and animal hybrids.

Thomas sketched hundreds of drawings of nude children and fantastical creatures. He termed his drawings "doodles" in a move to suggest they were spontaneous creations. Thomas wrote that his "doodles" arose at night right before he would sleep, stating, "Towards the end of the 1914 to 1918 (World War I), I formed the habit of fooling at night in bed instead of reading, to pass sleepless hours and I kept up the habit ever since."[29] This is contrary to documentary evidence, which details how both Thomas and Robert sketched real children during daylight. These drawings were not happenstance. Thomas took pains to preserve his drawings and would revisit them to either fill in their stories or color them with watercolors. He freely admitted that he would return to his drawings, stating that he would provide titles for them a while after he

[27] Mary Clapinson, *Summary Catalogue of Post-Medieval Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford, Vol.1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 483.
[28] BLOU Mss. Eng. Misc b.396, *Virginibus Puerisque,* vol. 3, folio 9.
[29] BLOU Mss. Eng. Misc b.404, He/She scrapbook.

completed them.[30] Thomas employed the term "doodle" and excluded information on live models when describing his sketches to suggest that his drawings were ephemeral. I retain the term "doodle" for his sketches because that is his preferred term throughout their correspondences, though the term masks the physical and emotional labor that the brothers undertook in toiling over their sketches and poems. These "doodles" were premeditated. They were not "scribbled aimlessly" without any regard to subject matter, as they quipped, but stemmed from their larger interests in children, animals, and sexual expression.[31]

The Gayer Andersons desired paintings that would inspire their own work. Figure 4 is one such drawing culled from one of their sketch volumes, which showcases prepubescent boys in various stages of undress. The boy at the bottom of the folio echoes the body posture of the native man in the Indian painting of figure 3. This is not mere coincidence. Thomas sketched figure 4 abroad while he was collecting Indian miniatures.[32] Besides drawing from real-life inspiration, Thomas regularly borrowed compositions for his nude drawings from newspaper clippings and book illustrations.[33] As such, Thomas could have easily drawn figure 4 after he collected the Indian drawing of figure 3. In this manner, the brothers' penchant for erotica and child nudes affected which Indian drawings and paintings they collected.

Fig. 6.5. Bodleian Library Mss. Eng. misc b.396, *Virginibus Puerisque*, vol. 3, folio 45

There were methodological operations to Thomas's "doodles." In figure 5, completed in 1942, Thomas provides a newspaper clipping that was source of his drawing's "inspiration." He uses that exact term on the bottom of the newspaper clipping. In his "doodle" album, the newspaper excerpt and his drawing lie side by side. From the newspaper composition, Thomas

[30] BLOU Mss. Eng. misc. b.394 and Ms. Res.b.38, *Virginibus Puerisque*, vol. 1, Foreword.
[31] BLOU Mss. Eng. misc. b.394 and Ms. Res.b.38, *Virginibus Puerisque*, vol. 1, Foreword.
[32] Ibid.
[33] BLOU Mss. Eng. misc b.396, *Virginibus Puerisque,* vol. 3, folio 45; Mss. Eng. misc b.395, *Virginibus Puerisque,* vol. 2, folio 1.

most strikingly removes all the boys' clothes. No longer are the boys garbed in full suits. Instead, Thomas draws the boys completely nude with semi-erect members that were meant to echo the phallic nature of the trumpets they play. His less visible insertions are the addition of a fourth young boy, curling their hair, making them all angels with wings, and placing a dog in the background. In a sense, by transforming the boys into angels, he justifies their nudity as one that is divinely inspired. On the bottom corner of figure 5, he states that it was "not a doodle but derived" since he did not draw it spontaneously as he did his other drawings. In another doodle, however, the same process occurs. Thomas juxtaposes a picture of two children that was culled from a book or newspaper and redraws them with no clothing.[34] He does not state that this drawing was not a "doodle." In another of his "doodle" drawings, two naked women of African American descent huddle next to their nude son, whose penis is clearly visible. Thomas writes that his drawing "was suggested by an illustration in a book."[35] These do not seem to be outliers but a systemic pattern in his drawings. Thus, once again the term "doodle" masks the labor-intensive process of Thomas's drawings. Moreover, such inspiration from books makes one wonder if their Indian paintings did indeed influence Thomas's drawings and Robert's poems.

It was not only Thomas who was invested in erotica. Robert as well discusses similar erotic themes in his writings. When explaining his collection of "doodles," Thomas describes how his images dovetail with his brother's texts, producing "twinly affinities."[36] He continues that although they are of "different media," one of poetry and the other pictorial "doodles," both forms reveal their identical thought processes. Thomas's voice reverberates more loudly in this chapter since Robert died in 1945, leaving Thomas to write letters and justifications for their

[34] BLOU Mss. Eng. Misc b.399: *Childish Nudes*, vol. 3, no. 9, folio 30.
[35] BLOU Mss. Eng. misc b.395, *Virginibus Puerisque*, vol. 2, folio 1.
[36] BLOU JMB/ JAJ Gayer-Anderson, Nov. 14, 1956. Letter from Colonel T.G. Gayer-Anderson to the Bodleian staff.

collection. Both brothers, however, had an equal hand in erotics. Robert would even mark Thomas's drawings, writing in the corner "lls."[37] At first, Thomas professes that he kept his doodling a "secret" from Robert since it was a "vice." He opened up about his passion when he "discovered" that Robert "had been acting" in much the similar manner "with rhymes and poems (some serious, some amusing, some even improper!)."[38] They decided to prevent a "general reading" public from gaining access to their work. Both allege that they write and doodle only at night. Robert even considered his poems "verbal doodles" to show his connection to his brother's drawings.[39] Furthering their twin-ness, Thomas illustrated a volume of Robert's poems. In terms of the subject matter, the two medias do correlate. Thomas states as much: "The subjects of many of my drawings are much the same as those of my twin's poems, influenced in both cases by our shared love of animals and children." While the twinning of text and image occurs in their private hobbies, their shared interests spill over into their collection of Indian painting, which further shows the "intellectual bond" that exists in "'identical' twins" across aesthetics and their sexuality.[40]

In their scrapbooks, Robert affirms the connection between his art collection and his sexual desires by writing amatory poetry on the subject.[41] He devotes a whole volume to the exploits of Antinous, the Greek lover of the Roman emperor Hadrian in first century AD, to show how this story had an "indirect bearing" on "modern sexual ethics." He describes Antinous

[37] BLOU Mss. Eng. misc. b.394 and Ms. Res.b.38, *Virginibus Puerisque*, vol. 1, Foreword.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Gayer-Anderson also links his drawings to ideals of love, and he quotes from Plato, Leonardo da Vinci, John Keats, and Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī. BLOU Ms. Eng Poet d.240, Papers of T. G. and R. G. Gayer-Anderson, *Obsessions*, folio 17.

as a "homoerotic" and "erotic" narrative.[42] A poem in one of their volumes titled *Obsession* further delineates the relationship between their art and erotica:

"To a Pock Marked Child"
Though scarred yet your dear blemished face
Is fair as antique statues are
That Time, from their smooth loveliness
Hath kissed to something lovelier.[43]

In the above composition, "To a Pock Marked Child," Robert finds the beauty of a child to be akin to that of antique statues. It is not surprising, then, that the brothers collected antique statues of nude figures. Robert writes that his sentiments on sex affected how he encountered art:

"Art and sex"
Where can one draw the line in art
Between the belly and the heart?
Between the soul and sexual part?
By decency compelled
I don't know, I cannot guess
Although I've felt, I must confess
Some picture strike below the belt
Inspired by their wantonness.[44]

In this poem, Robert clearly indicates that his sexual attraction toward the motifs in paintings and art objects affected what he purchased. As collectors of Indian painting and Avadhi art, the Gayer-Andersons in their poems and their language remind us that paintings are collected not only because of their "own merit" of style, but also because of the collector's sexual desires.

Like Thomas, Robert concealed his poetry from a public audience, fearing its reception. He remarked that some of his poems were "unprintable," "impossible," "unspeakable." He also categorized his works as "'first,' 'second' and 'third' degree" to show that, as in a "police-court," these image would be judged by the extent to which they flouted norms. For some verses, Robert

[42] BLOU Eng d.241, folios 20–56.
[43] BLOU Ms. Eng Poet d.240, Papers of T. G. and R. G. Gayer-Anderson, *Obsessions*, folio 74.
[44] BLOU Eng. Poet d.236, Ms. Res. d. 363, folio 131.

applied the descriptor of "frightfulness" or "naughtiness."[45]

Even as Robert and Thomas attest to the secrecy of their poetry and drawings, they also sought to cultivate parallels with other litterateurs. Thomas states that the tone of Robert's poetry "as well as his occasional illustrations" was "surrealist in feeling, for with this morbidly, imaginative and introspective clique, that had taken to itself such old friends of his as Van Boche, Lewis Carroll, and Edward Lear," who had "a strong sympathy."[46] Neither Thomas nor Robert had a relationship with these writers or operated in the same cultural milieu. Rather, they used these writers to show their literary and visual sensibilities. For instance, Edward Lear (1812–1888), who died a few years after the Gayer-Anderson brothers were born, popularized a genre known as "literary nonsense" that consists of drawings and poems meant to subvert logical thinking. For Thomas and Robert, Lear's poems are conceptually similar to their own work. Lear was also sexually attracted to men. In another example, Lewis Carroll (1832–1898), who wrote wordplays and fantastical adventures, was interested in sexualizing children. With Carroll, Thomas and Robert draw a correlation between art expression and sexual predilections. Their closest relationship with artists was with Humphrey Spender (1910–2005), a British painter and photographer, and his brother Stephen Spender (1909–1995), a poet. Both the Spender brothers were aware of the Gayer-Andersons' sexual preferences, branding them as "homosexuals."[47]

While Thomas and Robert might have exaggerated their artistic sensibilities with other writers, they were not outcasts. Robert met with Swedish royal Gustaf VI Adolf (1882–1973) in the 1930s to help him acquire Egyptian antiquities.[48] Because Robert and Thomas had amassed a large collection of objects from the Global South, museum personnel and collectors sought their

[45] BLOU Eng Poet d.234, Appendix, folio 181.
[46] Ibid., 184.
[47] BL National Life Stories Audio Collection, C466/101/08 F8795A. In the transcription for the audio recording, it is on page 157.
[48] Nicholas Warner, "Collecting for Eternity," 18.

assistance. Thomas and Robert's poems and drawings may not qualify as high art, but they continued to find others who shared their interest in collecting and in sexual practices deemed abnormal by British Victorian society.

Thomas merged their love for drawings and poems in a manuscript *He/She*. Though Thomas wrote and illustrated much of *He/She*, his brother was aware of its production. The book was dedicated to Robert, who helped translate the Greek poems found throughout. Completed in 1941, *He/She* is a story about child who is sexed both male and female. The child is not merely an intersex individual; Thomas conceived of a child born "bi-sexed" who was joined like "Siamese twins" at its shoulder blade.[49] The child had fully functioning male and female bodies with a single head. Like his "doodle" albums, *He/She* is arranged like a "souvenir book." The story is part biography and part fantasy. In terms of autobiography, there is a character, Morgy, who is a physician and oversees the character He/She's health. He/She confesses that it has loved only Morgy throughout its life, and Morgy has also been sexually attracted to He/She even when it was a child. The rest of the book weaves together different aspects of Thomas's sexual fantasies. Half of the world falls in love with He/She, and many are sexually attracted to it. Aided by its personal magnetism, He/She creates a religion called "he/sheism" that has a "broadminded attitude toward sex-companionships and sex-unions of all sorts which are outside the permanent relationship of marriage (a man made institution!)."[50] The manuscript moves to greater degrees of sexual perversion. Throughout the book, He/She has sex with itself and even has an "auto-pregnancy" at age ten.[51]

Thomas and Robert's drawings and poems may seem divorced from their collecting practices. On closer inspection, however, their fantasies expressed pictorially and textually are

[49] BLOU Mss. Eng. misc b.404, *He/She scrapbook*, folio 9.
[50] Ibid., folio 32e.
[51] Ibid., folios 84–103.

related to their collection and grounded in the material world the brothers inhabited. For instance, in *He/She*, the titular character at the age of sixteen decides to embark on a sexual relationship with an Indian raja. The raga character is not provided with a name; instead he stands as a caricature of India. In the story, the anonymous raja wants He/She to join his harem of fourteen-year-old girls. The raja is impotent, however, and once He/She acquiesces he derives pleasure from observing his harem girls sleeping with He/She.[52] Thomas imagines India as an exotic place where local rulers are unable to sexually gratify their partners, which was a myth perpetuated by British officers like the Gayer-Anderson brothers to discredit Indian sovereignty. Therefore, the brothers' projects of drawings and poems were correlated to their Indian painting collection in terms of the men's access to power to collect these objects and in that in both formats they continued to comment on the sexuality of India and its people.

C. Twinning children and animals

Fig. 6.6. BLOU Mss. Eng. misc d.1248, Ms. Res.b42, *Queer Animals*, vol. 1, no. 7 "Doodle," folio 4

The brothers were interested in conjoining humans and animals both in their verbal and pictorial "doodles" and in their Indian miniature painting. For instance, in figure 5, Thomas elaborated on a newspaper clipping by removing the children's clothes and adding a dog to the scene. This was not an isolated incident. Two out of Thomas's fourteen "doodle" scrapbooks were labeled as containing "queer animals." This conjunction of humans and animals was part of the brothers' obsession with "twinning," which as a term was meant to encapsulate how they were in sync with one another but in actuality came to stand for the entanglement of their sexual desires.

[52] Ibid., 124a.

Thomas was very clear in his writings that with the appearance of children he wanted animals. He states that:

> The most usual subjects of my doodles have been children and animals (real or imaginary) and I suppose that this choice is due to my always having found children, be they boys or girls—dark or fair—naked or clothed, between the ages of three and thirteen years, to be the most *delectable*, lovely and humorously delightful to look upon of all God's creatures: And of course where there are children, there must be animals.[53]

Figure 6 is one such drawing. It attests to Thomas's fetish for prepubescent children and bestiality. In the image, one cat explicitly licks a boy's genitals. The cats seem to envelop the young boy as they scratch, cuddle, and fondle his genitals.

As a subject matter, animals are represented in the brothers' collection of Indian miniature painting. In their donation to the Victoria and Albert Museum, many of the drawings feature animals, mainly elephants. Take for instance figure 7, which depicts a lone woman on a rock next to eight swimming elephants. Thomas or Robert collected the image because of its aesthetic sensibilities and also because the composition features a nude individual of Indian descent with animals. Her bare breasts may have been the feature that drew the brothers to the miniature. Take another example from Thomas's "doodle" drawings, figure 8, which shows prepubescent boys from India bathing an elephant. Unlike in the drawing of the boys with the cats, figure 6, here the elephant is not voluntarily sexually gratifying the young boys. Instead, one of the boys slides his genitals on the elephant's truck, seemingly for sexual pleasure. Figure 7 differs greatly from figure 8 in terms of composition, style, and material production. They do dovetail in basic elements of composition: nudity, racialized bodies, and animals, a subject which occupied both the Gayer-Andersons enough to draw hundreds of images and to collect the subject matter in miniature paintings.

[53] BLOU Mss. Eng. misc b.404, *He/She* scrapbook, folio iii.

Fig. 6.7. *Painting*
Deccan, India. c. 1780
V&A IS.207-1953

Fig. 6.8. BLOU Mss. Eng. Misc. d.1249, *Queer animals*, vol. 2
"Doodle," folio 26

Besides the ease of transportation that individual Indian miniatures afforded the brothers compared to whole albums, the format also suited the Gayer-Andersons' ends because it allowed them to select the miniatures that spoke to their specific desire for children. Thomas wrote, "There are, I regret to say, very few appearances of children amongst these [Indian] pictures and sketches and this I find hard to explain for I have always understood that the Indians are a child loving people—but perhaps this is not so?"[54] Thomas was so entranced by the subject of children in his Indian paintings that he created a separate category for them in a catalogue, writing that he had collected "8 drawings, 1 pricks, 9 tot of children."[55] Figure 9 is one of these eight Indian drawings, completed by an Indian artisan, depicting a young boy. It seems to be the portrait of a European boy, a rare subject indeed in Indian painting. Outside of figure 9, Thomas mentioned that one of his "special favorite Indian paintings" was a prick on paper that has "[a] saint and a god in a garden with children. The children are so delightfully drawn and grouped . . . and it is the only Indian drawing I have ever come across which shows every day crawl in the dust children."[56] This miniature, to which Thomas described in such detail does depict two children crawling on the ground. One of those children is naked below the wait, with his buttocks exposed.[57]

Fig. 6.9. *Painting of European Youth*
Rajasthan, India
V&A IS.233-1952

[54] Victoria and Albert Museum, Gayer-Anderson V&A catalogue, Foreword, iv.
[55] Prick in this case is not a sexual innuendo but refers to *charbas*, which were sketches with perforated holes so that local artists could transfer drawings to other manuscripts.
[56] Ibid., 133.
[57] V&A IS.494-1952.

In another case study, the Gayer-Andersons gifted an Indian miniature, figure 10, to the Victoria and Albert Museum; the painting features two nude children embracing and was most likely copied from a European print of putti. It is unknown who commissioned this image or how exactly it would have functioned within an Indian miniature album. What is clear is that the sexual elements present in the composition of figure 10 are intensified by knowing that the Gayer-Andersons regularly sketched nude children. More directly, in Thomas and Robert's "doodles," nude children are featured as cupids and are sexualized.[58] In figure 11, Thomas sketched children as various cupids while in Cairo in 1938, either before or after he collected the Indian miniature of putti (fig. 10). He labels each cupid in figure 11, such as "naughty cupid bears his bow." For the crouched boy with his phallus exposed on the middle left-hand side of the "doodle," he captions him as "cupid's morning meditation." In light of such folios, one can conclude that for the Gayer-Andersons, Indian miniatures such as that depicting the two cupids in an embrace would have appeared more sexual than playful.

Fig. 6.10. *Sketch*
Early 19th century. Rajasthan, India
V&A IS.475-1952

Fig. 6.11. BLOU *Virginibus Puersique*, vol. 1
"Doodle," folio 52

Not only did collectors such as the Gayer-Andersons act rationally, but their desires and emotions for children and animals preoccupied them and drove their collections. Ann Laura Stoler argues that "durable sentiments," or affective attachments, were pervasive forces in Dutch colonial authority.[59] In a bold affirmation of Stoler's remarks, Thomas describes his emotional attachment to his paintings during his imperial service:

[58] BLOU MSS. Eng. misc. b. 394, Ms. Res.b.38, *Virginibus Puerisque*, vol. 1, folio 52; Mss. Eng. Misc b.395, *Virginibus Puerisque,* vol. 2, folios 35, 36; Mss. Eng. misc b.396, *Virginibus Puerisque,* vol. 3, folios 14, 46.
[59] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2009).

> I have indeed become very attached to those Indian pictures each one of which I have sought out, tended, mounted and loved but I have no pangs at parting with them. I am proud and gratified that Australia has accepted them and it makes me happy to feel that they are now permanently placed where they will always be cared for, loved and studied and where they give pleasure for all time. . . . [S]o far as pangs are concerned I fancy I feel very much as a mother does when she has successfully married off her daughters.[60]

Thomas imagined his relationship to his paintings as being analogous to the love of a mother for her daughters, which as a metaphor is mobilized to suggest intimacy. He "loved" and "tended" to his inanimate paintings, which to him were made hyper-real through a language of sexual desire and filial piety. These sensibilities constituted and shaped his collecting practices. Before Thomas's death on June 10, 1960, N. S. Lynravn, who worked with Thomas on his painting donation to Australia, provided the same filial correlation, stating: "Gayer-Anderson is a very fine and generous person, but if he has any weakness it is vanity for recognition, and for ensuring that the name of Gayer-Anderson is perpetuated. As he has no children its perpetuation can only be by museums, sections of museums and galleries or collections being named for him."[61]

Studying Thomas and Robert's love for children and animals brings their durable sentiments and attachments to aesthetic objects to the surface. The paintings they collected mirrored their sexual and social desires. The Gayer-Andersons' collection serves as a window onto how other imperial officers and colonial collectors' would have had similar emotional and desirous affections that shaped their collections. The history of the Gayer-Andersons raises questions: How many other collectors from the colonial era up to the present day have conceived of the visual lexicon of their painting collections as an extension of their sexual desires? How many have been sexually attracted to Indian paintings?

[60] NAA A2910, 430/5/135 Part 1, March 16, 1954, folio 65. Transcript of BBC talk with Gayer-Anderson.
[61] NAA A3211, 1960/2488, Part 3, March 12, 1956, folio 24, N.S. Lynravn writing to H.L. White.

D. Twinning at home and abroad

Both brothers were sexually attracted to young boys. In the case of Robert, his relationships with his young servants in Cairo are well documented.[62] His brother Thomas's sexual entanglements are less well known. Given that he wrote that he found "boys or girls, dark or fair, naked or clothed, between the ages of about three and thirteen years to be the most delectable,"[63] it is safe assume that Thomas, at least in his imagination, was sexually fascinated by children. Both at home and abroad, in their imperial positions in Cairo and in India and in their quotidian life in England, the brothers preyed on and sought relationships with young children. As a result, issues of race and class surrounding the brother's sexuality comes to the fore.

While the brothers were living in their house in Suffolk, England, in the late 1920s, they drew local children in the nude. Humphrey Spender, who was an artist and their friend and neighbor, wrote of this activity, stating that "all the little boys in the village were asked to pose for drawings." Thomas, he noted, "simply suggested that it would be nice if they took their clothes off and he'd like them to sit there and keep quite still and so on. Well, nowadays any mother of any of those children would have been immediately suspicious and simply accused him of child abuse."[64] Humphrey Spender did not harshly criticize the Gayer-Anderson brothers since his own brother, Stephen Spender, also had an affinity for boys.[65] Later, Humphrey served as Thomas's "artistic executor" after Thomas's death.[66] Contrary to the Gayer-Anderson brothers' assertion that their "doodles" were drawn from their imagination, Humphrey claims that the

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[62] Foxcroft, *Gayer-Anderson: Life and Afterlife,* 133–134, 169, and 171.
[63] BLOU Mss. Eng. Misc b.404, *He/She* manuscript, folio iii.
[64] BL National Life Stories Audio Collection, C466/101/08 F8795B. In the transcript of the audio recording, it appears on page 170.
[65] John Sutherland, *Stephen Spender: A Literary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 168; Stephen Spender, Lee Bartlett, and Christopher Isherwood, *Letters to Christopher: Stephen Spender's Letters to Christopher Isherwood 1929–1939* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1980), 66.
[66] BL National Life Stories Audio Collection, C466/101/08 F8795B, page 170.

brothers drew "semi-pornographic drawings" by soliciting village boys from Suffolk to pose in the nude.[67]

Clearly, the Gayer-Anderson brothers had opportunities in their Suffolk home to sexualize young boys. Nevertheless, their drawings began long before their retirement to England in the 1920s. Thomas wrote that he drew children in the nude from 1914 to 1918.[68] Thomas and Robert both continued to draw young boys with and without clothing until the late 1930s, when they took inspiration from six World War II evacuee boys who were placed in their home.[69] Because of the air raids during WWII, the British government instituted a program to evacuate children from London, which was being heavily bombed. When the Gayer-Andersons petitioned to house displaced children in their home in Suffolk, they specifically asked the British government not to send any girls. All six of the boys they received were from the same district, Bethnal Green. Thomas repeatedly asked to paint these boys, but they demurred.[70] At this time, such practices were not widely socially accepted, and the brothers kept their activities mostly secret except for opening up to a few close friends. They locked up these drawings and "revealing photographs" of "little boys" in "cupboards" in their home.[71] Robert would return regularly to Cairo so that he could more openly indulge in his sexual predilections. In both geographical locations, Suffolk and Cairo alike, Thomas and Robert continually exploited lower-class boys. Regarding the neighborhood children they drew in the nude, the brothers remarked that the town of Lavenham was still "medieval" in its thinking, which resulted in two classes of people: "peasantry and gentry." They continued, stating that "the children of the peasantry

[67] Ibid.
[68] BLOU Eng, Misc. b.404, *He/She* manuscript, folio iii.
[69] NAA 705409, T. G. Gayer-Anderson, 1956, "The Gayer-Anderson Hostel for Art Students, Lavenham (Suffolk): A Short History and Guide in Two Parts," folio 37.
[70] Foxcroft, *Gayer-Anderson: Life and Afterlife,* 132 and 229–230. Foxcroft's source for this information seems to be the brothers' private letters, which are currently stored in their old Suffolk house.
[71] BL National Life Stories Audio Collection, C466/101/08 F8795B, page 170.

curtsied or touched their forelocks to the gentry and sometimes to motor-cars."[72] With such a mentality, these lower-class children were more willing to acquiesce and not question the Gayer-Andersons' position of power.

Through having the capital and a seat of power, the brothers were free to collect images of young boys for their Indian miniature painting collection. In the preface to a catalogue he compiled in 1952, Thomas touched on this lifelong interest in Indian painting: "With increased experience and knowledge," he wrote, "my preference for Indian paintings and drawings has become ever more marked and they now have for me an almost obsessive attraction and give me a subtle pleasure which I get from no other form of visual art!"[73] This obsessive attraction was linked to his sexual and paternal desires. He further stated, "[Indian painting] has produced in me a keen interest in Indian art and has therefore opened up a whole new source of gratification to my love of man made beauty and has caused me to appreciate not only her art but her people and their country."[74] Echoing these sentiments, Thomas in 1954 remarked, "I became keenly interested in it [Indian painting] over thirty years ago and it opened up to me a whole new and fascinating source of artistic pleasure. The creations of that wonderful land [India] give me a thrill which I get from no other form of art and fill me with gratitude to her lovable and gifted people."[75] As Thomas professes, the brothers derived gratification from these objects and were obsessed with them. With their Greek sculptures and Indian miniatures, the brothers could surround themselves with objects that indexed their desires without fear of retribution from their peers. Unlike the medium of photography, the medium of miniature painting allowed the

[72] NAA 705409, T. G. Gayer-Anderson, 1956, "The Gayer-Anderson Hostel for Art Students, Lavenham (Suffolk): A Short History and Guide in Two Parts," folio 19.
[73] Victoria and Albert Museum, Gayer-Anderson V&A catalogue, Foreword, i.
[74] NAA A2910, 430/5/135 part 1, March 16, 1954, folio 64-5. Transcript of a BBC talk with Gayer-Anderson.
[75] NAA A2910, 430/5/135 part 1, folio 60. Gayer-Anderson's remarks on the opening of the Australian house exhibition.

brothers to hide behind the label of nonrealism. A general public could not accuse them of engaging in illicit activity if these objects were nondocumentary, merely fantastical projections from native artists.

Fig. 6.12. *Drawing*
Late 19th century. Provenance: Unknown
V&A IS.468-1952

The Gayer-Anderson collection of Indian painting spans a wide range of styles including Avadhi, Mughal, and Rajput, with a strong array of rāgamālā paintings (paintings of musical modes). Regardless of style, these paintings are connected to the brothers' erotic "doodles" and their acts of pederasty made possible by empire. Thomas wrote, "In my collection moreover I have at times included works for a variety of reasons which may perhaps seem inconsequent; as for instance because they struck me puzzling, humorous, ingenious, or sociologically interesting."[76] Figure 12 is an Indian drawing from the Gayer-Andersons' Victoria and Albert collection, and shows a young Indian boy lightly sketched on paper by a native artist. This painting encapsulates Thomas and Robert's preoccupation with the "sociological" and the "human" element in their collection's visual program. Figure 12 is stylistically and compositionally reminiscent of the "doodles" that the twins drafted. When revisiting figure 12, one is struck by its uncanny visual kinship with their "doodles." Knowing that the brothers had a penchant for young boys, one wonders how this boy came to pose for a native artist. It was created most likely prior to the arrival of Thomas in India. Therefore, it was not Thomas who insisted that the young boy remove his shirt. Perhaps the native artist was completing a quick sketch as a proto-anthropological study of the lower castes of India, much like the eight-volume *The People of India* (1868–75). As a result, we may never know if the boy was much like the six

[76] Victoria and Albert Museum, Gayer-Anderson V&A catalogue, Foreword, iii.

WWII evacuees of the Gayer-Andersons' estate who were cajoled by the brothers to pose or if a local artist demanded that the boy pose in such a manner.

As collectors, Thomas and Robert left a rich archive with traces of their sexual and imperial desires for children embedded in their fourteen volumes of sketches and drawings. Pratapaditya Pal touches upon this issue of archival formation and passion, stating, "What such an archive lacks in order or completeness, however, it will make up for in traces of subjectivity and desire that otherwise would have been lost to the historical record. Instead, it partakes of what one of the editors of Benjamin's archive calls 'the passions of the collector.'"[77] With Pratapaditya Pal's words in mind, do we see a young boy in figure 12 or do we see the brothers' sexual passion for a young boy? Can we forget Thomas and Robert's pedophilia when viewing their Indian miniatures? If we chose to forget in order to preserve the so-called "authenticity" of the Indian miniature's meanings, then in the process we choose to forget about the power structures that allowed the image to be drawn, taken away to England, and preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Undergirding depictions such as figure 12 is the Gayer-Andersons' power to sexualize colonial subjects as white British officers of empire. British imperialism afforded its agents sexual opportunities that were not possible in their English communities.[78] In Britain, public condemnation of homosexuality coalesced around the Oscar Wilde trail in 1895, which resulted in British marginal figures fleeing to the colonies. While the Oscar Wilde trial is usually associated with the formation of a modern homosexual identity, it also resulted in those who identified as sexual minorities moving to geographical spaces with more lenient legal systems. In

[77] Pratapaditya Pal, *In Pursuit of the Past: Collecting Old Art in Modern India, circa 1875–1950* (Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2015), 30.
[78] Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990). For a generous critique of Hyam's book, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and Education*, 129.

the social circles that Gayer-Anderson brothers traversed, one of their friends stated that as a bisexual he feared legal recourse and blackmail in England.[79] If you lived in a close-knit community in England, there was paranoia that these social linkages could turn into extortion for deviating from the perceived social order. To safeguard themselves from accusation, those who did not identify as heterosexuals moved to remote locations where they could hold a position of command and were therefore able to suppress gossip about their sexual affairs. The Gayer-Anderson brothers reveal as much in their writings. In Thomas's manuscript of *He/She*, he explains how a sexually promiscuous bi-sexed individual, He/She, is able to negotiate condemnation from a general public and how eventually it is socially accepted by the entire global populace. In the novel, the guardians of He/She decide to move away from Britain so that they can be free from suspicion. They move to a remote and "barren" island in Italy, where they are able to set up their own governmental and legal structures to protect He/She and its sexual doctrine.[80] In the world that the Gayer-Anderson brothers inhabited, they did not have such extravagant financial opportunities. Nevertheless, in Cairo and in India they were able to amass more capital than they had prior to their departures and they were able obtain important governmental positions. In the 1910s in India, policies were in place to prevent male foreigners from engaging in sexual activities with local women. For the British Raj, there was a general panic of heterosexual sexual relations between English and natives, which they feared would spread sexual disease and racial impurities. While there was some anxiety over male-male bonds, there was less regulation and less oversight.

E. M. Forster, the well-known writer of *A Passage to India* (1924), is emblematic of this period. Leela Gandhi argued that E. M. Forster through his writings allowed for same-sex desire

[79] BL National Life Stories Audio Collection, C466/101/13 F8800A. In the audio transcript, it appears on page 268.
[80] BLOU Mss. Eng. Misc b.404, *He/She* scrapbook, folio 34a.

to have the radical potential to resist imperialism.[81] Different circuits of sociality and kinship, ones predicated on sexual alliance, allowed for a revolutionary reconfiguration of colonial forms of community. Gandhi's deference to Derrida's notion of hospitality promotes a utopian ideal of friendship that provides the antidote to colonial and imperial exclusionary social practices. Derrida's framework, however, also promotes hostility within friendship bonds. In the case of E. M. Forster, he engaged in sex with a low-caste boy who eventually lost his livelihood as a result of the affair.[82] Forster's sexual alliance with the boy was not outside of the prescribed social contracts of imperialism. He used his position of power to cultivate a friendship with the boy and to eventually engage in sexual acts.

The Gayer-Andersons deployed similar tactics to achieve sexual gratification. Their power as colonial officers was reaffirmed by their sexual relations. The images that the Gayer-Anderson brothers collected and savored put into sharp relief the destructive power of their sexuality, and how it concretized the inequalities present within social networks of imperialism.

One could claim that the brothers had an ambiguous relationship with imperial power since they were not themselves in a position to institute violent legal policies against Indian or Egyptian peoples. In accordance with Mary Louise Pratt's anti-conquest paradigm, officers might "declare innocence," but they are still implicated in the system of imperialism even during art surveys.[83] In the case of the Gayer-Andersons, two young men who served in Robert's Cairo household and were his sexual partners met a ghastly demise.[84] In the 1920s, anti-British animus

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[81] Leela Gandhi's argument rests on Edward Carpenter, but she also brings Forster into the conversation. *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 34–66.
[82] For a deeper account of E. M. Forster's sexuality, see: Robert K. Martin and George Piggford, eds., *Queer Forster* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Wendy Moffat, *A Great Unrecorded History: A New Life of E. M. Forster* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010). Forster seems to have sexually engaged with young boys only while in India.
[83] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 9.
[84] Foxcroft, *Gayer-Anderson: Life and Afterlife,* 177.

swelled in Cairo. Even after Egypt won its independence in 1922, unrest over the British presence continued. Because Robert remained in his Cairo home, some locals set out to murder him. The attempted murder went awry as Robert wasn't home, and they killed a young man in the house, Dovdah. In the summer of 1922, the second victim, Abd al Wahid, was killed and his body disposed of in a cave in the Muqattam Hills outside of Cairo. Abd al Wahid, at twenty-four, was older than Dovdah. His socks were labeled with the name Gayer-Anderson, so police officials were able to deduce that he was employed by Robert.[85] While Robert escaped harm, Sir Lee Stack Pasha, who was another British officer and governor-general of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, was murdered in in 1924 in a similar scheme to drive out British officers.[86] While these episodes seem a little salacious as the men were killed not merely out of their sexual involvement with Robert, this is not a case of a wrong-place-wrong-time situation. Other persons were not harmed in Robert's employ because Abd al Wahid and Dovdah were ever present in Robert's household and defended Robert perhaps out of a sense of affective loyalty spurred by their sexual intimacies. A regular cook or house cleaner may not have been as attached to Robert and would have let the murderers into the household. Of course, not all of Robert's sexual entanglements resulted in bloodshed. Nevertheless, it is clear that, like E. M. Forster, the brothers used imperial spaces to have sexual relations with young boys of low class standing. The Gayer-Andersons might have conceived of their sexual desires for children as being outside of empire, when in actuality, much like their collecting practices, they were a strategy of imperialism to possess foreign bodies.

In nineteenth-century England, there was a general view that the colonies and their peoples engaged in abnormal sexualities, ones outside of straight sex, and an excessive number

[85] Sydney Smith, *Mostly Murder* (New York: David McKay Co, 1959), 94–96.
[86] Ibid., 97.

of sexual acts.[87] The "material facts" of erotica and empire show a different side to this well-rehearsed story. Anjali Arondekar has noted, "By the 1890s, England had spectacular exports in everything from cotton clothes to nude erotic photographs. George Cannon, William Dugdale, and Henry Hayler were lauded entrepreneurs of pornography, a substantial section of which involved pornography set in the colonies."[88] Arondekar, in her book *For the Record*, studies the history and the historiography of imperial servant Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890) and the ways in which he advanced the relationship between sex and empire. According to Arondekar, Burton referenced pederasty as a "vice specific to Muslims (of Afghani, Sindi, and Kashmiri descent), extending rarely to Hindus. Such an attitude followed the dominant ideology of the day that staged Muslim vice precisely to contain Muslim threat."[89] Throughout this dissertation, I have shown that colonial officers and even present-day museum personnel have marked the court of Avadh as hedonistic because its rulers were Muslims who patronized erotic miniature painting. What the Gayer-Anderson case shows is how imperial structures of power enabled European agents to eroticize native bodies in their collecting practices as well as to engage in sexual activities with them. This undermines the Muslim pederasty myth further.

Neither Thomas nor Robert ever commissioned Indian artisans to paint compositions. They never established their own artisan workshop like colonial officers Richard Johnson (1753–1807) or Colonel Antoine-Louis Henri de Polier (1741–1795). Thomas and Robert, like the Victoria and Albert Museum's former keeper William Archer and many other collectors in the 1920s, collected based on availability and on the premise of "taste." As such, one can conclude

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[87] Philippa Levine, "Sexuality, Gender, and Empire," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.
[88] Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 107.
[89] Ibid., 44; For more information on this conceit of a Muslim sexual threat see: Wendy Doniger, "Presidential Address: 'I Have Scinde': Flogging a Dead (White Male Orientalist) Horse," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, no. 4 (1999): 940–60.

that Indian artisans did not produce erotic images exclusively for European collectors since these images, to varying degrees, had always been in circulation. Once European collectors like the Gayer-Andersons collected these images, however, they were overlaid with additional messages of carnality that had an imperial valance, which evacuated local social and historical meanings.

E. Coercion at the Bodleian Library

In 1952, Thomas donated a vast amount of his collection of Indian miniature paintings to the Victoria and Albert Museum, about half of his 541 paintings and drawings.[90] During the donation process, Thomas was very involved and authored a catalogue titled *The Gayer-Anderson Collection of Indian Paintings and Drawings* for the museum.[91] The donation was valued for the ways it filled the gaps in the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection of Indian drawings and of the Indian painting school of Kotah.[92] William Archer, who was a curator at the V&A, included several of the Gayer-Andersons' Indian paintings in his publications, including *Indian Painting in Bundi and Kotah*.[93] Thomas leveraged his relationship with the V&A to force the Bodleian Library to accept his "doodle" albums.

Throughout the 1950s, Thomas wrote repeatedly to the Bodleian Library in the hope of reaching a formal agreement on the fourteen "doodle" volumes. In 1942, Robert had donated forty manuscripts including Persian volumes to the Bodleian.[94] After that, Thomas expected the Bodleian to accept his hand-drawn sketchbooks. The Bodleian was hesitant, so Thomas used his museum connections to force the Bodleian to accept them. At the time, various museum

[90] He had a total of 540 objects that he split between the V&A and Australia. NLA Ms 4956. NAA A463, 1968/4321, folio 31, 50. Gayer Anderson to Thomas White. Oct. 22, 1952. V&A Gayer Anderson V&A catalogue 1952, folio 1r, which states his collection includes "541 pieces, 210 paintings, 280 drawings and 51 pricklings.".
[91] Victoria and Albert Museum, Gayer-Anderson V&A catalogue, 1952.
[92] Indian Miniatures," accessed March 12, 2014, http://www.indianminiature.org/gayer-anderson-collection.html.
[93] Ibid.
[94] BLOU JMB/ JAJ Gayer-Anderson, March 13, 1946. This file states that he and his brother first made a donation in 1942.

personnel were aware of Thomas and Robert's nude sketches. Staff at the Victoria and Albert Museum such as William Archer and John Irwin took great pains to formally separate the "doodle" sketches from the brothers' Indian painting collection.

Thomas and Robert were aware that the albums were socially unacceptable. In the appendix to their volumes, Thomas states that he acted as Robert's literary executor. While Robert felt that his poems were "advantage to all," Thomas states that "according of present day conventions, such characteristic thoughts and expressions must be hidden away and refused acknowledgement or recognition as though they were something unnatural, even criminal that both the law and decency forbid."[95] Thomas further writes:

> In at least half of these volumes thus produced however the poet's candid expression, as well as the usual nature of much of the subject matter, especially in his translations, would doubtless appear so unconventional, outspoken, often perverse, and blasphemous, that were the publication of such verse undertaken it would of necessity have to be in a private and restricted edition meant only for the eye of the few.[96]

And yet, despite these sentiments, Robert and Thomas wanted their albums of image and text under the care of one of most prestigious libraries in England.

On March 13, 1946, Thomas wrote to the Bodleian entreating them to accept his scrapbooks, citing the fact the Bodleian had already accepted Robert's poems and arguing that his "doodle" albums needed to be housed next to them.[97] The Bodleian agreed to keep these "doodle" scrapbooks when Thomas donated additional Indian paintings. On October 26, 1958, Thomas wrote to a secretary at the Bodleian Library, stating:

> I am now in process of winding up my affairs & I find that I have eight 17th/18th century Indian & Persian paintings & drawings (see the enclosed list) of good quality and of good conditions contained in a rather attractive Indian lacquer box. I should like to add the above to the small collection, which my late twin brother (Major R. G. Gayer-Anderson, Pasha) and I presented to the Library in about 1946. In a similar connection (Your

[95] BLOU Ms. Eng Post. d.242 and Ms Res. d.369, folio 353.
[96] Ibid., folio 350.
[97] BLOU JMB/JAJ Gayer-Anderson, March 13, 1946.

> reference JLMN/BJK of 17th April 1948, Ref. 419) —and please let me assure you that I put forward what follows in no way as a "quid pro quo"!— I would be much gratified if you would accept from me, (without conditions), on my death (I am now 77) 14 foolscap sized "scrapbooks" each just over an inch thick and each containing about 50 original drawings by myself, in pencil pen and colour of a fanciful (*but not pornographic*) nature and made during the past 20 years or so. I make this request because I am much interested in the subject of identical-twinship with its curious twinly affinities.[98]

Thomas emphasizes that his fourteen volumes are not pornography (my emphasis). He conjures instead the specter of psychology and the uniqueness of twins to explain the amount of nudity portrayed in the sketch albums. Even though the brothers themselves knew that their album were socially unacceptable, they wanted them preserved. To ensure this, Thomas leveraged his relationship with V&A personnel and decided to donate additional Indian miniatures to the Bodleian, binding his Indian miniatures more closely to his "doodle" albums.

In this letter to the Bodleian in 1958, Thomas directly associated his Indian miniature collection to his scrapbooks, stating that he would donate his miniatures only on the condition that the scrapbooks would be conserved as well. Of the eight additional Indian miniatures gifted to the Bodleian, some included nude figurations such as "a naked lady" with "3 naked maids." Thomas described another miniature as a "bearded old teacher" with "four children."[99] He was not ashamed to mention the subject matter of these Indian paintings and relate them to his albums even though the Bodleian staff might have found such language too descriptively reminiscent of his unwanted scrapbooks of nude children and erotica.

William Archer, the keeper at the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1949 to 1959, wrote to Myres, who worked at the Bodleian Library, on May 20, 1960, to confirm that the Bodleian

[98] Emphasis mine. Bodleian Library, JMB/JAJ Ref. 419, October 26, 1958, Gayer-Anderson to anonymous museum personnel. Included in this letter was a list of eight miniatures to be donated. The eight miniatures have since been allocated to the Ashmolean Museum. Personal correspondence on Nov. 26, 2016, with Alasdair Watson, Bahari Curator of Persian Collections, Bodleian Libraries.
[99] BLOU JMB/JAJ Ref.419, October 26, 1958.

would retain the Gayer-Andersons' fourteen volumes. In writing the letter on Thomas's behalf, Archer sought to preserve his business relationship with Thomas. He wrote:

> Colonel Gayer-Anderson is very anxious that his own manuscripts should join those of his twin [Robert] and it appears from the introduction, which he has written to Volume I of the drawings, that this has already been agreed to. John Irwin (the present Keeper) and I feel that the drawings and manuscripts form a fascinating body of material, which fully merits preservation. Colonel Gayer-Anderson who is now aged 79 has been a great benefactor of the [V&A's] Indian Section and that is how Irwin and I come to be associated with this matter. I am forwarding with this letter Volume I of the Drawings (with Colonel Gayer-Anderson's Introduction) and on hearing from you that it will be in order, I will forward the remaining thirteen volumes.[100]

While Archer was cataloguing the brothers' painting donation for the V&A, Thomas informed Archer of his predicament with the Bodleian. Thomas was unconvinced that the Bodleian would accept the scrapbooks because of their prurient subject matter, so Archer wrote to the Bodleian and urged them to uphold their agreement and take the "doodle" volumes. Otherwise, Archer realized, the V&A would have been saddled with them. At the same time, Archer wanted to keep his distance from the affair, stating, "that is how Irwin and I come to be associated with this matter [of the doodle scrapbooks]."[101] Archer never confirms or denies that the "doodles" are erotica or pornography. He instead champions their "merit." After Thomas's death, Archer wrote again to make sure the Bodleian had received the "doodles."

Fig. 6.13. *Painting of a Prince and Lady Making Love*
Guler, India; c. 1830
V&A IS.170-1952

Archer needed Thomas's Indian paintings and drawings at the V&A to strengthen the museum's collection. Prior to Archer's entrance to the V&A, the institution held very few miniatures. Under his guidance, its holdings burgeoned. Repeatedly, Archer ran out of funding and needed to rely on donors to bolster his project. Moreover, the brothers' Indian drawings showed the mechanics of production for miniatures, which allowed museum personnel to

[100] BLOU 59/4080, May 20, 1960, W. G. Archer to Dr. J. N. C. Myres, a Bodleian librarian.
[101] Ibid.

educate a general British audience on the different stage of production for creating miniature paintings. Education was an important component of the V&A's mission. No matter Archer's intentions, he could obviously see the relationship between the brothers' albums and their Indian painting collection. Figure 13, *Painting of a Prince and Lady Making Love*, was one image that was part of Thomas's donation to the V&A. It explicitly shows a scene of penetration. Either Thomas or Robert collected this miniature because its sexual imagery fed into their sexual obsessions. Archer makes no mention of this.

Thomas and Archer had a strained relationship during the donation process. Thomas admitted that Archer mounted and dismembered the miniatures contrary to his wishes.[102] In addition, it is evident that Thomas's thoughts such as his sexual attraction to some of the miniatures were suppressed. Thomas created a catalogue of his miniatures in 1952 and donated it to the V&A alongside his paintings. In this catalogue, Thomas expresses how he collected some of the miniatures solely because they contained images of children. Such language further draws the connection between his "doodle" albums and the Indian miniatures. The catalogue went missing until 2016, when I requested a copy. It was always within the V&A storage room but was never used or studied. Now, the National Art Library staff has officially catalogued it and it will continue to be held in the South and South-east Asia Department Library. Its reappearance only recently reveals that the Gayer-Anderson brothers' voice and way of conceptualizing these paintings were not taken into account by the V&A staff or by other researchers.[103] This disregard

[102] NAA: A2910, 430/5/135 part 1, folio 141.
[103] Robert Skelton is the only scholar to cite their catalogue. Robert Skelton, "Collecting Indian Miniatures," in *Indian Miniatures: The Ehrenfeld Collection*, ed. Daniel Ehnbom (New York: Hudson Hills, 1985), 13. While Skelton quotes Gayer Anderson's assertion that Indian painting has for him "an almost obsessive attraction" and gives him "a subtle pleasure which [he gets] from no other form of visual art," he does not mention that this pleasure is sexually charged.

for the brothers' views has meant that the miniatures and their sexual imagery are associated only with India and not with the British collectors who were attracted to these paintings.

Thomas carefully planned and outlined the posthumous display of his fourteen sketchbooks at the Bodleian. He placed a hold on the scrapbooks, stating that they should be opened only "ten years after [his] death."[104] This was perhaps a move to create a separation between the "doodles" and his art collection, which was intended for a more general public. A contradiction thus arises. At first, museum staff such as Archer strove to separate the Gayer-Andersons' collection of Indian painting and their "doodles." Later, Thomas as well attempts to preserve his respectability. Thus, the fourteen volumes were gifted to the Bodleian on condition that they remain semi-public.

The brothers' "doodles" such as figure 14 are still not available to a general audience. Even today, scholars and visitors need special permission to view the albums because of their licentious subject matter. When I photographed these volumes, I was instructed to read the albums in a corner of the library's reading room so that the material would not offend other readers. This library procedure underlines the fact that many would consider the Gayer-Anderson "doodles" obscene and/or objectionable. These albums remain on the margins of one of the institution's most canonical archives.

Fig. 6.14. BLOU Mss. Eng. Misc. b.394, *Virginibus Puerisque*, vol. 1
"Doodle," folio 46

Although the "doodle" albums are not widely available, they are in keeping with the very nature of archives. During the early part of the nineteenth century, the British Museum encountered a similar issue of patrons donating erotic books alongside their more conventional objects. To remedy the matter, museums and libraries installed private cases, which kept material

[104] BLOU JMB/ JAJ Gayer-Anderson, March 13, 1946.

deemed obscene away from the public eye.[105] This is still an issue today. The Bodleian Library and other similar institutions are continuously keeping visual and textual perversions out of sight of an imagined normal, moral audience by installing private cases and private reading rooms. Sex and sexual excess seems to be a guiding analytic for the most authoritative archives in the United Kingdom.

F. Conclusion

The paintings that the Gayer-Andersons collected register the brothers' presence in imperial sites and wars in Egypt and India. It is also visually and textually evident that Thomas and Robert managed their collection to reflect their preoccupation with sex and young children. There has long been documentation that the twins collected Indian paintings based on their desires, but the museums that house and display their Indian paintings have never formally acknowledged this connection. The brothers' attachments to and affiliations with child pornography have not qualified as a usable history or as a usable archive.

No longer can we view erotica in Avadhi painting and other Indian painting as a product of degenerate and voluptuary native courts. We must also consider how colonial and imperial officers' investments and desires pushed and promoted erotica across all Indian painting styles. Otherwise, their imperial genealogies will remain, without any dislocation or acknowledgement. We must stretch our vision to see the marks left by colonialism and imperialism on Indian painting. By doing so, we will see that desire was at the heart and "substance" of many governing and collecting practices in Asia.[106] In the case of the Gayer-Anderson collection, the policies of British imperialism gave the brothers the opportunity to sexualize colonialized bodies.

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[105] Walter M. Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (New York: Viking 1987), 71; Patrick J. Kearney and G. Legman, *The Private Case: An Annotated Bibliography of the Private Case Erotica Collection in the British (Museum) Library* (London: J. Landesman, 1981). In the 1900s, Henry Spencer Ashbee made the largest donation of "obscene" textual materials to a British institution.
[106] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 60.

If we press on that lever, a larger pattern of desire may reveal itself with other imperial collectors of Indian painting. The Gayer-Anderson brothers currently have a marginal position in South Asian art history. Yet they are actually, I argue, symptomatic of a larger system of desire for collectors of Indian painting. Currently, mementos of the brothers' racial and sexual acts of power are now preserved, with only slight reservations, in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Gallery of Art, Australia.

CONCLUSION

A DELAY IN CLOSURE

Fig. 7.1. *Intoxicated Mystics and Assorted Subjects*
Late Mughal or Avadh, c. 1775
Watercolor on paper with gold leaf, sheet
15 ¾ x 11½ in (40.0 x 29.2 cm)
TBM, Anonymous gift, 84.183

Intoxicated Mystics opened this dissertation to show the ways this painting has been constrained to a single framework of analysis, that of obscenity. It returns in a narrative arc to demonstrate the visual lessons that can be learned when we think beyond the obscenity paradigm. To arrive at its vernacular meaning, an overview of its formal properties is in order, which is similar to the analytical work performed throughout this dissertation. *Intoxicated Mystics* is compositionally linked to older Persianate paintings such as the *Shāhnāma* (Book of kings) and focused on the theme of *razm o bazm* (fighting and feasting).[1] Commonly, razm (fighting scenes) were depicted on separate folios from their bazm (celebratory) counterparts. In this case, they have been placed together within one painting. Through the depiction of royal activities, *Intoxicated Mystics* visually legitimizes its patron, Mughal ruler Shāh ʻĀlam (r. 1759–1806). By performing visual analysis, I argue that *Intoxciated Mystics* is tied to three important elements: Persianate literature like the *Shāhnāma*, Persianate themes of razm or bazm, and to Sufism (mystical Islam).

Intoxicated Mystics is meant to be read in clockwise in a whirling, circular fashion which is in opposition to how the curator Joseph Kosuth visual read this piece, which was in a straightforward viewpoint for his show, *The Play of the Unmentionable*. My circuitous re-viewing of *Intoxicated Mystics* reinforces the notion that miniature painting can simultaneously

[1] For a visual overview of razm o bazm, see Eleanor Sims, B. I. Marshak, and Ernst J. Grube, *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and Its Sources* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 91–126.

depict the political history of early modern India and a patron's spirituality. To begin at the lower right-hand corner, Shāh ʿĀlam and his young son Mirzā Jawān Bakht are on an elephant as they attack a lion with spears and swords.[2] The lion has bitten so deeply into the trunk of their elephant that blood gushes from its extremity. Two retainers follow behind in blue and white robes. In the bottom left corner, Rustam, the hero character from the *Shāhnāma*, from atop his elephant lassoes Kamus, the khaqan of China.[3] In this painting, the contemporary Mughal ruler Shāh ʿĀlam is juxtaposed with Rustam, an ancient Persianate symbol of rightful sovereignty. Through this visual relationship, Shāh ʿĀlam and his son bind their political victories with a heroic narrative past. Both the Mughal emperor and his progeny are depicted in halos and are the largest figural pair, which further suggests that they patronized this image and used the painting as a visual manifestation of their power.

Further up the left side of the painting is a man with a distended stomach from his overconsumption of opium. Another man pokes at his companion's belly button, drawing the viewer's eye to the bloated abdomen. Next, a monkey picks at the fleas on the head of a white-haired ascetic who crouches over a bowl of opium pods. Above them is a pair of men who share an opium pipe as one of them counts his prayer beads. Beside this pair of men, the top center features a fight between two elephants, which compositionally resembles another miniature painting completed for the Mughal ruler Akbar (r. 1556–1605) in his manuscript, *Akbarnāma*.[4] At the top left is a woman in a *howdah* (carriage) whose male companion jumps on her elephant to greet her. The scene appears to be copied from an unknown miniature painting as the male and female pair are not connected to any other figures in the composition such as the opium

[2] They are identifiable by inscriptions.
[3] These two characters are identifiable by an inscription that reads "Rustam Pahlavān."
[4] V&A IS.2:40-1896. *Akbar*, V&A, accessed June 24, 2017, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9711/akbar-painting-mohesh/

consumers or Shāh ʻĀlam. While seemingly out of place, like the Rustam imagery, the elephants and the unknown woman are extracted from visual sources to create links with an epic visual past.

Fig. 7.2. *Allegory of Worldly and Otherworldly Drunkenness*
Folio from the *Divan of Hafiz*
Painting by Sultan Muhammad (active first half 16th century)
Attributed to Iran, Tabriz, ca. 1531–33
Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper
Dimensions of page: Height 11 3/8 in. (28.9 cm) x Width 7 1/8 in. (18.1 cm)
Jointly owned by The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University;
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Cary Welch Jr., 1988
Accession Number: 1988.430

The antinomian practice of opium consumption could be read as a visual reference to Sufism (mystical Islam). In this sense, *Intoxicated Mystics* is similar to *Allegory of Worldly and Otherworldly Drunkenness*, a famous Persian miniature that illustrates verses from the *Divan of Hafiz* (fig. 2).[5] In *Allegory of Worldly and Otherworldly Drunkenness*, overindulgent drinkers are serenaded by Sufi qalandars (a sect of dervishes). As the title of the miniature suggests, the consumption of wine was a transcendental practice in order to reach the divine. Drunkenness was a result of libidinal spirits, which was a product of the terrestrial world, and also stemmed from spiritual intoxication, which was derived from an otherworldly plane. *Intoxicated Mystics,* read through *Allegory of Worldly and Otherworldly Drunkenness,* functions as a scene of spiritual intoxication. The mystics and their descent into opium inebriation are a potential allegory for the spiritual journey toward divinity.

By incorporating the visual principles of razm o bazm and Sufi aesthetics, *Intoxicated Mystics* no longer aligns well with the modern art of Mapplethorpe (Introduction) as it does not offer a critique of sexual moralities and racial inequalities. The miniature dramatizes the unorthodoxy of opium consumption and sexual pleasure only to have them absorbed into larger

[5] Accession number 1988.430, Metropolitan Museum of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Cary Welch Jr., 1988.

institutional and canonical structures of power within royal society. Shāh ʻAlām surveys the vagrancies and intoxication as a means to affirming his rule. They are not outside of his line of sight.

The rest of the image buttresses this reading. Two musicians who play the sarod bow their heads in ecstasy over either their piety or their opium consumption. There is visual ambiguity. Two men to their left sieve opium seeds to remove extraneous matter. At the center of the composition are two men engaged in an intimate moment of ejaculation or urination. Joseph Kosuth, who curated the show *The Play of the Unmentionable*, contends that the man who is seated receives the other man's urine so that the opium can enter his bloodstream more quickly. Since the man's stream is tinted white and not yellow, it has the appearance of semen. In the painting, the white semen also plays off the traditional white color of opium, each calling attention to the other. In either case, whether the man is passing urine or semen, the act is one of intimate sharing. Although the pair appears transgressive, they still reaffirm certain early modern social hierarchies. The man who gives his bodily fluids is an older man. He has a beard, whereas the receiver is beardless. In certain Muslim circles in the eighteenth century, an older man was allowed to be the active sexual partner and the younger man was allowed to be penetrated and be a beloved. In the composition, both men are of high social rank, like many other figures on the painting. One of them has pearls around his neck, and they both are arrayed in rich attire. A couple on the right side of the composition, a young pupil and his older teacher, echoes their age difference. The pupil attends to the teacher and guides him across the pictorial space. They are perhaps en route to school since the young boy holds a book. One might speculate that either the child is about to acquire mystical knowledge from his teacher or they are about to engage in some kind of sexual or narcotic activity.

Although the background of the painting is a bit unfinished, with the sky and the grass painted in light washes, the landscape evokes both a wilderness of hermetic withdrawal and a hunting expedition. Both landscapes would have been found outside of courtly cities. Nevertheless, the landscape of *Intoxicated Mystics* is not completely a space of social inversion, since age hierarchies and social statuses such as the relationship between the young boy and the teacher, and between Rustam and Kamus, are maintained. Through close visual analysis, *Intoxicated Mystics* reads as an allegory of the power of Mughal Delhi rather than merely an objectionable piece of Avadhi art.

As an icon, the miniature is a real depiction of Shāh ʻĀlam and his royal authority. Read through the symbolic, this image prefigures and pronounces the ontological transformation of spiritual practices. Beyond the miniature's iconicity or its representation of the physical qualities of rulers and people, the erotic elements render visible the invisible world of spiritual metamorphosis and imparts how social mores such as age hierarchies maintain such religious transformations. The painting defies an easy reading. There is ambiguity as to whether this image is a celebration of Shāh ʻAlām's royal power to manage various kinds of religious and social activities or a glorification of Sufi mysticism. The line between pleasure and discomfort, and between social orthodoxy and deviancy, is pictorially blurred. Instead of establishing a binary of profane and sacred, erotic imagery in early modern North India should be treated as always already both, since such a bifurcation would only serve to reify the presupposition that erotic imagery is non-normative, scarce, and unethical.

A. The historical stakes

Academics have widely studied the history of Avadh while the arts of Avadh, in particular its miniature paintings, have been neglected. *Intoxicated Mystics*, for instance, has received very

little scholarly attention because of its association with Avadh and erotica. In contrast, the arts of the early Mughals have been exhaustively discussed, analyzed, dissected, and exhibited. At the time I began my research on the nawabs, there was no book devoted solely to Avadh's miniature painting. Serendipitously, the art exhibition at Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2010 that resulted in the catalogue *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow* has slightly remedied the situation. Still, this one book is a pale comparison to the countless books that have been written on the arts of the Mughals.[6] Moreover, while the show, *India's Fabled City*, was a productive exercise for shining a spotlight back onto Avadhi aesthetics, the exhibition space concluded with an oil painting of a dancing girl whose body has come to stand in for musical patronage but also for sexual gratification.[7] In effect, the exhibition sublimated aspects of Avadhi erotics in order to create a more elevated art product, and at the same time sex and sexuality still haunted the structure of the show.

I first approached this material with the question of *why?* Why had Avadh been excised from art historical scholarship? Quickly I realized that the old historiographical model of decline and decay, which had been done away with in most history books, had calcified around Avadhi arts. The model, a holdover from colonial discourses, stated that the pinnacle of local power had been reached with the Mughal ruler Akbar "the Great," and the decline precipitated with the reign of the Aurangzeb "the Bad," whose negative paradigm has been partially dismantled but persists in popular culture such as in the 2014 play *Dara*. With this model in place, local powers such as the nawabs of Avadh are framed as if they had excessively engaged in degeneration

[6] In this regard, Natasha Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765–1860*, studies facets of art production in Lucknow in relation to British taste. She concentrates on the sale and collection of Indian miniature painting in chapter 1, pages 28–51. Stephen Vernoit, *Occidentalism: Islamic Art in the 19th Century* (New York: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University, 1997), was also one of the first authors to include Avadhi miniatures in a catalogue on Islamic art. Although not an art historian, Madhu Trivedi, *The Making of Awadh Culture* (2010), has a whole chapter on Avadhi painting, 145–70.

[7] See chapter 1 to understand the issues surrounding the association of Avadh with courtesans and dancing girls.

whose pursuit of luxury and sexual affairs set the British on the path to subjugate all of India. This perspective is employed by both colonial and national discourses. From a colonial storytelling point of view, this model justifies why the British were needed since they provided a moral and judicial compass for South Asia in the absence of the nawabs' ethics. In a national narrative, the nawabs were complicit in the rise of the British. And in a similar line of thinking, the Hindu national right can point the finger at the nawabs as a Muslim coalition that weakened South Asia to such an extent that the British garnered control.

One way to buttress these ideas was to visually show that the nawabs were fixated on decadent objects such as erotica. In 1978, Stuart Cary Welch, a major figure in the field of Islamic and South Asian art, described Avadhi miniatures in the following manner:

> Late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Oudh, with its capital at Lucknow, was an Indian mixture of today's Teheran, Monte Carlo, and Las Vegas, with just a touch of Glyndebourne [an English opera house] for good measure. Although a series of Company officers and Residents (after 1773) tried to keep the Nawabs in hand, they seldom succeeded, for the vastly rich, imaginatively sensual, selfish, childish, yet often generous and charming Nawabs were untameable.[8]

By looking at "sensual" miniature paintings, Welch claims, he can glean the political realities of the weak nawabs. Art historian Linda Leach in 1996 discussed the arts of Avadh as representing "hedonism reflected in leisure pursuits—such as wagering on kite-flying, cockfights or contests between larger animals—and in quickly constructed, quickly decaying architecture as well as often superficial miniature paintings."[9] While one could argue this correlation does not hold much water in current art historical practice, I would counter by pointing to the deafening silence that still enshrouds this material. This silence persists because the nawabs and their painting "lack" historical weight, stylistic integrity, and market value. Historically, as discussed,

[8] Stuart Cary Welch, *Room for Wonder: Indian Painting during the British Period, 1760–1880* (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1978), 84.
[9] Linda York Leach, *Paintings from India, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art* (London: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1998), 166.

colonialism posits a historical lack in its progress narrative of native emancipation and dominance. Stylistically, Avadhi arts have mostly been considered a subsidiary school of Mughal painting since Avadhi paintings are similar to their Mughal counterparts. They diverge stylistically in their use of hybrid European devices that have met, until recently, with much rancor. Correspondingly, in the art market, Avadhi paintings have repeatedly failed to reach the status of "art" and have therefore been assigned a lower monetary value.

I thus turned to erotica to understand whether Avadhi painting indeed pictorialized merely the "scandal" and "leisure pursuits" of the "selfish" and "sensual" nawabs. Such imagery, I argued, though it could be deemed extreme or marginal, does not reinforce the oriental despot argument espoused by colonial and national thinkers. In particular, I overturned the model of decline and decadence by showing that erotica in the rāgamālā and vaqa'i genres had social, political, and religious import and was not merely about the body. From chapter 2, in which erotic imagery provided a regional discourse that fostered interregional communication, to chapter 5, in which Wājid ʻAlī Shāh promoted his erotic biography to advance his political clout, I restored local meanings to erotic representations.

My question of *why* slowly expanded to the question of *how*. How does erotica enforce the oriental despot paradigm of decline and decadence, and how can this material be used to unravel that paradigm? Visual genres were my answer.[10] I graphed erotica's function and operation in complete books by turning to eighteenth-century vernacular genres. To do so, I placed erotic imagery back into the eighteenth-century textual and visual genres from which individual works had been removed when they were initially sold and acquired in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As chapter 4 outlined, over the course of the sale, exhibition, and display

[10] For the various ways to approach miniature painting, see David J. Roxburgh, "The Study of Painting and the Arts of the Book," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 1–16.

of Avadhi miniatures, they have been disbanded from their albums and their book genres. Repositioning the images within those genres restored erotica's social, literary, and cultural contexts and sloughed off the category of obscenity that these miniatures had acquired in the disbandment process in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Intoxicated Mystics stands as a rejoinder to these chapters. Throughout, I pointed to the act of textual translation to show that images had a relationship to literary genres and Persianate treatises. Miniatures such as *Intoxicated Mystics* that are not directly associated with a textual artifact can perform similar kind of work, as they may never be reconciled with their original literary genres or the book format in which they once resided. Through visual analysis of the compositions, however, art historians and historians can notice new ways of interpreting them that go beyond the obscenity paradigm.

The nawabs were not unique in their sponsorship of erotica. *Intoxicated Mystics* shows that erotica was a prevalent mode of expression across northern India and in Delhi, as the painting was patronized by Mughal ruler Shāh ʿĀlam and not a nawab of Avadh. Casting a wider net means a further dismantling of the "decay" paradigm associated primarily with the nawabs. In chapter 4, Wājid ʿAlī Shāh, the last nawab, cited as royal antecedents the Mughals, the Deccani sultanate, and other local Indic practices. In chapter 1, through stylistic analysis, I showed how the decadent and erotic signifier was present in the art of various courts throughout early modern India, from Murshidabad to Delhi. As such, the erotica patronized by the nawabs and their courtiers cannot be used to justify the rise of colonialism since such visualizations were present throughout many native courts.

B. Intervention

The connection between the nawabs and erotica has consequences for the fields of South

Asian art history and Islamic art history. Islamic art historians have been on the forefront of critiquing and reevaluating what constitutes normative Islamic art.[11] Through the scholarship of, most notably, Iftikhar Dadi, Finbarr Barry Flood, and Gülru Necipoğlu, they have questioned the central tenets of Islamic art in its disciplinary parameters of time and place, pushing for the inclusion of the art of Iran's Qajar period as well as modern and contemporary South Asian art.[12] The art of Avadh produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries fits into their call for opening up the field past the seventeenth century. Moreover, Islamic art historians have also disrupted the discipline's conceptual base and its legacies of orientalism by incorporating artisans who are non-Muslim but who can nevertheless be said to have produced Islamic art.[13] Such was the case with the production of Avadhi art. Focusing on erotica in Avadh and its relationship to the discipline of Islamic art further dispels the popular myth of iconoclasm and Islamicate aesthetics and disrupts normative ideals of what Islamic art should look like and when it was made.[14]

Adding Avadh back to into South Asian art history obliquely picks apart the disciplinary concentration of style. As discussed in chapter 2, Avadhi miniatures cannot be cast as testaments to a single painterly style or artist. The genre obscures the terrain of style since, with its frequent use of European painting techniques, it does not abide by essentialist conceptions of Islamic or South Asian art. By occupying both disciplinary spaces, Avadhi art further shows that such a

[11] Oleg Grabar, "Reflections on the Study of Islamic Art," *Muqarnas* 1 (1983): 1–14.
[12] Iftikhar Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Concept of Islamic Art: Inherited Discourses and New Approaches," originally published in Benoît Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber and Gerhard Wolf, eds., *Islamic Art and the Museum* (London: Saqi Books, 2012); Finbarr Barry Flood, "From Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the End of Islamic Art," originally published in Elizabeth Mansfield, ed., *Making Art History: A Changing Discipline and Its Institutions* (London: Routledge, 2007), 31–53. See also Margaret S. Graves, "Feeling Uncomfortable in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (2012): 1–27.
[13] This occurred with one of the discipline's most cherished masterpieces, the Dome of the Rock.
[14] I drew on the work of Jamal Elias, Flood, and Sussan Babaie that champions the need for historical specificity when studying so-called Islamic iconoclasm. See Finbarr Barry Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 641–59.

preoccupation with an authentic Islamic or South Asian art style is a remnant of the British colonial and imperial apparatus.

Before this dissertation, no scholar or writer had looked extensively at any of my visual material. I have been the first to write about and research the *J.42* rāgamālā album, the '*Ishqnāma*, and the Clive albums. At times I was able to make use of short references, as with chapter 6 on the Gayer-Anderson twins.[15] For the most part, however, there was a scarcity of journal articles and book chapters dealing with my primary visual and textual sources.

To occupy this silence, I have translated a vast array of Persian and Urdu textual materials that referenced Avadhi miniature paintings. To solve the lack of words, I filled this space with perhaps too many. My aim in combining Persianate archival documents and painting was to allow my reader to question the link made between Avadh and decadency and call into doubt any singular definition of eroticism. By attending to historicity in the category of erotica, I asked what kind of work this category performs for institutions and individuals.

Erotic visual materials provide an interesting entry point into a discussion of the history of the nawabs because eroticism is not a stable enough marker for advancing the oriental despotic argument. Colonial officer categorized miniatures from Avadh as erotic, decadent, and lesser-than since they seemed to represent only the body. Yet the visual culture of Avadh offers a new way of writing and understanding histories mired in colonialism, as many local elites used such imagery as a counter-discourse to colonialism. By focusing on erotic miniatures, the very objects used as visual evidence of the Avadhi court's social degeneracy, my dissertation shows that images of the flesh have more than surface purchase and actually have historical, religious,

[15] Louise Foxcroft, *Gayer-Anderson: Life and Afterlife* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2016), discusses the Gayer Andersons' collecting habits. She does not, however, touch on their collection of miniature paintings.

and political importance.[16]

History as a field has ebbed and flowed throughout my discussion. A caveat exists with all historical investigations that attempt to give voice to the past. After all, erotic representations of the body that do not meet a normative ideal can be displaced in the pursuit of history proper. Rather, I have been argued that they should be studied for the ways in which communities such as the nawabs and Shāh ʻĀlam valued and prized this genre of art. This dissertation has been engaged primarily with one subset of history: early modern studies.

Early modern studies, recently emerged as a historical category, is an attempt by scholars to unravel what continuities or ruptures led down the road to modernism. One of the metanarratives of the early modern is that royal courts ceded power to the proto-bourgeois to create new kinds of publics and economic markets. Avadh is a case in point in which the court underwent a complete shift in power from colonialism to imperialism and the emergence of a new class of merchants. These politics affected artistic production. Richard Johnson and Clive, for instance, were part of this new dynamic patronage network and market within Avadh and beyond. While scholars have embraced the concept of the circulation of objects in the early modern period as a forerunner of the modern art market, the case of Avadh shows that the exchange of objects relies on major power imbalances that can continue to resonate in how objects are received today.

There is a capaciousness to the concept of the early modern. Greenblatt identified a cornerstone of the periodization of early modernism: self-fashioning.[17] Working in the context of the Renaissance, Greenblatt argued that the West's encounter with an alien other, in the form of

[16] Orsini made a similar argument in Francesca Orsini, *Love in South Asia: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). She states, "The prominence of love themes over several epochs of Indian courtly culture can no longer be explained in terms of aristocratic debauchery and cultural bankruptcy" (5).
[17] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

peoples from the Global South, sharpened Europe's notion of itself. By decentering the Renaissance, we see how such a concept shores up binaries of a monolithic West and South. In my discussion of rāgamālā albums, encounters still occurred but on a more trans-local level between south-south interactions. Specifically, there was a translation of visual aesthetics between Indic and Islamicate registers. By charting such encounters, simple binaries are dismantled and erotics reenters the discussion as the very heart of these encounters. We need to take seriously local histories rather than dismissing them as peripheral to the main discussion of the Renaissance. Thus, the role of religious passion can be re-narrativized.

Discourse analysis was a necessary exercise for this dissertation to show how the decadency mode emerged historically and was maintained in the study of Avadhi painting. Another analytical strategy was to attend to vernacular conceptualizations of eroticism as poetic images of social change. Like poetry, Avadhi miniatures can be ambiguous (*iham*) by not producing a clear meaning or a definitive marker of when they should be relegated to the realm of erotica. To enrich the field, I did not seek narrative closure on whether the nawabs were deviant or corrupt. Instead, I unearthed a few strands of vernacular thought so that we can approach this material through its eighteenth-century world views. Taken as poetic couplets, which can always be interpreted anew, these erotic images with ties to poetics and literature can convey ethical and political values that conceptually open up new fragments of intellectual possibilities for future scholars in the fields of early modern studies, Islamic art, and South Asian art.

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APPENDIX I:

FIGURES

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