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presented by Aisha Dad

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‘Through the Looking Glass’:
The Narrative Performance of Anarkali

A dissertation presented

by

Aisha Dad

to

The Department of Comparative Literature

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

Comparative Literature

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

April 2022

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‘Through the Looking Glass’: The Narrative Performance of Anarkali

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the figure of Anarkali, an Orientalized persona assigned to the *haram* of the Mughal Emperor Akbar. In most iterations of her narrative, Anarkali is the lover of Akbar’s on, Salim, the future Mughal Emperor Jahangir which places her in a contentious space between Akbar and Salim. But while both Akbar and Salim are historically attested personalities, Anarkali is not. Yet, her narrative is pervasive from architecture to film in South Asia. The enigma of Anarkali till now has always centered on uncovering her historicity. My dissertation approaches understanding Anarkali, not as a yet undiscovered historical person, but as a narrative persona construed under the male gaze and questions the significance of the liminal space she occupies between Akbar and Salim.

As the basis of my methodology, I argue for the existence of an Anarkali *qissa* (an oral narrative) that predates extant iterations of the narrative. Each of the four dissertation chapters examines the re-performance of the Anarkali *qissa* across different mediums and the ensuing signification of the figure of Anarkali. The chapters focus, in turn, on the Tomb of Anarkali in Lahore, early travel writings on Anarkali, Imtiaz Ali Taj’s seminal play ‘Anarkali’, and the Indian Cinema films *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). While chapter one, on the Tomb of Anarkali, defines the topophilia contained within the architecture’s re-performance of the Anarkali *qissa,* the driving inquiry for chapters two, three, and four considers how Anarkali is employed as a medium for domestic and social anxieties at stake between the imperial personalities of Akbar and Salim.

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Introduction

"Bang!—Just Like a Candle!"

The Hall of Mirrors blazed with lamps one night
When royal Akbar sat in crowded state
And held his court; with wine and song elate
Reveled the courtiers and it was a sight
To set the youthful heart aglow with light
And love. Prince Selim cast his longing eye
On fair Anarkali and heaved a sigh
That spoke his love-struck heart, and beaming bright,
She smiled on him. But then the tell-tale glass
Betrayed their secret love and Akbar bade
In wrath that she should die. The luckless lass
Perished, but Selim kept her story sad
In mind, all life, and when he graced the throne
He reared to her a monument in stone.

Pundi Seshadri, 'Anarkali' (1915)

"He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee: "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"
Alice said, "Nobody can guess that."
"Why, about *you*!" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"
"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.
"Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"
"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle!"

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (1871)

Anarkali and Alice: Whose Figment?

I begin with the two quotes above, the first a poem by Pundi Seshadri and the second an excerpt from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, to dive into the heart of what this work is about: a simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of the narrative existence of a female figure called Anarkali. Who Anarkali is can vary depending on the story, from wife of the Mughal Emperor Akbar to favored serving-girl in Akbar's royal *haram*. Consequently, her relation to Salim (Akbar's son and the future Mughal Emperor Jahangir) can vary from

incestuous lover to none at all. The first quote above, from a poem titled ‘Anarkali’ by Pundi Seshadri (1887-1942), succinctly captures the most well-known juxtaposition of Anarkali between the Mughal Emperor Akbar and his son, Prince Salim: Anarkali, a musician in Akbar’s court and *haram*, is secretly in love with and loved by Prince Salim, a match that is unbearable to Akbar. As a result, Akbar decrees Anarkali’s death and Salim, once emperor himself, builds her a monument to honor her memory. Pundi Seshadri, a professor of English at Benares University at the turn of the twentieth century, produced several volumes of poetry in English. His poem ‘Anarkali’ appeared in a volume called *Champak Leaves* published in 1915. I begin with Seshadri’s poem not because it is particularly unique, but rather because it is extremely emblematic of two elements that consistently tether Anarkali. The first is Anarkali’s interdependence on Akbar and Salim and the disorienting effect of their historicity, and the second is Anarkali as an Orientalized subject of the male gaze. I shall explore each of these elements in turn.

Firstly, any and every mention of Anarkali features either Akbar or Salim or both. She is bound either to Akbar or Salim or, most often, bound within the space between Akbar and Salim no matter what her status. Her interdependence on Akbar and Salim feeds into what has become the enigma of Anarkali: while Akbar and Salim are verifiable historical personalities, Anarkali is not. There is absolutely no evidence of an Anarkali in any records contemporary to the lives of Akbar and Salim, neither in their own extremely detailed memoirs, nor in those of Mughal historians. Yet her existence in narratives about Akbar and Salim is persistent starting from seventeenth-century travel writings of Englishmen in Mughal India to twentieth-century blockbuster Indian films. Her existence is also as vivid as tangible reality: In Lahore, the Tomb of Anarkali, for example, has continued to serve as archeological evidence for the reality of her

historical existence. It is this enigma of Anarkali's historicity, the question 'who was Anarkali', that has been the focus of any scholarship surrounding her narrative. The attempt of solving Anarkali's historicity almost always produces one of two results: either the claim that the 'true' identity of Anarkali is yet to be found, that it is somehow still lost in the dependable pages of history, or that Anarkali is a 'mistaken' identity for one of the known wives of Salim. I submit here that this work approaches Anarkali with the concession that Anarkali is something that fractures the realm of history. She is both real and unreal. I replace the question 'who was Anarkali' with 'what is Anarkali' so as to interpret her meaning and her function across the narratives that keep her alive. That is, this work asks the questions: how and when was the narrative of Anarkali introduced? By whom was it introduced and transmitted? And for what purpose? These questions bring us to the second element of Anarkali that Pundi Seshadri's poem is emblematic of: Anarkali as an Orientalized subject of the male gaze.

Seshadri, living in British India under British rule, explains his desire to produce literature on specifically Indian subjects in English in terms of the hope that one day the British themselves will see the value of writing on Indian subjects:

> …it is necessary to draw attention to another possible source of contribution to Anglo-Indian poetry in the future—from poets in the British Isles themselves. Without any attempt at belittling the perennial poetic interest of Britain, at least for her own children, it may be ventured that their muse must soon seek additional material in parts of the British Empire which still have an air of romance for them. The colonies and India with its baffling mysteries for the foreigner, must serve as "fresh woods and pastures new" for the English poet of this century...[1]

At the same time Seshadri asserts that only an Indian can truly capture India:

> But the poetic interpretation of India, its life and civilization, could be most effectively discharged only by the Indian as he is the son of the land and he lives, moves, and has his

[1] Seshadri (1928) in Reddy 2013, 236. Note that Seshadri here quotes the last lines of Milton's 'Lycidas' in his reference to "fresh woods and pastures new," an interesting choice of reception.

> being in her, unlike the foreigner, or even the European in India, for whom she is only a temporary home.[2]

If it is only the Indian than can truly capture Indian subjects, then what is it that the foreigner (the British specially) can capture when writing about India? Seshadri gives us his answer. The foreigner can capture what India (and other colonies) represent for them: the "air of romance" and "baffling mysteries." Known or unknown to him, Seshadri is inviting, even assigning, an Orientalizing gaze of India to the British, something that not only had been in production for centuries already but includes the conception of Anarkali. The earliest accounts that mention Anarkali are recorded and transmitted in the seventeenth-century travel writings of two Englishman, William Finch and Edward Terry. I quote below both Finch and Terry's brief accounts of Anarkali, two passages that I shall return to repeatedly throughout this work.

William Finch, writing from 1608 to 1611 records that, while visiting Lahore, he saw

> ...a faire monument for Don Sha his mother, one of the Acabar his wives, with whom it is said Sha Selim had to do (her name was Immacque Kelle, or Pomgranate kernell); upon notice of which the King (Akbar) caused her to be inclosed quicke within a wall in his moholl, where shee dyed, and the King (Jahangir), in token of his love, commands a sumptuous tombe to be built of stone in the midst of a foure-square garden richly walled with a gate and divers roomes over it.[3]

Edward Terry, writing from 1616-1619, tells us that

> ...Achabar-sha had threatened to disinherit the present King [Jahangir], for abuse of Anar-kalee (that is Pomegranate Kernell), his most beloved wife; but on his death-bed repealed it.[4]

[2] Seshadri (1928) in Reddy 2013, 237.

[3] Finch in Foster (ed.) 1968, 166.

[4] Terry in Foster (ed.) 1968, 330

These British travel writings and their account of Anarkali, as I discuss in chapter two, are filtered through an Orientalizing male gaze; a gaze that, in reality, had no access to royal women or any aspect of royal domestic life yet construed and transmitted innumerable narratives on the topic. It is in Finch's and Terry's early accounts of Anarkali that we begin to see her as a contrived subject, far from a historical personality. Seshadri's delineation between the authenticity of an Indian writer versus a British writer, then, collapses when it comes to Anarkali, because we must question whether she ever was an authentic Indian subject. Instead of authenticity, Seshadri's poem 'Anarkali' is colored by his own invitation of Orientalism, one that harkens back to the narrative's conception under the male gaze of Englishmen such as Finch and Terry. Anarkali as a subject exists in a realm that is construed not only under an Orientalizing gaze, but most importantly a *male* gaze that continues to bind her throughout the transmission of her narrative. We can question, then, how much of Anarkali is a figment of this male gaze and whether she exists or can exist outside of it. I transition here to the second quote I began this introduction with, the excerpt from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass.*

In *Through the Looking Glass*, a sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice once again finds herself in a fantastical world. This time, instead of jumping down a rabbit hole, Alice has stepped through a large mirror, or looking glass, into a world that is reversed in many ways. At one point in her adventure, Alice comes across the nursery rhyme characters of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. When Alice hears a loud roaring, Tweedledum and Tweedledee inform Alice that the sound is only the snoring of the Red King who is napping under a nearby tree. They then try to convince Alice that she is exists only in the dream, in the imagination, of the Red King and that, if he were to wake up, she (Alice) would "go out—bang!—just like a candle!" I include this passage not to transpose Alice onto Anarkali or vice-versa, but to suggest how effectively it

disrupts the reality of Alice. What if Alice is a figment of the Red King's dream or his imagination? Underlying this is also the acute sense of not only a gender imbalance, but a power imbalance. If Alice indeed exists only in the Red King's dream, then her existence, as a lost young girl, is a contrivance of a man of power. And even if it turns out that Alice is not a figment of the Red King's dream, then she is still a product of Lewis Carroll's (that is, Charles Dodgson's) imagination. It has long been believed that Dodgson's Alice was wholly inspired by and based on Dodgson's acquaintance of the child Alice Liddell, his unrequited love. Karoline Leach terms this the 'Carroll Myth.' The myth asserts that Dodgson falls in love with the eleven-year-old girl and creates the character Alice to please the real Alice. When his obsession gets out of hand, his ties with Alice Liddell are severed by her family, which leaves Dodgson tragically heartbroken and desolate.[5] Leach shows that this 'Carroll Myth' is unsubstantiated by any real evidence:

> There is no evidence that he was in love with her, no evidence that her family worried about his attachment to her, no evidence that they banned him from her presence. There are no letters or private diary entries to suggest any kind of romantic or passionate attachment or even to indicate he had a special interest in her for any but the briefest time. There is no evidence, either prima-facie or secondary, cryptic or elliptic, to suggest he proposed to the eleven-year-old girl or even considered doing so.[6]

Leach's argument for the uncoupling of the historical Alice from the character Alice, asserts that the character Alice was a fully-fledged creation of Dodgson, one having little to do with Alice Liddell aside from her name:

> He never confused Alice with 'Alice' as we do. She was never his 'dreamchild', and he never pretended that she was. His Alice, the dreamchild, shared her name, but she enjoyed an entirely independent existence; 'my dream-child (named after a real Alice, but none the less a dream-child)', a creature of his fancy, whose separateness he guarded jealously, almost pointedly…Even in his personal dedication in her copy of the 1886

[5] Leach 2006, 172-173.

[6] Leach 2006, 181.

> facsimile of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* Dodgson carefully emphasizes that it was not her but her 'namesake' who 'inspired his story'. For him, 'dream-Alice' reigned paramount.[7]

Alice is a product of the male imagination both within and with-out the narrative. I argue that Anarkali exists in a similarly layered disruption of reality, one that is just as fraught, if not more so, with gender and power imbalance. Anarkali almost always exists under the male gaze both within the narrative, between Akbar and Salim, and with-out the narrative, composed solely by male writers. What I propose throughout this work is that Anarkali is an acutely gendered medium that has more to do with addressing the figures of Akbar and Salim and, often, the space that lies in between them than any substantial investment in the person of Anarkali.

Structure and Method

This dissertation is divided into four chapters, each of which addresses a particular medium that transmits the Anarkali narrative: the Tomb of Anarkali in Lahore; the early written sources on Anarkali; the play *Anarkali* (1931) by Imtiaz Ali Taj; and the two Indian films *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). The chapters are linked together through a two-fold inquiry. Firstly, the overarching goal of this work, as I have mentioned briefly above, is to replace the question of 'who is Anarkali' with 'what is Anarkali'. The purpose is to shift away from a historical approach to Anarkali and towards a literary approach that examines her significance in narrative. Throughout these four chapters, I explore what Anarkali means, what she represents, what she conveys and for whom, how, and why. Secondly, I posit each chapter as an examination of the performance or reperformance of the Anarkali *qissa.* I explain this point further here by first briefly touching upon the Urdu genre of the *qissa* (I address the genre more

[7] Leach 2006, 183.

thoroughly in chapter two). The *qissa* (Persian for 'story') is a genre of oral storytelling whose origin extends back to medieval Iran where it was often related by professional storytellers called *qissa-khvans* or *dastan-gos*. It often related tales of wonder and adventure. At its heart, the *qissa* has an innate link to performance. The genre came into South Asia through the Persian language (the official court language of the Mughal Empire) and seeped into local language traditions such as Urdu. But by the early nineteenth century, especially after the boom of commercial publishing in the 1860s, the dissemination of the *qissa* genre was not restricted to oral performance alone, and often took written forms as well. Yet we need not imagine an abrupt and complete transition from oral to written transmission and performance. Rather, the *qissa* continued to be narrated and heard while appearing in textual form at the same time.

I shall argue for the existence of an Anarkali *qissa*, an oral strain of the story, that lies beyond even the earliest written sources. The English travel writer William Finch, for example, relates a tale that "is said," signaling that he must have heard this story and activating, I suggest, the Anarkali *qissa*. Similarly, Imtiaz Ali Taj attributes the inspiration for his play to the "stories about Anarkali he has heard since childhood" (*buchpan se anarkali ki ferzi kahani suntay rehne se…*).[8] What the Anarkali *qissa* originally looked like and what its oral evolution was is unclear and inaccessible to us. But I surmise that it always featured at least the two elements that I propose define Anarkali: a preoccupation of the male gaze and a positioning between Akbar and Salim. What we do have access to is what I term the performance and reperformance of the Anarkali *qissa*, so that what we witness across the four chapters is not a study of adaptation, but rather a study of the performance and reperformance of the Anarkali *qissa* as it is activated

[8] Taj 2012, 6. All Urdu translations are my own, unless noted otherwise.

through different mediums, from architecture (the Tomb of Anarkali), to page (early sources), to stage (Taj's play), to screen (film).

I begin, in chapter one, with the Tomb of Anarkali in Lahore. It is remarkable that the tomb's inseparable conflation with the account of Anarkali is already present in the earliest sources. William Finch, whose brief account of Anarkali is quoted above, transmits the narrative concerning Anarkali in response to the tomb he sees in Lahore. Whether or not the tomb that Finch sees is the same one as the one currently identified as the Tomb of Anarkali is not quite clear due to inconsistencies in the tomb's dates of construction. But what is significant is that the tomb, even *a* tomb (if it was indeed not the same as the one currently identified as such), has an implicit connection with the narrative and collective memory of Anarkali. Hence, I suggest a methodological approach to the tomb as a monument, a culturally emic structure that has both a physical and a psychological presence. Drawing on notions of monumentality, we find that monumentality has a reciprocal relationship with social experience and collective memory where it simultaneously draws on and shapes them. Moreover, because of the essentially evolving nature of this reciprocity, a monument is not fixed, but rather *performs* an evolving dialectic between representations, practices, and experiences. I argue that a monument's complex performance of collective memory is essentially related to narrative making, and hence consider the relationship between monument and narrative. While the study of monumentality and the built environment explores the role of narrative in architecture (how narrative thinking functions in architectural planning) and even the role of architecture in narrative (how architectural descriptions are used by authors), it rarely addresses the coexistence of narrative and architecture; that is, what happens when narrative and architecture occupy the same space? More specifically, what does it look like when narrative and a monument, a tomb in particular, occupy

the same space? To explore these questions, I look at two case studies, the tomb of King Arthur and the tomb of Virgil. I show that for both these cases the narratives surrounding the tomb and the persona have been absorbed by the tomb and are subsequently reperformed by the tomb itself, thus making the tomb complicit in the performance of its own narrative. It is with this methodological framework that I analyze the Tomb of Anarkali in Lahore.

In understanding the existence of the Tomb of Anarkali, I first tackle the enigmatic cenotaph that it once housed. Unmarked by any information as to whom it belonged, the cenotaph is inscribed with a romantic Persian couplet the likes of which are entirely unattested in any other Mughal tomb or cenotaph. Signed with the peculiar signature of *Majnun Salim Akbar,* it has continued to baffle scholars who view it as an astonishingly scandalous slip by the Emperor Jahangir for whomever the tomb historically belonged to. I offer a different explanation. Based on Jahangir's otherwise attested investment in the figure of *Majnun,* the enamored lover from the tale *Layla and Majnun* (most famously recorded by the Persian poet Nizami), I propose that the couplet falls within Jahangir's desire to style himself as a *Majnun*, since *Majnun's* harmony with the wilderness represented sovereignty over the entire world. Moving from the cenotaph to the existence of the whole structure of the tomb, I first consider a brief survey of the theories that have thus far been suggested by scholars to interpret the physical presence of the tomb. These range from an adamant belief in the historicity of Anarkali (Latif 1892) to the most common contemporary view that identifies Anarkali as one of the early wives of Emperor Jahangir (Baqir 1952, Chaghatai 1981, Salik 1975, Chaudry 2002). But, as I note, the latter strain, the one that identifies Anarkali as one of the wives of Jahangir, is not wholly an innocent one. Especially in most recent years, this claim shows a purposeful and ideologically motivated desire to distance the tomb from the figure of Anarkali and, in aligning it with one of

the wives of Jahangir, to attempt to highlight the moral and legitimate face of Mughal heritage. Yet the tomb continues to retain its connection to Anarkali. In offering a perspective on how to understand why the tomb continues to retain its identification with Anarkali, I return to my earlier methodological framework of monumentality and narrative. By tracking how the tomb of Anarkali has functioned in the history of Lahore, I demonstrate that the tomb functions as the Tomb of Anarkali because it has been overtaken by the narrative itself, which then continues to perpetuate itself especially in the topophilia, the 'sense', of Lahore; that is, the tomb, independent of history, will always be the Tomb of Anarkali because it has become complicit in performing the narrative of Anarkali for Lahore. By studying the tomb not as 'evidence', but rather a performative phenomenon, the first chapter is also an essential step towards disconnecting from the search of Anarkali's historicity. This is an essential step because it allows, then, for peeling back the retrospective guise of history imposed on the earliest sources of Anarkali.

The second chapter begins with a critical analysis of the earliest sources on Anarkali: the seventeenth-century travel accounts of the Englishmen William Finch and Edward Terry. These accounts, though often cited, rarely receive critical analysis as the biased narrative productions that they are. They are typically taken at face value and accepted as accurate historical observations. In looking at Finch's and Terry's accounts of Anarkali, I also consider their other descriptions of the royal household to highlight the eroticized gaze that colors their writings. This, in turn, exposes a much larger paradigmatic issue with the travel accounts of European men visiting Mughal India particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth century before the advent of British rule; that is, while the Mughal Empire is very much in power. The issue being that while none of these men had any access to domestic quarters and the private life of the Mughal

emperor and his female relations, they were, nonetheless, eager to produce narratives about it. The result is narrative production under a male gaze, one that compensates for its lack of visibility into the lives of royal women with what it desires to see which has little connection to authentic experience. These accounts on the royal Mughal domestic sphere, often colored by eroticism and decadence, reflect what Europeans traveling to Mughal India imagined was happening behind doors firmly closed to them. Their productions constitute an Orientalizing narrative that is primarily born out of their preconceived notions of the Mughal empire. A prime example of this is the royal Mughal *haram*, which becomes, under the European male gaze, the harem, an erotic space governed by sexual pleasure alone. In reality, the royal Mughal *haram* ("a sacred space") denoted the domestic space occupied by all female relations of the Mughal Emperor (including his mother, aunts, sisters, etc.). While the Mughal *haram* did also house the Mughal Emperor's wives and concubines, not all occupants were singularly present for the sexual pleasure of the Emperor as the Orientalized concept of the harem suggests. It is with this awareness of the European male gaze that I return to the writings of Finch and Terry, where it becomes increasing clear that their Anarkali is not as much an organic historical entity, but a manner of approach to Akbar and Salim. My analysis focuses on two aspects of these Anarkali accounts in particular: one, the positioning of Anarkali between Akbar and Salim; and two, the detail of her punishment by immurement.

As I have mentioned above, one of the defining elements about Anarkali is that she is always positioned in some respect to Akbar and Salim. In the early sources of Finch and Terry, she is a wife of Akbar with whom Salim has some unacceptable relationship; this has always received a sexually scandalous interpretation, namely that a sexual rivalry between father and son resulted in incest. I propose a different approach to the accounts of Finch and Terry, in which

the focus is on Anarkali as a point of some sort of breach between Akbar and Salim—a breach that invokes the historical tension between emperor and heir apparent between 1600-1605 when Salim rebelled against his father. Through a close reading of these early accounts in conjunction with Finch's and Terry's other travel writings, I suggest that their accounts of Anarkali have very little to do with exposing a sexual scandal. Instead, Anarkali is used as a medium to highlight the anxiety of dysregulation of Akbar's (and later Jahangir's) private royal domain as emblematic of the threat of dysregulation throughout Mughal society as a whole.

The second detail about Anarkali, her immurement, recorded by Finch alone, is a remarkable one, to say the least. Finch records "that King (Akbar) caused her to be inclosed quicke within a wall in his moholl, where shee dyed." While Finch does not use the term 'immurement', what he describes is immurement, that is, being walled-up alive. Unattested as a punishment in the Mughal Empire, it stands out as a rather peculiar detail. I consider Anarkali's immurement through two different avenues. The first is the use of the term 'immurement/immure' as it occurs in other European travel writings from the seventeenth century, which reveals that the term is applied to the imprisonment, without intent of death, of two other historical characters: Emperor Jahangir's son, Khusarau, and Emperor Aurangzeb's nephew, Sipihr Shikoh. Khusarau's imprisonment is a result of his rebellion against his father, Emperor Jahangir. Sipihr Shikoh's imprisonment is a result of his and his father's (Dara Shikoh) failed succession war against Aurangzeb. What we find in these instances, then, is immurement as imprisonment of agents of dysregulation, a parallel, I argue, seen in the figure of Anarkali. The second avenue I employ is the folklore motif of immurement, being walled-up alive with the intent of death, best recorded in Dundes' compilation *The Walled-Up Wife* (1996). A folklore motif very much present in Eastern Europe and a possible importation by Finch, I consider the

motif's manifestation in two Indian ballads: a Northwest Indian ballad called "Kulh" (The Waterway) recorded by anthropologist Kirin Narayan in the 1990s and a South Indian Kannada ballad called "Keregehara" (A Feast for the Well), the author of which is unknown. What comes to the forefront in these two Indian ballads, within the motif of the young women immured, is the significance of the location of her immurement: it is the proper functioning of the location (in this case the waterway and the well) that is at stake. For Anarkali, Finch records that she is walled up right within Akbar's palace, "in his moholl (palace)." From this perspective, I suggest, her immurement lends itself to the functioning of Akbar's domestic domain.

A close reading of Finch's and Terry's Anarkali narrative is critical because their accounts permanently color Anarkali's appearance in the works of later local historians. The second part of chapter two tracks the written transmission of the Anarkali narrative. Not mentioned in any other accounts by writers contemporary or near contemporary to the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir (Salim), the next earliest written reference to Anarkali does not appear until the nineteenth century. At this point, the transmission seems to appear in two strains of the narrative. The first, recounted by Soltykoff (1842) and Latif (1892), loosely follows the accounts of Finch and Terry. The second, recorded by Lal (1884) and Chishti (1906), relates a version in which Anarkali, a serving-girl (*kaniz*) to Akbar, died a sudden death either due to sickness or poisoning by other members of the *haram*; this strain does not seem to involve Salim at all. Aside from Alexy Soltykoff, the Russian Prince on tour of Lahore in 1884, all other writers (Lal 1884, Latif 1892, Chishti 1906), are historians of Lahore and their references to Anarkali appear in their histories of Lahore. This appearance of Anarkali in the histories of Lahore is what lies at the heart of the continued hunt for her historicity. But does her appearance in 'history' make her historical? The answer, I suggest, is no. Anarkali's transmission into the works of Lahore's

historians is partly due to the long-standing historical classification given to European travel writings such as those of Finch and Terry. But, more importantly, the genre of history practiced by historians such as Lal, Latif, and Chishti stems from local genre of *tarikh,* a porous historical genre that often coexists with another genre: the *qissa*. I have briefly touched upon the genre of the *qissa* above, and while *qissas* are seemingly opposed to *tarikh,* they could easily appear in *tarikh.* In conclusion to chapter two, I propose an understanding of the appearance of Anarkali in the histories of Lahore as the appearance of the Anarkali *qissa* within *tarikh,* an approach that again radically shifts the value of Anarkali away from historicity and towards her significance in the collective imagination.

In all these early sources, Anarkali is usually a brief reference, one that signals the existence of a larger Anarkali *qissa* but does not fully record it. It is not until Imtiaz Ali Taj's seminal play *Anarkali*, the focus of chapter three, that we get a full performance/reperformance of the Anarkali *qissa.* It is important to note here that I am not suggesting that Taj's play commits to writing or captures the Anarkali *qissa,* but rather that it is *a* (re)performance of it, with the understanding that the Anarkali *qissa* lies outside any single iteration. As I discuss in chapter three, Taj's play holds a unique place in Anarkali's *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Though not published until 1931, the play often seems to reach into the past to supply a storyline for tying together the sparse early accounts of Anarkali. At the same time, the play's storyline becomes the entry point for all evolving aspects of Anarkali, the linchpin that holds together the entire tradition. Taj, a native of Lahore stepped in the topophilia of the city, first wrote the play in 1922 while still completing his Bachelor's degree at Lahore Government College, located only a few kilometers from the Tomb of Anarkali. Taj, in his preface to his work, tells us that he had originally sought to have his play performed, but that it was not accepted by local theaters. The

changes they suggested were not acceptable to Taj at the time. Taj eventually published the play in 1931. By the time Taj writes his play in 1922 and publishes it in 1932 both the Tomb of Anarkali and her appearance in local Lahori history are firmly established sources, although Taj himself refrains from attributing any historical authenticity to Anarkali or his work. In fact, Taj makes an explicit note that his play originates from the oral stories of the Anarkali *qissa* that he has heard during his childhood. He firmly situates his play in the literary and performative tradition of the Anarkali *qissa.* But what is it that we find in the play's (re)performance of the Anarkali *qissa?* I delve into this question through a close reading of the play that first and foremost focuses on the figure of Anarkali. I argue that while Taj's play pieces together a more intricate narrative and a more intricate Anarkali than ever before, she is no less a medium than ever before. What Taj employs in Anarkali is a liminal figure not only because she balances a threshold between Akbar and Salim, but because she can traverse the separation between male and female spaces in Mughal society and hence destabilize norms of status and gender. I argue this point by looking closely at Anarkali's liminality in the play which, I suggest, arises from her status as a musician, a detail wholly unseen before Taj's play. To further explicate the liminality associated with a female musician in Mughal court and society, I take into consideration a comparative and possibly influential strain of popular storytelling known as the 'Courtesan Tales'.

The 'Courtesan Tales' are accounts written by Mughal chroniclers between the sixteenth and eighteenth century that present a cautionary commentary on the scandalous relationships of Mughal noblemen with courtesans. The term 'courtesan' is a rather blanket translation for a variety of Urdu and Persian terms for female musical performers who, in a segregated Mughal society, were regulated and categorized by the spaces they performed in. The courtesans that

feature in these 'Courtesan Tales' designate a very particular category. Usually termed as *lulis* or *kancanis*, these female musicians performed solely in male-only spaces and provided sexual favors for their male patrons, though they could also be attached to a single male patron. While performing in male-only spaces afforded them a degree of independence and freedom, it also permanently barred them from entering female-only spaces such as the *haram*. Moreover, while the courtesan could be independently wealthy, her social status was still acutely inferior to those for whom she performed. The liminality of this particular kind of courtesan arises from both her gender and status, as a low-ranking (though wealthy) female in an elite male-only space. For a society such as that of the Mughals, which valued segregation and regulation by gender and social status, this kind of courtesan created a social liminality that was both unique and potentially dangerous. The potential danger arises from the courtesan's arena of social liminality, that is, the space of her musical performance. In a musical gathering, a *mehfil*, while the courtesan's performance may serve as a moment of subversion for the status-quo of the norms of gender and status, there is a danger that the subversion extends out of the performance and into reality.

Enter here the basic plot of the 'Courtesan Tale': a Mughal nobleman becomes excessively attached to a courtesan and, in neglect of his honor and duties, he decides to marry her. By deciding to marry the courtesan, the nobleman has failed to navigate the musical performance as the moment of suspended reality. Furthermore, by marrying the courtesan, the nobleman destabilizes the spatial markers of status and gender that order society because in marriage that courtesan can enter the nobleman's female only space, one that she was barred from before. While I do not propose transposing the 'Courtesan Tale' or the role of this particular kind of historically categorized courtesan on to Taj's play and the character of

Anarkali (Taj's Anarkali is clearly not a performer for male-only spaces), the tale does provide a framework with which to approach the concern that is at stake in the play: Salim's desire to marry Anarkali. In the play, Salim's desire is not for a clandestine affair, it is clearly a desire to *marry* Anarkali. Given how Taj portrays Anarkali, Salim, and the evolution of their relationship, I argue that Salim's marriage to Anarkali would enact a similar kind of boundary crossing of status (serving-girl to princess) and gender (transfer of male patronage) that plagues the 'Courtesan Tales'.

I turn also to another aspect of the 'Courtesan Tale' to further analyze Taj's portrayal of Anarkali as a musician. The question that arises both in the 'Courtesan Tale' and in Taj's play is what initially, and then excessively, attracts the male viewer (Mughal nobleman or Salim) to the female performer. The answer lies in the potency of the female performer's musical sound to the extent where it not only becomes conflated with love, but where love is portrayed *as* a musical sound. The conflation of love with music is then further extended to include intoxication, all three elements that bring forth the climax of Taj's play, the musical performance of Anarkali at the Spring Festival. There are three parts to this climactic musical performance by Anarkali which I analyze in turn in the context of the conflation between love, music, and intoxication especially, as it is during her last (third) performance that, having been drugged, she inadvertently reveals to Akbar her relationship with Salim. I conclude chapter three by considering Taj's characterization of Akbar. In his preface to the play, Taj mentions that those who have heard his story disagree about whether "this is a tragedy of Salim and Anarkali or a tragedy of Akbar the Great" (*yeh tragedy salim aur anarkali ki hai ya akbar azam ki*).[9] I argue that the tragedy of Anarkali *is* the tragedy of Akbar and, by extension, the tragedy of the Mughal

[9]Taj 2012, 6.

empire. Anarkali serves as a medium through which to localize the loss of Akbar, who, by the end of the play, is disowned by his son and has lost the future of the empire as he had once imagined it.

Chapter four looks at the performance of the Anarkali *qissa* on screen in two Indian films: Nandlal Jaswantlal's *Anarkali* (1953) and K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). Each film has a distinct approach to the Anarkali narrative as evident in their titles. The focus of *Anarkali* (1953) is on the figure of Anarkali, while it is Akbar that constitutes the focal point of *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), translated as 'The Great Mughal' (that is, Akbar). Before delving into a close reading of each on-screen performance, I look at what the medium of film provides for a narrative performance that, up to this point, in both its textual and oral transmission has lacked the register of visual representation. In doing so, I consider the semiotics of film and find that the filmic sign, compared to the linguistic sign, is defined by a decreased distance between its signifier and signified. I give the following example: reading the word "mirror" may invoke for a reader different mental images as well as a variety of signified meanings or associations, but the on-screen image of a particular "mirror" is presented to the audience as a much more concrete signifier; i.e., the same "mirror" is being viewed by all members. So that while individuals may interpret the image of the "mirror" differently, the form of the "mirror" is identical for everyone. This shared visibility of the filmic signifier lends it a level of control on how a narrative is made visible and what components of the narrative are excluded from visibility. The filmic sign, then, produces an elasticity of visibility and it is under this elasticity that I approach each on-screen performance of the Anarkali narrative. That is, I am interested in understanding what components of the Anarkali narrative each film makes visible and/or invisible.

I take one other essential methodological step before proceeding to a close reading of each film performance. Most current scholarship on the films *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) is intricately woven around, one, the assumption of Taj's authority over the Anarkali narrative, and two, the role of national ideology in Indian cinema. The first, I argue, unnecessarily casts the films as adaptions of Taj's play with a linear line of transmission, whereas the films are better contextualized more broadly in the film trend of the first half of the twentieth century that saw of preoccupation with Mughal era period pieces. Secondly, the lens of national ideology in Indian cinema often sees films such as *Anarkali* (1953), but more importantly, *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), as active representations of national identity. The productions of both *Anarkali* and *Mughal-e-Azam* span the decades surrounding the Partition (1947), the division that separated British India into two independent nations: India and Pakistan. While I note that both films are contextually significant for their cultural relevance to the then nascent Indian national identity as it negotiated its own Muslim Mughal heritage, I also reiterate that my approach to the films is concerned mainly with reading the filmic reperformance of the Anarkali *qissa* and less so with historical causality.

The close reading of each film is centered around three critical aspects of the Anarkali narrative that I refer to as follows: the draw of Anarkali; the dance of Anarkali; and the death of Anarkali. The draw of Anarkali pulls on how each film frames their introduction of the character of Anarkali and what is presented as her draw. I argue that the film *Anarkali* (1953) brings to the forefront from the very start of the film the liminality of Anarkali with respect to Akbar and his royal sphere, where she stands both outside his sphere of influence and literally outside the sphere of his royal palace. Yet, her character will continue to negotiate the threshold between being outside the palace/sphere of influence and being inside the palace/sphere of influence. In

Mughal-e-Azam (1960) Anarkali's draw is a postponed one. Since the frame of *Mughal-e-Azam* is the narrative about Akbar, as indicated by the title, the film does not begin with Anarkali. Rather, Anarkali has a delayed introduction and when she does enter the film narrative, as a statue in disguise, she is posited as an artifice which invokes her continuing appearance as a medium.

The second aspect, the dance of Anarkali, considers the visual representation of the climactic musical performance of Anarkali where her relationship with Salim is fully exposed to Akbar. I note from the discussion on Taj's portrayal of Anarkali as a musician and the comparable paradigm of the 'Courtesan Tale' that the musical performance is a potentially dangerous arena of liminality that features the conflation of love, music, and intoxication. In *Anarkali,* Anarkali's climactic musical performance serves as a collapse of her characteristic liminality so that when, drugged and intoxicated, she enters the space of her musical performance she has been destabilized by her own musical sound. Anarkali's dance essentially visualizes the dangerous collapse of the boundaries of status and gender that plague not only the 'Courtesan Tales', but Taj's play as well. On the other hand, the dance of Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam* could not be more different. Unintoxicated, Anarkali enters the space of her climactic musical performance in complete control and, still in complete control, crosses the boundary between performance and reality. Her famous song, *pyar kiya to darna kya* ("Why fear love"), is a challenge to Akbar that spells out a purposeful extension of her control beyond the space of her musical performance into reality; that is, she spells out that her love for Salim is not a facet of her performance, but a fact of reality.

The third and final aspect, the death of Anarkali, focuses on how Anarkali's end is visualized on screen. Here again, the two films diverge significantly. In *Anarkali,* Anarkali is

walled-up alive brick by brick. In *Mughal-e-Azam*, she is allowed by Akbar to escape through an underground tunnel, although to the knowledge of everyone else, including Salim, she has been immured. I propose here that in both films, the last scenes of the 'death of Anarkali', circle back to the beginning of each film, evoking the essential draw of Anarkali as depicted in each film. In *Anarkali*, her immurement far away from the palace evokes the same liminality that she balances at the beginning of the film when she is shown to stand outside of Akbar's royal sphere and influence, yet continuously negotiates its threshold. In *Mughal-e-Azam*, the treatment of the 'death of Anarkali' is absolutely unique in that it allows Anarkali to live. The idea that Anarkali is allowed to live is, at least, what seems to be the purpose of underground tunnel scene. It is most often understood as a moment emblematic of Akbar's clemency. But I suggest that it not so much a question of life and death, but that the underground tunnel scene, in how it portrays an inert Anarkali, returns Anarkali to the statue that she was introduced as. It returns Anarkali to the artifice she is.

In conclusion to the four chapters, I revisit Alice and her trip *Through the Looking Glass* in conjunction with the Anarkali *qissa* to once again ask as whose 'dream' Anarkali functions. I return, in particular, to the two salient elements of Anarkali: one, her limited position between Akbar and Salim and, two, her artifice as construed under the male gaze. But here I take one step further. I look at two other brief appearances by Anarkali (in Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* and in a 2014 graphic short story titled 'Anarkali') to understand the spectrum of 'dreaming' Anarkali. While it is clearly possible to 'dream' of Anarkali, I question if there is a possibility for Anarkali to be the dreamer; that is, what happens if it is Anarkali's 'dream' and not vice versa? Is there space for her to step outside her own artifice? Can Anarkali be untethered from the two

salient features that have thus far defined her or would she simply go out “Bang! Just like a candle.”

Chapter One

Tomb and City

The focus of this chapter is on the tomb widely known as the Tomb of Anarkali in Lahore, Pakistan. As a physical, tangible entity it has always served as evidence for the historicity of Anarkali but, in turn, remains an enigma since there is no determined historicity of Anarkali. How do we then understand a tomb as something other than historical evidence? How can we make sense of the Tomb of Anarkali if we concede that Anarkali is only a narrative creation? The answers to these questions, I will propose, lie at the cross section of monumental memory and topophilia; that is, the tomb finds its meaning as a monument of memory in the topophilia of Lahore.

A Mughal Tomb

References to Anarkali's tomb, a material structure on the physical landscape of Lahore, surface early in the written accounts of the narrative. One of the earliest records of Anarkali occurs in the travel writings of the Englishman William Finch. Writing about his travels in India from 1608 to 1611, Finch records that while visiting Lahore he saw

> ...a faire monument for Don Sha,[10] his mother, one of the Acabar his wives, with whom it is said Sha Selim had to do (her name was Immacque Kelle, or Pomgranate kernell); upon notice of which the King (Akbar) caused her to be inclosed quicke within a wall in his moholl, where shee dyed, and the King (Jahangir), in token of his love, commands a sumptuous tombe to be built of stone in the midst of a foure-square garden richly walled with a gate and divers roomes over it.[11]

[10] "Don Sha" is usually identified as the Mughal prince Daniyal (Eraly 1997, 911; Foster 1968, 166 n.5), whose birth to a one of Akbar's concubines (*khwas*) is recorded by Emperor Jahangir in his *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*.

[11] Finch in Foster (ed.) 1968, 166.

Finch's account of Anarkali ("Immacque Kelle", "Pomegrante kernell") is triggered directly by the physical monument that he sees. What he sees is something that demands notice. The seemingly simple description of the structure as a "sumptuous tombe" located in the middle of "a foure-square garden" in context denotes a structure of high status. Only royal Mughal tombs were situated within a square garden. Common Mughal funerary practice involved underground graves with simple surface markers. Beyond that, tombs could take two forms: the simpler iteration would be an irregular enclosure and the more prestigious iteration would be a raised, expansive square or octagonal structure within a square garden.[12] The latter was reserved for royal status. James Wescoat, an eminent scholar on Mughal architecture and landscape, has proposed that while the architectural style of a Mughal tomb was constrained by Islamic law, the garden surrounding it was not and, hence, the size of the garden could be used to indicate status differentiations among the Mughal elite.[13] While there is a dearth of historical sources that offer a guide on how a garden size was established, Wescoat investigates the question by considering the size of extant tomb-gardens of Lahore and the factors of rank and status, where rank refers to the *mansabdari* system (an administrative system) and status to the more complex overlap of a person's character, conduct, contributions, and overall social standing in relation to the emperor. Status could be assessed and re-assessed at the point of death, which is why a rebellious prince might not have a tomb at all or why the emperor's childhood wet nurse might have a relatively larger tomb. Status seems to have had a stronger correlation to the tomb-garden size than rank. While, as Wescoat notes, there is no systematic conclusion that matches status to garden size, we

[12] Wescoat 1994, 324. For geometric patterns and designs of Mughal palace and tomb complexes see Asher (1992) and Koch (2002).

[13] Wescoat 1994, 326. Wescoat also traces the development of the tomb-gardens in the Muslim history of the region in general and notes that gardens were not an Arab funerary practice.

can assume that the tomb that William Finch saw did indeed belong to an individual of royal status given its enclosure within a square garden. Hence not only did it demand attention, but to take a step further, it also demanded an explanation; that is, a tomb of such royal status cannot be passed over in anonymity. The point that I would emphasize here is that Finch's account of Anarkali serves to explain what he sees so that it is the structure that instigates the narrative.

But whether the tomb that Finch records is that same one that stands in Lahore today is unclear. Today, the monument identified as the tomb of Anarkali stands, white-washed, on the southeast corner of the Punjab Civil Secretariat complex in Lahore (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Tomb of Anarkali, Present Day (https://archaeology.punjab.gov.pk/anarkali-tomb)

This Mughal monument that dates to the early seventeenth century was originally built in Lahori burnt brick with lime mortar and originally stood on the left bank of the Ravi river (Figure 2).



Figure 2: *From An old Sketch of Anarkali Tomb* (Chaudhry 2002).

The drastic change is due to both the extensive remodeling of the structure itself by the British and the Sikhs over the eighteenth and nineteenth century and to the dwindling of the once powerful and expansive Ravi River.

While many of the more detailed and decorative facets of the monument have not survived, the basic structure remains intact. An octagonal tomb, with sides that measure 44 feet and 30 feet, is supported in each corner by a corresponding octagonal tower, the dome of which mimics the central dome of the tomb. The present-day monument is not enclosed within a garden with marked boundaries.[14] The historical record of a potential surrounding garden is addressed in detail later in this chapter, but we can generally surmise that a garden must have existed since it

[14] Note that while Wescoat (1994) mentions the Mughal tomb of Anarkali in Lahore in his survey of tomb-gardens of Lahore, he does not include it in his analysis since it does not have a clear garden boundary marker anymore.

is unlikely that an octagonal tomb would have been built without one; as noted above, tombs without gardens were usually irregular enclosures.

The interior has two stories that mimic the layout and are connected by a narrow turret staircase (Figure 3).

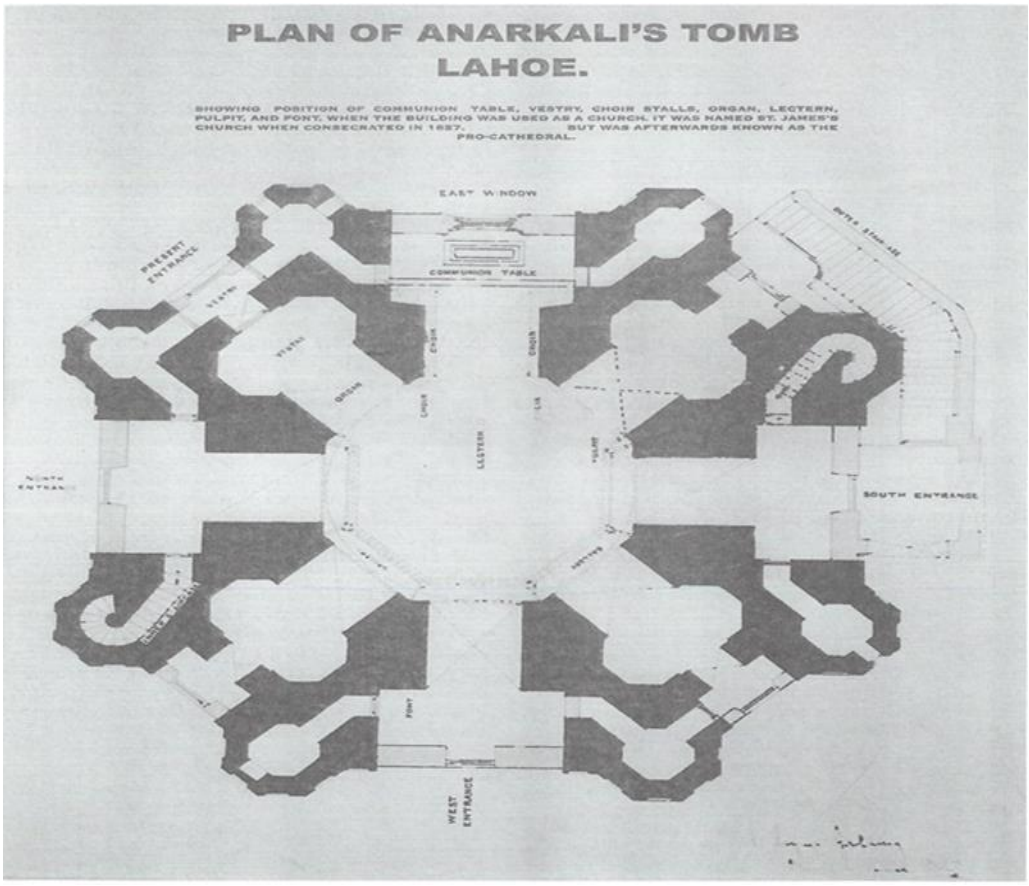


Figure 3: Internal Plan of Tomb as recorded during its service as a Church (Chaudhry 2002).

The original marble flooring has not survived, neither have the detail of the original decorative scheme that would have had ornamental lime plaster panels on the exterior and frescos in the interior.[15]

[15] A more minutely detailed architectural description of the tomb can be best found in both Chaudhry (2002) and Rehmani (2016).

Again, whether this structure is the one that Finch records is unclear due to potential inconsistencies that I will address later in this chapter when we turn to the recorded history of the monument. But the present structure *is* the one that Taj mentions in the preface of his play *Anarkali*:

> The version of this *dastan* that stands in a frame, from the Department of Archeology, in the tomb of Anarkali in Lahore, is this: 'The civil station of Lahore is known by the name of Anarkali. This title [Anarkali] was given to Nadira Begum or Sharif al-Nisa Begum, a favorite courtesan [*kaniz*] in Emperor Akbar's haram. One day Akbar was sitting in the *Shish-Mahal* and a young Anarkali was busy in his service when he saw in the mirrors that she was responding to Salim's signs with smiles. On account of inciting his son to rebellion he gave the order to have her buried alive. Accordingly, in carrying out the order she was made to stand straight on an appointed spot and around her a wall was cemented. Salim was saddened beyond measure by her death. After taking the throne, he had built on top of Anarkali's grave a very grand building. Its tombstone/cenotaph is made of a single piece of pure marble. With respect to its beauty it is unusual and with respect to its features it is a wonder of the world. According to Mr. Eastwick, it is one of the best examples of stone carving in the world. On top of it are inscribed the 99 names of Allah. On its border is inscribed the following verse, the one that Anarkali's lover Emperor Jahangir spoke himself:
>
> Ah! could I behold the face of my beloved once more
> I would give thanks to my God until the day of Resurrection
> (Majnun Salim Akbar)'
>
> In another frame are written the dates of this building that note in which time/year what service the building was used for. In this record, the date of Anarkali's immurement is given as 1599 and date of the tomb's completion is given as 1615.[16]
>
> *Lahore main mehkmeh asar kadmi ki taraf se anarakli key maqbare main is ki jo dastan ek frame main lagi hoi hai us ka tarjumah ye hai: Lahore ka civil station anarkali ke nam se mashoor hai. Yeh khitab shehenshah akbar ke harm main nadira begum ya sharif-al-nisa begum ek manzoor nazar kaniz ko mila tha. Ek roz akbar shesh mahal main behta tha naujawan anarkali is khidmat main masroof thi. To akbar ne ainoon main dekh liya ke salim ke asharoon ka jawab tabasam se de rahi hai. Betey seh mujarmaneh sazish ke shobeh par shehenshah ne usey zinda gard deneh ka hukum deya. Chunachan hukum ki tameel main usey maqrah maqam par sedah kharda kar keh us ke gird dewar chun di gaye. Salim ko us ki maut ka behhad sadmah hua. Takth par betne ke bad us ne anarkali ki kabar ek nehayat alishan amarat bunwa di. Us ka taweez khalas sang-e-marmar ki ek hi sil se bana hua hai. Jo apne husan ke etbar se gher mamuli au naksh ke etbar se nadir rozgar hai. Beqwal eastwick ke yeh taweez dunya main sang-e-tarashi ke behthareen namunoon main se hai. Is ke upar allah-tallah ki 99 safat kandah hain. Pehloon par ye sher khuda hua hai. Jo anarkali ke ashiq shah-e-jahangir ne khud kaha tha.*

[16] Taj 2012, 6-7. All translations of Taj are my own unless noted otherwise.

Ah! agar man baz binam rui yar khuish ra.
ta kiyamat shukar guim kard gar khuish ra
Salim Majnun Akbar

Ek dusare frame main is amarat ki tarikh likhi hai ke kis zamane main is amarat se kya kam liya geya. Is silsale main anarakli ke zinda gardne ki tarikh 1599 aur maqbareh ki takmeel ki tarkikh 1615 darj hai.

Note that Taj does not actually discuss the tomb. He acknowledges the tomb in a rather oblique way by quoting the frames that are housed within it; that is the extent of his engagement with the physical structure. He does not himself relay any information or description about the tomb nor does he comment on how to understand its existence or presence. This is quite surprising since, in his preface, he clearly asserts that, in his opinion, the whole episode of Anarkali has no historical basis: "As far as I have been able to research, this story has no historical basis" (*jahan tak main tehqiq kar saka hoon tariki ehtibar se yeh qissa be bunyad hai*).[17] He asserts this not once, but multiple times. If the narrative of Anarkali is wholly fictitious (as Taj espouses), then how do we understand the tangible existence of the tomb? Taj offers no explanation. Yet, while he avoids any substantial engagement with the structure, he cannot ignore it.

How do we then make sense of this material landmark and what role does it play in negotiating between history and narrative, between the past and the present? This chapter unpacks what we can make of this tomb as a monument by essentially focusing on the relationship between architecture, memory, and narrative. Before delving into the specific case of Anarkali's tomb and its significance to Lahore (and its inhabitants), I first look at a theoretical framework for monumentality and narrative in architecture (or architecture in narrative). While much, though not all, of the theoretical and comparative scholarship I engage with clearly comes

[17] Taj 2012, 5.

from Western tradition and cannot be assumed to speak wholly for a culturally emic understanding of Anarkali's tomb (or Mughal monuments in general), I agree with Kolb's formulation of where we can find value in such an approach. An anthropologist whose extensive field work analyzes monumental architecture across the Mediterranean, the Pacific and Africa, Kolb offers that

> While a culturally specific "emic" framework certainly dictates how and why a monument is utilized in a contextual fashion, there are also general "etic" insights that may be employed to better understand why humanity, from the inception of complex culture to the present day, continues to construct and utilize monuments. The internal emic perspective is often viewed as incommensurable with the comparative external etic viewpoint; however, synergy between the two does exist, and I employ both approaches in a complementary fashion where one stimulates the other's progress.[18]

Monumentality

In order to unpack this enigmatic, white-washed structure that stands on the physical landscape of Lahore, we start broadly by first addressing the basic dynamic between space and place. Formative works by scholars such as the eminent French philosopher Henri Lefebvre and the American-Chinese geographer Yi-Fu Tuan have given us a clear understanding of how physical space turns into place once it is imbued with cultural and cognitive factors of experience, memory, and social exchanges.[19] Yi-Fu Tuan describes space as more abstract than place so that "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value."[20] Tuan explains this "value" as "felt value," and that "places are centers of felt value" where, on a most basic level, human biological needs are satisfied, but also

[18] Kolb 2019, 2.

[19] Lefebvre 1991, Tuan 2001.

[20] Tuan 2001, 6.

where the perceived and experiential meaning of those needs resides.[21] The "felt value" of place stems then from an *emic* register since it is culturally and internally determined. Tuan's "felt value" loosely maps onto what Henri Lefebvre would classify as "lived space" in his three-fold dialectic of space. Lefebvre's triad of space encompasses perceived space, conceived space, and lived space. Perceived space is the material space of our spatial practices; it is our physical spatial world and how we act in it so, for example, the route we choose to take based on our daily routine and the urban reality (what street connects where and how long it would take, etc.). Conceived space (also called "representations of space") is the dominant realm of space in which spatial knowledge and codes of spatial knowledge are controlled and executed by urban planners, engineers, scientists, and even political actors (those who are conceptualizing space with maps, blueprints, and even ideology). The actors and transactions involved in planning a new housing community, for example, would fall under conceived space. Lived space, or representational space, is the space of "inhabitants" and how it is experienced by those inhabitants through the kinds of symbols or meaning they associate with it. It is the experience of *living* the space. It is the space "which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate," which means that it is subject not only to how we experience it, but how we choose to remember it.[22] Both Tuan's "felt value" and Lefebvre's "lived space" serve as the basis for the process of place-making. Kolb concisely describes place-making as a "ubiquitous social and cognitive process that is cumulative and culturally specific that, over time and space, becomes associated with a vast network of experiences and memories as people reoccupy, reuse, and recreate places."[23] Kolb, in his 2019

[21] Tuan 2001, 4.

[22] Lefebvre 1991, 38-39.

[23] Kolb 2019, 3.

book *Making Sense of Monuments*, addresses place-making as one of the main concepts in understanding monuments. Understanding monumental architecture is relevant to our discussion since tombs are often classified by scholars such as Kolb as monuments/monumental architecture; they hold a certain preeminence in material culture due in part to their comparative scale and size. Monuments are more than a physical presence on the landscape. They are a culturally emic *place* that draws on and shapes a complex association of social experiences and memories. A monument, as Kolb explains, "provides both material and psychological structure and form to society, casting social ideas and principles as being naturally true within the landscape in which they stand, and transforms private actions and behaviors into movements of the collective public."[24] A monument has both a physical and a psychological presence. It exists both in the tangible world and in our thoughts and we process these together through cognition, "a collaboration between the *mind*, the *body*, and the *environment*."[25] Kolb breaks down this cognitive process further by outlining three interrelated spatial-cognitive metaphors necessary in "making sense" of monuments—metaphor of time, metaphor of movement, and metaphor of scale— all of which work towards constructing/reconstructing and validating/re-validating the social memory that a monument can convey.[26]

Monuments have a complex hold on memory and vice versa. Citing the Indo-European etymological connection between 'monument' and 'memory', Nelson and Olin describe the relationship as "process and product, although not necessarily as cause and effect, for circulatory often obtains."[27] Monuments, in how they are preserved, used, and viewed can shape what we

[24] Kolb 2019, 3-4.

[25] Kolb 2019, 17.

[26] Kolb 2019,19-21.

[27] Nelson and Olin 2003, 4.

remember and what we choose to forget, which, in turn, can affect the monument. The potential of monuments to "redirect cultural memory" is not limited to appropriation and restoration, but often extends to destruction as well; monuments can be and often are destroyed in an attempt to recast memory, past, present, or future.[28] For example, scholar of Asian art history, Santhi Kavuri-Bauer introduces her work on Mughal monuments in India by detailing the identity politics surrounding the attempted preservation and eventual destruction of the Babri Masjid, a sixteenth-century mosque of Mughal design. Kavuri-Bauer explains that India's eighth Prime-minister, V.P. Singh strove to preserve the small mosque against the demand of Hindu-nationalists to demolish it and to build, in its place, a Hindu temple. For V.P. Singh, the preservation of the small mosque was in line with his desire for a secular democratic India. When V.P. Singh eventually lost his seat, Babri Masjid was destroyed in 1992.[29] While Kavuri-Bauer does not delve specifically into the role of social memory, her argument, with this example of Babri Masjid, that monuments hold power for directing national and social identities essentially functions on the dialectics of how any given society constructs its identity and history through memory; that is, what a society remembers and what it forgets.[30] Hence the eventual destruction of Babri Masjid indicates a desire to revise the social memory associated with that site. It is not a unanimous desire. In this case, it is a specific political desire, that of the Hindu nationalists, to exhibit a triumph that would translate into the memory of the destruction of the

[28] Nelson and Olin (2003) suggest one step further that a building of a certain scale (not yet a monument), can become a monument *through* its destruction. In a conclusion to the compiled essays in the edited work *Monuments and Memory: Made and Unmade*, they apply this to the WTC and its status of monument after its catastrophic destruction; they suggest that its destruction changed it from being a *milieu de memoire* to a *lieu de memoire*.

[29] Kavuri-Bauer 2011, 1-4.

[30] For memory and forgetting Hutton (1993) and Connerton (1989).

Babri Masjid. One additional point that Kavuri-Bauer notes is the contention of such a monument as a public space which, I suggest, signals a potential disconnect between public memory and collective memory.

In the discussion of the relationship between monuments and memory, scholars often do not specifically distinguish between social memory, collective memory, cultural memory, and public memory. Van Dyke points out that many recent scholars studying memory at the intersection of anthropology and archeology use these memory terms interchangeably to denote a kind of shared memory as opposed to individual memory, but that these memory terms all possess distinct contextual meanings. 'Collective' and 'cultural' memory as developed by Nora and Halbwachs denotes a distinct relationship to national identity, whereas 'public' memory can be discordant, a counter-history that opposes the formal records. 'Social' memory is the most general term that lacks the connotation of national identity.[31] Of course, these 'kinds' of memory are not mutually exclusive and can overlap and interweave with one another. Memory is not stable or singular; a point about the fluidity and multiplicity of memory that I will return to throughout the chapter especially as it relates to Mughal monuments specifically.

Coming back to Kolb's spatial cognitive metaphors I will reserve discussing the spatial cognitive metaphors of movement and scale until later in this chapter where they will be most relevant and focus here on the metaphor of time since it most directly addresses the capacity of memory.

[31] Van Dyke 2019, 209-210. For the formative notion of collective memory see Nora (1996) and Halbwachs (1992). Cf. Ricoeur (2004) who addresses the potential connectedness and relationship between individual memory and collective memory by identifying the middle realm of the memory that we share with our "close relations" (93-132). For public memory cf. Shackle (2001) who presents a more nuanced idea of public memory that it is not always a counter-history, but that it is more dependent on the current political public impulse that can be different from a national perspective. Radstone and Shwarz (2010) provide a helpful overview of the study of memory.

According to Kolb's configuration, the spatial cognitive metaphor of time, or monumental time, encompasses 'prospective memory' and 'retrospective memory'.[32] 'Prospective memory' is forward facing in that it deals with the conveyance of ideas or experiences that are deemed worthy. It is the collective memory that a monument strives to pass on.[33] 'Retrospective memory', on the other hand, allows us to reconstruct the past by rearranging what is remembered and what is forgotten.[34] Kolb calls these tangents, but 'prospective memory' and 'retrospective memory' are not mutually exclusive. In discussing 'prospective memory' of prehistoric monuments, archeologist Richard Bradley concedes that both past and future memory of monuments can become unstable, especially over a long period of time, affecting one another.[35] Neither prospective or retrospective memory is certain or fixed and a shift in one can affect a shift in the other; that is, a shift in the retrospective memory of a monument (what is chosen to be remembered and what is forgotten) can affect the prospective memory a monument will convey to future generations and vice versa. This convergence of unstable prospective and retrospective memories creates a fluidity and a potential for multiplicity; as Lefebvre would note, monumental work has a "horizon of meaning."[36] In *Archaeologies of Memory,* a diverse collection of essays on memory by archaeologists working across geographic and chronological contexts, one connecting thread is clear: "people remember or forget the past according to the needs of the present, and social memory is an active and ongoing process."[37]

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[32] Kolb 2019, 21-22.

[33] For the concept of monumental time and further on 'prospective memory' see Holtorf (1997).

[34] For 'retrospective memory' see also Williams (2003).

[35] Bradley 2002, 82-111.

[36] Lefebvre 1991, 222.

[37] Van Dyke and Alcock 2003, 3.

This "active and ongoing process" of memory is a selective construction and reconstruction, one, to take a step further, that gives it a distinct performative character especially as it relates to monuments. Memory, Vanvalkenburgh notes, is not a "substance 'banked' in monuments, texts, and artifacts, but a process of assembly in which sites of memory are continually redefined and repositioned through different performances."[38] The performance, as Vanvalkenburgh goes on to suggest, is best understood as the overlap or engagement between representations and practices that occupy monumental space; representations and practices that are also subject to change. Memory does not sit in a monument as a fixed marker, it is performed as a changing dialectic between representations, practices, and experiences.

Furthermore, this "ongoing process" or "process of assembly" of monumental memory that is reconstructed through performance and re-performance is not unlike that of oral tradition.[39] Narrative and narrative-making, in general, has a significant relation to monuments, especially as a medium for communicating and shaping retrospective and prospective memory. Unpacking the role of narrative in understanding monuments will be a crucial piece in making sense of the tomb of Anarkali, especially, as we have already noted, since for both, Finch and Taj, the narrative of Anarkali is bound up, from its inception, with the physical structure of the tomb.

Monuments and Narrative

The relationship between narrative and architecture, in general, has been approached from many different scholarly avenues. Scholar of Architecture and the Built Environment,

[38] VanValkenburgh 2017, 121.

[39] Bradley 2002, 111.

Sophia Psarra, in *Architecture and Narrative*, addresses how acknowledging the connection between narrative and architecture stems from rejecting the long-held opposition, in architecture, between the conceptual and perceptual, between form and meaning.[40] The conceptual aspects encompass the *conceived* realm of form and spatial structure, while the perceptual aspects encompass the *perceived* realm of spatial experience. Psarra argues that these aspects are not binary or mutually exclusive, but rather "interacting systems of ordering experience" that together shape cultural meaning.[41] This interaction of the conceptual and the perceptual aspect of architecture arises from spatial cognition, the "cognitive link" between the designer and the viewer.[42] It is this "cognitive link" that, for Psarra, allows for the connection between narrative and architecture:

> A narrative requires a narrator and a reader in the same way in which architecture requires an architect and a viewer. A narrative, therefore, is not only the content of the story that is narrated, or the way in which it is interpreted by readers, but also the way in which it is structured and presented to an audience by an authorial entity, a writer, a film-maker, an architect or the curator of an exhibit. The relationship between narrative structure, perceptual experience and representation is the aspect of narrative that is most relevant to architecture...[43]

The potential comparison between the experience of text and space or the textual character of space was already noted by anthropologist Henrietta Moore in 1986 in *Space, Text, and Gender* where her field study of the domestic and social space as experienced by the Marakwet tribe in

[40] Psarra 2009, 2.

[41] Psarra 2009, 4. In moving away from the binary understanding of conceptual and perceptual aspects of architecture, she is largely engaged and arguing against Tschumi (1996).

[42] Psarra 2009, 4.

[43] Psarra 2009, 2.

Kenya led her to suggest that, much like a text, space can be experienced differently by different people.[44]

Delving deeper into this comparison between text and space, Psarra explores the relevance of narrative to architecture through two avenues: narration in architecture and architecture in narration. The first focuses on how architecture can relate narratives through its spatial experiences, arrangement, design, etc. Examples of these include museums, galleries, and cultural buildings.[45] While she does not specifically address monuments, 'cultural buildings' are what come closest to that category. The main concept here suggests that certain kinds of architecture can impart or present narratives to its viewers to absorb or read. Archaeologists of the Neolithic age often discuss the "reading" of monuments and draw a similar comparison between text and monuments. British Archaeologist Julian Thomas, in his work on Neolithic societies, writes that

> monuments as parts of a landscape can be seen as the equivalents of written discourse; they 'inscribe' space as parts of a chain of signification. No monument should be looked on as a system of meaning closed in upon itself. Indeed, monuments are demonstrably 'intertextual', laden with nuances of mutual reference...so although meaning is invoked or produced in the physical encounter with a monument, this act of 'reading' the monument may still be open to interpretation. [46]

The potential textual quality, the experience of interpretation, of space and architecture in general seems particularly amplified in monuments. We can find an early connection between narrative and monumental space in Lefebvre's writing as well where he moves from noting a monologic poetic quality of monumental space to suggesting a dialogic theatrical quality:

> Inasmuch as the poet through a poem gives voice to a way of living (loving, feeling, thinking, taking pleasure, or suffering), the experience of monumental space may be said

[44] Moore, 1986.

[45] Psarra 2009, 4, 109-185.

[46] Thomas 1999, 38; see also Bradley 2002, 82-111.

> to have some similarity to entering and sojourning in the poetic world. It is more easily understood, however, when compared with texts written for the theatre, which are composed of dialogues, rather than with poetry or other literary texts, which are monologues.[47]

The experience of monumental space is analogous to the experience of a textual dialogue. Lefebvre's comparison again draws out the aspects of engagement, exchange, and performance in the experience of monumental space. Banerjee puts this comparison into practice by presenting the architecture of Humayun's Tomb (second Mughal emperor) in New Delhi as a literal unfolding of a narrative. Assigning literary roles to the architecture (the tomb is the protagonist) and literary techniques (framing, fading, etc.), Banerjee argues that the experience of visiting Humayun's tomb should be understood as a narrative experience.[48]

Whereas this analogous relationship between narrative and architecture (and monuments, in particular) emphasizes the parallel experience of both, Psarra's second line of investigation (i.e.. architecture in narrative) explores a more embedded connection. Psarra turns to the narrative fiction of Borges to illustrate the capacity of architecture to not only frame a narrative's temporal sequence, but also serve as a model of the literary and philosophical thoughts the narrative is attempting to communicate.[49] Psarra supports her hypothesis of the role of architecture in narrative by looking closely at four of Borges' fictions: *The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero*, *The Garden of Forking Paths*, *Death and the Compass*, and *The Library of Babel.* These four fictions, for Psarra, engage architectural space as a means to highlight the contestation between linear sequence and infinite possibilities; that is, while the geometry and symmetry of architecture can seemingly impart a sense of linear sequentiality and closure,

[47] Lefebvre 1991, 224.

[48] Banerjee 2017.

[49] Psarra 2009, 67-69.

Borges' use of it, in these narratives, essentially undermines exactly that and instead exposes the infinite plurality that exists both in the architectural space and the narrative itself. Psarra concludes that "architecture and fiction for Borges do not represent reality as it actually is. They are attempts to express *what reality actually lacks*; that is, an underlying framework, a perfect order that can explain the conflicting empirical and time-bound aspects of everyday life."[50]

Both of Psarra's avenues (narration in architecture and architecture in narration) show that there is a plurality of experience that connects the two. But there is one avenue that Psarra does not consider, when architecture and narrative co-exist in the same space. More specifically, when a monument is interconnected to its own narrative in a way that meaning becomes bound to the co-existence of the two. This avenue will be most relevant in making sense of the tomb of Anarkali. To explicate this unique relationship between monument and narrative, I will briefly discuss two examples: the tomb of Arthur and the tomb of Virgil.

The figure of Arthur has always struggled and continues to struggle with its own historicity. The question of whether or not Arthur was a real historical personality continues to fuel scholarship.[51] The so-called tomb of Arthur at Glastonbury has played a vital role in serving as physical evidence to the historical existence of Arthur. In his preface to the original publication of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* in 1485, William Caxton specifically mentioned the tomb at Glastonbury as evidence: "ye may see his sepulture in the monasterye of Glastyngbury."[52] Recall here Taj's inclusion of the tomb of Anarkali in his preface to the play. While Caxton cites the tomb explicitly as evidence for the historical existence of Arthur and Taj

[50] Psarra 2009, 86.

[51] Green (2007) covers this in detail.

[52] Caxton 2013, 'Prologue to *Le Morte d'Arthur*'.

specifically stops short of doing that, there is a similarity in how the narrative becomes bound to a physical structure (or how a physical structure becomes bound to a narrative) in a sort of mutualism. In current Arthurian scholarship, the tomb at Glastonbury is quite widely seen as a conscious development to bolster the Abbey rather than as evidence for a historical person.[53] The original exhumation of the remains and relics of Arthur and Guinevere occurred in 1191 in a particular context: Glastonbury Abbey needed to attract the attention (and hence the patronage and funding) of King Richard I in order to rebuild the buildings destroyed during a fire in 1184.[54] Clancy notes that "the monks may well have dug up an authentic Anglo-Saxon burial, but the identity of the bodies and the 'miraculous' circumstances of the discovery were clearly falsified."[55] But that does not withhold the physical tomb (the relics were transferred to a tomb in 1278) from becoming inseparably woven into the Arthurian romance tradition. While tracing the earliest literary references to Arthur's burial, it is clear that the exhumation at the Abbey espoused the literary depiction of Arthur's burial at Glastonbury (earlier sources mention a burial, but not at a location aside from the Isle of Avalon).[56] But the consequent literary depiction of Arthur's burial becomes so dominant that it begins to inform the tomb just as the tomb had initially informed the literary depiction; the tomb then becomes both a real and imagined space.

While the tomb of Arthur stands as an example of how narrative can overtake so-called 'reality' or 'historicity', the tomb of Virgil offers an even more complex relationship between narrative and tombs since it folds together both literary existence and literary works of buried poets. In their introduction to the collected essays in *Tombs of the Ancient Poets*, Goldschmidt

[53] Green 2007, 12.

[54] Clancy 2018, 125.

[55] Clancy 2018, 126; see also Barber (2001).

[56] Clancy 2018, 136-138.

and Graziosi note that tombs of poets "are also, and more intensely than other tombs, sites of reading, because the 'reading' of the tomb is in effect intertextual, in dialogue not only with other tombs, but with the oeuvre of the buried author."[57] The ancient account of Virgil's death tells us that Virgil was on route to Greece and then Asia in order to revise the *Aeneid* and then retire to a life of philosophy when he met Augustus in Athens and decided, instead, to return to Rome with him. On the journey back he developed a heat fever which worsened until he died (19 BCE) at Brundisium and his body was taken to Naples and laid to rest in a tomb on the road to Puteoli.[58] Tracking the corroboration of this account with Roman imperial sources up until the fifth century CE, Garrison argues that the ancient locale of the Neapolitan tomb was not generic, but rather served to invoke the literary Virgilian landscape: "The reference to the Via Puteolana activates a memory both of the locale of Aeneas' *katabasis* in subterranean Avernus and of the epitaphic gestures performed in its vicinity by Aeneas and retrospectively read as prefiguring the poet's final resting place."[59] The location of the Virgil's Neapolitan tomb becomes not only the resting place of the deceased poet, but also an imagined location of his literary legacy which in turn allows for an appropriation by those claiming literary agency. Both Martial and Pliny attribute the first century CE restoration of Virgil's tomb to the poet Silius Italicus and employ Silius' investment in Virgil's tomb as a means of casting him as "Virgil's material and intellectual heir."[60] While the location of Virgil's tomb becomes speculative over the next

[57] Goldschmidt and Graziosi 2018, 6.

[58] This account is found in the so-called *Vita Suetonii vulgo Donatiana*, or *VSD*: *Ossa eius Neapolim translata sunt tumuloque condita qui est in via Puteolana intra lapidem secundum* (VSD 36). See Ziolkowski and Putnam 2008, 181-198.

[59] Garrison 2018, 266.

[60] Martial, *Epigrams* 11.48–9 (and the commentary in Kay 1984); Pliny, *Epistles* 3.7; Statius, *Silvae* 4.4.51–5; Garrison 2018, 276.

several centuries, this desire and attempt to connect with Virgil's legacy re-occurs famously in the thirteenth century when Petrarch identifies Virgil's tomb with a grave at Piedigrotta near Naples. Driven by an admiration for Virgil and a desire to imitate the Latin poet in crafting his own literary persona, Petrarch found a deep investment in 'identifying' Virgil's tomb.[61] During a tour of the Neapolitan area in 1341, while he prepared for his coronation as poet laureate, and then a subsequent exploratory trip in 1343, Petrarch identifies an unmarked Roman columbarium in Piedigrotta near the Posillipo tunnel as the tomb of Virgil. Petrarch's identification was not wholly self-constructed. The general area between Naples and Puteoli (modern Pozzuoli) had a long-standing tradition identification with Virgil and his literary landscape, especially that of Aeneas's *katabasis*. In fact, the tunnel had even been associated with the magical powers of Virgil.[62] And Petrarch's identification of Virgil's tomb with the Roman columbarium has been maintained ever since. Hendrix analyzes the 'invention' of Virgil's tomb and notes that "'Virgil's tomb' is in fact a projection of literary memories and associations, inscribed into physical remains of antiquity that were otherwise difficult to document, and which therefore had little meaning independent of its literary reception."[63] The impulse noted by Hendrix is similar to the one seen for Arthur's tomb; that is, there exists a physical structure that is very much 'real', but has little meaning outside of the literary association that has been projected upon it.

I argue that spaces such as these are best understood through Soja's concept of 'thirdspace'. In this formative work, *Thirdspace,* Soja uses Borges' concept of the 'Aleph' to reinterpret Lefebvre's *Production of Space* and to denote 'thirdspace' as space where

[61] Hendrix 2018, 285.

[62] Hendrix 2018, 285.

[63] Hendrix 2018, 286.

"everything comes together...subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and the unending history."[64] Like the 'Aleph', thirdspace struggles with the constraints of language. It is essentially a space in which dialectics and binaries become problematic and detract from the meaning of the place. For our purposes, the concept of thirdspace helps illuminate the possibility of coexistence; coexistence of architecture and narrative, of history and literature, of the real and the imagined. This coexistence or the simultaneous existence captured concisely by the narrator in Borges' *The Garden of Forking Paths* when he learns that the enigmatic book of his ancestor and his undiscovered labyrinth "were one and the same."[65] It is with this framework of how we can begin to understand monumental space as coexisting as a literary place that we delve into unpacking Anarkali's tomb.

Tomb of Anarkali

While Anarkali's tomb is relatively less well-known, it is particularly significant amongst Mughal architecture across the subcontinent because it is one of the earliest known tombs from the Mughal period. Its unique construction lays the basis for the more ornametalized facets that become emblematic of later Mughal tombs; these include octagonal structures, garden settings and experimental style. The octagonal plan of this monument, especially the octagonal towers or minarets that support each corner of the structure become an essential and very recognizable

[64] Soja 1996, 56-57.

[65] Borges 1998, 124.

facet of future Mughal tomb design. They become architecturally most significant in the tomb of I'timad ud-Daula at Agra, designed and built between 1622 and 1628 by Empress Nur Jahan (wife of Jahangir) for her father. The tomb of I'timad ud-Daula is most commonly, in turn, known as the basis for the design of the Taj Mahal, which then solidifies this octagonal structuring as a key element of Mughal architecture.

Anarkali's tomb is also one of the earliest known Mughal tombs that was set in the middle of and surrounded by a formal cultivated garden. Archeologist Nabi Khan notes that structure was originally constructed "in the midst of a formal garden having a network of walkways, fountains, water channels and platforms, all enclosed by a perimeter wall with a gateway and a series of rooms and cells along the perimeter wall" all of which become emblematic facets of the future Mughal garden-tomb.[66]

Furthermore, the architectural style of the Anarkali tomb, as a product of the very early Mughal period, represents the tangible transition between Akbar and Jahangir which is marked by a high level of experimentation: "Typical of this period are highly decorated surfaces of buildings i.e., both exterior and interior. The walls are often paneled by a framework of bands. Architectural decoration is characterized by a plethora of materials: the familiar stone carving which attained new refinement with marble, stone, intarsia, painted stucco and tile-work etc." [67] Tomb architecture under Jahangir expands to include more decorative elements both in materials and design. In addition to the ornamental and experimental design that characterizes the architectural shift under Jahangir, the tomb of Anarkali possesses an absolutely unique engraved marble cenotaph.

[66] Nabi Khan 1997, 99.

[67] Chaudhry 2002, 17-18.

The marble cenotaph is the most enigmatic detail of the entire monument. It is a white marble monolith cut from a single rock in the shape of a rectangular box and measures one foot nine inches in height, seven feet in length, and one foot four inches in width (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Cenotaph of Anarkali (Rehmani, 2016)

The cenotaph remained intact and in place at the center of the tomb until the mid-nineteenth century church renovations during which it was removed from the main hall and the remains buried below it were exhumed and buried elsewhere.[68] The long ignored marble cenotaph was later rediscovered by the British scholar Eastwick in 1880, but has never been returned to its original location in the tomb.[69] Covering the majority of the white marble cenotaph are the ninety-nine names of Allah in *nastaliq* characters. It is one of the rare and earliest known examples of the use of the *nastaliq* script for monumental calligraphy. The use and appearance of

[68] Chaudhry 2002, 103.

[69] Suvorova 2011, 125.

the *nastaliq* script in the subcontinent shows a strong influence of the Persian script and is characterized by ornate, calligraphic letters that can move vertically as opposed to the use of *naksh* script that is more strongly Arabic based with bold, straight letters with no vertical movement. The inclusion of the ninety-nine names of Allah on such a structure is not uncommon. The cenotaphs of other significant Mughals such as Jahangir himself, his son and successor, Shah Jahan, and his wife, Mumtaz Mahal, all bear either the Ninety-Nine names of Allah or other Quranic verses.[70] But their appearance in *nastaliq* as opposed to *naksh* letters in this early Mughal structure is architecturally and culturally significant because until the early reign of Akbar, the *naksh* script was more generally used on tombs and monuments and the preference for the *nastaliq* script became more apparent in the later reign of Jahangir and the following Mughal emperors.[71] Hence, its appearance on this early Mughal cenotaph, again highlights the transitional period between Akbar and Jahangir.

It is the other inscriptions in the cartouches of the sides of the cenotaph that are most unusual, fall outside the pattern of Mughal tomb inscriptions and have been extremely difficult to decipher. The east and west oblong sides (if we call the north the head and the south the foot of the cenotaph) bear a hemistich each that together create the following Persian couplet:

> Ah! could I behold the face of my beloved once more
> I would give thanks to my God until the day of Resurrection
>
> *Ah! agar man baz binam rui yar khuish ra*
> *ta kiyamat shukar guim kard gar khuish ra*

These oblong sides, along with a hemistich of the couplet quoted above, bear an additional inscription each: one that reads *majnun salim akbar* ("the madly enamored Salim Akbar") and

[70] Cf. See Rehmani (2016) for inscriptions on surviving Mughal cenotaphs.

[71] Chaudhry 2011, 71; Nabi Khan 1997, 102.

the other that reads the date 1008 A.H. (1599 C.E.). On the south side, or the foot of the cenotaph, is inscribed the date 1024 A.H. (1615 C.E.).

As most scholars have continued to point out, the interpretation of these inscriptions is problematic. The first difficulty lies in understanding the Persian couplet and the phrase the *majnun salim akbar*, which can only be understood as the bold signature of the speaker of the couplet, both of which are highly uncharacteristic of a Mughal emperor. Even if we were to assume that the individual buried in the tomb was one of the wives of Emperor Jahangir (Salim), let alone a concubine or wife of Akbar, even so such an engraving would be completely inappropriate for a Mughal emperor. Suvorova notes that "no Mughal emperor would have ever said that he was 'madly in love' with his lawful wife, and that he dreamt of meeting her in the afterlife" and that "in seventeenth-century Muslim India, such romantic and poetic license would have been impossible in the relations between husband and wife, especially of such high standing."[72] Chaudhry too asserts that it is "absolutely improbable that the grand Mughal Emperor would address his married wife as 'Yar' [beloved] designate himself as 'Majnun' and aspire to see her face once again" and if we consider that the individual buried in the tomb was not his wife how then, Chaudhry questions, "could an emperor afford to publicly make such a wish to his beloved and take the liberty to be romantic and a little poetic too."[73] Nabi Khan notes that even in the case of Jahangir's later love affair with his future empress Nur Jahan, which invited the talk of most historians, Jahangir himself "was too conscious to express his sentiments publicly for his most beloved consort to the extent that his own autobiography shows no

[72] Suvorova 2011, 124.

[73] Chaudhry 2002, 21.

microscopic deflection from is royal dignity."[74] If such a passionate inscription would be unthinkable for even a legitimate wife of Jahangir, it is impossible that it could have been dedicated to a concubine or wife of Akbar. Furthermore, as Nabi Khan continues to point out, Salim's name, especially by 1615, should have been recorded in the traditional manner as Nur u'd-Din Muhammad Jahangir Padshah-i-Ghazi and that 'Salim Akbar' was used neither by Salim himself nor by his contemporary chroniclers.[75]

Scholars of Anarkali's tomb have yet only approached the inscriptions historically. While acknowledging the extremely personal nature of this couplet and signature is unprecedented and difficult to compare or categorize historically, I argue that both the couplet and the signature are not a scandalous 'slip', but conscious literary allusions to Nizami's *Layla and Majnun*; that is, Salim is casting himself not as a 'majnun', but as *the* 'majnun'. One of the most celebrated illustrated copies of Nizami's *Khamsa* (a collection of five poems that includes *Layal and Majnun*) was created under Akbar during the end of his reign (late sixteenth century) and was completed under Jahangir.[76] The colophon tells us that *Layla and Majnun* was completed in 1594.[77] We know that Jahangir was involved with the completion of the manuscript and ordered an additional illustration to be added to the end of the colophon that showed portraits of both the scribe, Abd-al Rahim, and the illustrator, Dawlat, between 1611 and 1620.[78] The timeline of the completion of *Layla and Majnun* and the manuscripts transfer to Jahangir's possession overlaps with that of Anarkali's death and the construction of her tomb (late 16th

[74] Nabi Khan 1997, 104.

[75] Nabi Khan 1997, 104.

[76] Brend 1995, 8. This is the copy that is known as the British Library manuscript (Or. 12208).

[77] Brend 1995, 65.

[78] Brend 1995, 66.

century/early 17th century). It is highly probable that Nizami's *Khamsa* was thus literarily prevalent in Akbar and Jahangir's court.

As a narrative, the story of *Layla and Majnun* provides an archetypical framework for lost love. Nizami, building on the story's Arabic origins, gave the poem its full and most recognized form in Persian in the twelfth century. Traditionally set in the seventh century, the poem recounts the love of an Arab boy named Qays who falls madly in love with a girl, Layal, from a rival tribe. He becomes known as 'Majnun' because he is possessed by maddening love. Unable to be with Layla, Majnun wanders in the desert wilderness, shunning the comforts of domestic life. After unsuccessful attempts to be together, Layla eventually dies of sorrow and soon after Majnun too dies of grief while lying on Layla's tomb.[79] While the poem quite clearly foregrounds the star-crossed relationship between Layla and Majnun and their lost love, the illustrated Mughal manuscript mentioned above highlights one other tragic relationship: the relation between Majnun and his father. The miniatures show heartrending scenes between father and son. One in which Majnun's distressed father comes to lovingly convince his son to turn home with him. Another in which Majnun's father returns to a wandering Majnun to announce that he will not live much longer. And lastly one in which Majnun grieves over this father's tomb in remorse.[80] It is not difficult to imagine the resonance of this tragic father-son relationship to Salim who himself had a complex relationship with his father that ranged from hostility to remorse.

[79] For further details about the narrative and thematic analysis of Nizami's *Layla and Majnun* see Seyed-Gohrab (2003).

[80] Brend 1995, 30.

Nor would this be the only instance of Jahangir's interest in the figure of Majnun. In fact, the Mughal *muraqqa'* (court album) under Jahangir shows an avid investment in stylized illustrations of three figures—Majnun, Solomon, and Orpheus—all three of which become symbolic representations for the Mughal emperor because of their peaceable dominion over the animal kingdom, a signification of the harmony between kingship and nature.[81] Koch explains that the "link was the *dad u dām*, the pacified animals… Solomon tamed them through regal power and justice, Majnun through the power of his love, and Orpheus brought them harmony and peace through music. All could stand for the Mughal *padshah* [emperor]—first Jahangir, then Shah Jahan—and symbolize the Golden Age of his rule." [82] I argue that both the couplet and the signature on the tomb may well have been a conscious choice by Jahangir to evoke Majnun not only as Nizami's poetic lover, but also as the symbolic representation of his kingship. While still uncommon, as a literary allusion, the couplet and the signature both make sense and are not inexplicable. Their inclusion as experiential design is also not improbable in a Jahangir's early reign which saw, as already noted, a high level of experimentation.

There is a second aspect of the inscriptions on the cenotaph that has also been difficult to interpret: the dates 1008 A.H. (1599 C.E.) and 1024 A.H. (1615 C.E.). The inclusion of two dates is uncharacteristic. Most later Mughal cenotaphs record a single date that marks the death of an individual as is the case, for example, for the cenotaphs of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Inscribed in Persian, the date on Jahangir's cenotaph is recorded in the manner: "This is the illuminated resting place if His Majesty, the Asylum of Pardon, Nur-ud Din Muhammad

[81] Koch 2010.

[82] Koch 2010, 295.

Jahangir Badshah in the year 1037 AH (1627)."[83] Nineteenth century scholars such as Latif spurred the opinion that the two dates identified on the cenotaph were those of Anarkali's execution (1599 C.E.) and the construction/completion of her tomb (1615 C.E.).[84] But this theory about the two dates has been easily debunked by certain historical facts that would make it quite improbable. For one, neither Akbar nor Salim were present in Lahore in 1599, on the so-called date of Anarkali's death. Akbar had already moved the capital from Lahore to Agra in 1598, and in 1599, while he was engaged in Deccan, Akbar had charged Salim to march against Mewar, but Salim rebelliously chose to stay in Ajmer.[85] Nabi Khan suggests that perhaps the first date records the commencement of the tomb and the second its completion, but himself then notes that since Jahangir ascended to the throne in 1605 after Akbar's death, such an interpretation of the dates would mean the construction of the tomb began during Akbar's reign and took an exceptionally long period (sixteen years) for the completion of a tomb of smaller scale.[86] Furthermore, we must call attention to the fact that Finch's account of the tomb of Anarkali in Lahore predates 1615 so that if we take 1615 to be the date of the tomb's completion, it is improbable that it is the same tomb as the one in Finch's account. In fact, Finch's account mentions a tomb made of "stone" while the structure in question was originally made of burnt brick. The enigma of these dates lies at the heart of the various scholarly theories that try to assign a concrete historical identity to Anarkali, one that is supported by the so-called evidence of these dates. Unpacking these various theories is relevant, not because any of them are able

[83] Rehmani 2016, 217.

[84] Latif 1892, 187.

[85] Eraly 1997, 223; Chaudhry 2002, 21.

[86] Nabi Khan 1997, 104.

'solve' the enigma, but rather because almost all of these theories are essentially implicit attempts at constructing a pious, legitimizing narrative of Akbar and Salim.

Identifying Anarkali

Sayed Latif, a late 19th century historian of Lahore, stands out as the single most adamant supporter of the belief in the historical existence of Anarkali and the tomb of Anarkali as her last burial place. He identifies Anarkali as Nadira Begam or Sharf-un-Nisa, a member of Akbar's haram and records a story in which Akbar witnesses Anarkali return Prince Salim's smile via a mirror and, suspecting her of collusion with Salim, orders her to be buried alive. Latif asserted that the dates on the tomb (1599 C.E. and 1615 C.E.) refer to the death of Anarkali and the construction of the tomb later by Jahangir after he took the throne.[87] But, among most historians that followed Latif, his dated argument is quite universally considered unfeasible and debunked largely due to glaring historical inaccuracies the most significant of which, as mentioned already, is that neither Akbar nor Salim were present in Lahore 1599. Hence an occurrence centered on the interaction of the three (Akbar, Salim, and Anarkali) is improbable.

The main theory that stands in opposition to Latif's refutes the association of the tomb with Anarkali and, instead, identifies the tomb as that of Sahib-e-Jamal, one of the early wives of Salim and the mother of Prince Parvez. Scholars including Baqir (1952), Chaghatai (1981), Salik (1975), and Chaudry (2002) all support this identification to varying degrees. Baqir, Salik, and Chaudhry identify Sahib-e-Jamal, who married Salim in 1589 C.E. and died in Lahore in 1599 C.E, as the daughter of Zain Khan Koka, foster brother of Akbar and governor of Kabul. Chaghatai deviates slightly from this and identifies Sahib-e-Jamal not as the daughter of Zain

[87] Latif 1892, 186-187.

Khan Koka, but his cousin; that is, according to Chaghatai, Sahib-e-Jamal was the daughter of Khwaja Hasan, uncle of Zain Khan Koka. Seemingly insignificant at first, this deviation lays open a more complicated historical account of Salim's marriages into the family of Zain Khan Koka.

Jahangir himself mentions Sahib-i-Jamal in his memoirs, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, as the mother of his son, Parvez, stating that "a son was born from Sahib-i-Jamal (Mistress of Beauty), relative of Zain Khan Koka, in the city of Kabul. My father named him Parvez." [88] The early 18th century Mughal historian Shah Nawaz also clearly identifies the mother of Prince Parvez as a relative of Zain Khan Koka. More specifically, he states that she is the daughter of Khwaja Hasan, uncle of Zain Khan Koka (that is, she is Zain Khan Koka's cousin). But Shah Nawaz also then goes on to detail that once Zain Khan Koka was given the governorship of Kabul (1596 C.E.), Salim fell in love with his daughter (while still married to Zain Khan Koka's cousin) and was determined to marry her and that while Akbar did not approve of it, he consented nevertheless: "Also in that year Sultan Salim fell in love with the daughter of Zain Khan and determined to marry her. Emperor Akbar did not approve of that impropriety but as the infatuation of the Prince was beyond all bounds, he permitted the marriage, and it took place in 1596."[89]

Akbar's initial disapproval at the 'impropriety' of Salim's marriage to the daughter of Zain Khan Koka and his eventual consent to it is also recorded by Abu'l Fazl: "...the Prince Royal became violently enamored of the daughter of Zain Khan Koka and mediated marrying

[88] *Jahangir Nama* 2000, 23 in Rehmani 2016. Excerpt is from the facsimile reprint of the earliest known manuscript (1611CE) copy. Later manuscripts (see *Jahangir Nama* 1999) record the birth more specifically from "to the daughter of Khwaja Hasan, the uncle of Zain Khan."

[89] Shah Nawaz Khan 1999 (trans. Beveridge), Vol 2. 1027.

her. His Majesty was displeased at the impropriety, but when he saw that his heart was immoderately affected he, of necessity, gave his consent." [90] The reason for Akbar's disapproval has been assumed by commentators and translators such as Beveridge to arise from the fact that, due to Salim's earlier marriage to Sahib-i-Jamal, there would now be an aunt and niece present in Salim's harem at the same time and that this was an undesirable custom.

If we can conclude then that Salim married both Zain Khan Koka's cousin (most likely called Sahib-e-Jamal) and his daughter,[91] then identifying Sahib-e-Jamal as the daughter of Zain Khan Koka proves troublesome. Furthermore, since there is no historical record of a tomb having been commissioned for either of these women, we are essentially left unconvinced of a resolute conclusion as to whom the tomb belongs. The mystery is left unsolved.

In conjunction with identifying the tomb with Sahib-i-Jamal, Chaudhry and Chaghatai have also proposed theories on how the name 'Anarkali' came to be attached to the tomb. Chaudhry and Chaghatai believe that the garden surrounding the tomb must have been known as *Bagh-i-Anarkali* (Garden of Pomegranates) due to its beauty (there is no evidence that actual pomegranates were planted there) and that when William Finch first ascribed the name of Anarkali to the tomb he saw, he must have mistaken the name of the garden for that of the tomb. But recall here another complication that if we take 1615 to be the date of the tomb's completion, it is improbable that it is the same tomb as the one in Finch's account since that predates 1615. Rehmani points out that later sources, including a nineteenth century map of Lahore, mention the existence of a *Bagh-i-Anar* (Garden of Pomegranates) in the vicinity of the tomb, but that it is unclear whether the name of the tomb informed the name of the garden or vice-versa.

[90] Abu'l Fazal, 1899 (trans. Beveridge), Vol.3. 1058.

[91] Sometimes popularly called Khas Mahal.

The avid attempt by scholars such as Baqir, Salik, Chaghatai, and Chaudhry to identify the tomb as belonging to Sahib-e-Jamal goes beyond a desire to historically and archaeologically authenticate the inscribed dates. In refuting the existence of Anarkali, there is also a conscious attempt to distance the Mughal monument from the *qissa* of Anarkali altogether. This is most evident in Chaudhry's writing, where he clearly voices what he views as the damage inflicted upon the Muslim Mughal heritage by the perpetuation of *qissa* by both Urdu and English writer: "The undue publicity attached by Urdu dramatists and fiction writers need be ignored which is to defame the Muslim rulers...It was exploited by the mythical writers and dramatists without any serious thought to the historical facts which would ultimately reflect on the Muslim culture and history in the subcontinent."[92] Being one of the more contemporary historians on this subject, Chaudhry's opinion marks a shift in the reception of the *qissa* of Anarkali, namely that it stands in opposition to restoring the piety of the Muslim Mughal rulers. The tomb becomes an opportunity to redeem a Mughal heritage that has, so-far, been abused by the propagation of the Anarkali *qissa*, a strain that is curiously obvious even in the conflicting Wikipedia entries for the site. Two entries exist on Wikipedia, one under the name 'Tomb of Anarkali' and the other under the name 'Sahib Jamal'. Both entries show a picture of the same tomb and note the same structural and geographic details. Both also assert that the tomb has been erroneously assigned to Anarkali and is, in fact, the historical burial site of Sahib-i-Jamal, a wife of Jahangir. The page for 'Sahib Jamal' calls the association of the tomb with the "legendary dancing girl" a "popular misconception" and that "many modern historians accept the credulity" of the identity of Sahib-i-Jamal.[93] I consider these Wikipedia entries in order to show that the impulse to re-assign the

[92] Chaudhry 2011, 13, 50.

[93] Tomb of Anarkali: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_Anarkali#cite_ref-4; Sahib Jamal: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahib_Jamal

narrative connected to the tomb site goes beyond historians such as Chaudhry alone. It is indicative of a desire to redirect the mainstream interaction with the tomb. Distancing the tomb from the figure of Anarkali and aligning it with one of the wives of Jahangir, attempts to highlight the moral and legitimate face of Mughal heritage in general, while eschewing the complexities and anxieties that Anarkali exposes. It is a modern attempt to restore a Mughal reputation 'sullied' by the Anarkali *qissa.* But there is nothing in the historical sources that tells us that this tomb site was originally attributed to Sahib-i-Jamal or that it was later mis-associated with Anarkali. Hence this rhetoric of restoration is a conscious construction to gain control over the narrative associated with the tomb and to appropriate a very particular image of Mughal heritage. In terms of memory, we see here a clear desire by some to re-assign the retrospective memory of this monument (by 'restoring' it) in order then to re-create a prospective memory that favor the legitimate wife of Jahangir over a scandalous concubine, which essentially, transmits the image of a pious Muslim emperor instead of one rid with potential societal and familial anxieties. This impulse to historically identify the tomb with Sahib-i-Jamal creates a competing social memory of the monument, one that is invested in the positioning of Mughal heritage.

But this impulse neither replaces nor eradicates the long-standing collective cultural memory of the monument as the 'Tomb of Anarkali'. The monument has maintained its association with Anarkali for centuries. While the impulse to identify the monument with Sahib-i-Jamal may fulfil a certain historical register, it does not help us understand how to make sense of its long-standing association with Anarkali. To understand a monument is a process not a discovery. Dismissing that simply as erroneous undermines understanding the *meaning* of the 'Tomb of Anarkali', which, as in the case of the Virgil's tomb, there is little of independent of its literary narrative. Even in the case of Arthur and Virgil's tombs, while archaeological attempts to

identify the unmarked physical remains may fill a certain historical register, they do not replace the meaning of these monuments which are part of a different register; not an 'imagined' register because it is real in its own cultural existence. More specifically, it is part of the very real topophilia that these monuments are embedded within. The 'Tomb of Virgil' derives its meaning from its literary reception because it is part of the topophilia of that region (Cumae, Pozzuoli, etc.). The 'Tomb of Arthur' derives its meaning from its literary reception because it is part of the topophilia of Glastonbury. That is, these sites would not be able to derive meaning from their literary narratives if they were not located where they are. I argue that, similarly, the 'Tomb of Anarkali' derives its meaning from the Anarkali *qissa* because it is part of the topophilia of Lahore. Very few scholars have investigated the cultural value of Anarkali's tomb to the city of Lahore and its inhabitants. To unpack the tomb's role in the topophilia of Lahore, let us first consider the life of the tomb in the history of the city.

Tomb and City: Anarkali and Lahore

During the eighteenth-century decline of Mughal rule in the Punjab, Lahore fell to the rule of the Sikh and in 1780 was divided up among the triumvirate of the Sikh *Sardars*, Gujjar Singh, Lehna Singh, and Sobha Singh. The walled city of Lahore, including the Lahore fort, was taken by Lehna Singh. The area south of the walled city, in which falls the Tomb of Anarkali, went to Sobha Singh who immediately designated the tomb to be used as a prison (*thana*). It is recorded that during a "military scuffle between the two Sikh *sardars*, the *thana* was bombarded and the its *thanadar* was killed."[94] In 1799 Ranjit Singh besieged Lahore and, defeating the three sikh *sardars*, became the ruler of the entire city. It would be under Ranjit Singh's rule that

[94] Ali-ud-Din 1961, 66.

the Sikh Empire would reach its peak in the early nineteenth century. Ranjit Singh gifted the Tomb of Anarkali to his son, and heir apparent, Kharrak Singh, but as Kharrak Singh made his own residence in the Lahore fort, the tomb was made into a residence for one General Ventura of the Sikh army. Ventura was one of several Frenchmen, veterans of Waterloo, who had left Europe after the fall of Napoleon and made their way first to Persia and then to India where they ultimately were accepted for service by Ranjit Singh.[95]

Throughout this time period, reference to the tomb and its surrounding gardens as 'Anarkali' is common and unequivocal. At the early stages of his appointment General Ventura reported to Ranjit Singh that a number of Sikh Sirdars resented his command. "The Maharaja at once at the head of a body of troops and with some guns came out of the city to Anarkali and ordered his tents to be pitched there. Many arrests were made, officers degraded and ringleaders fined."[96]

On a more celebratory occasion, parades of the Sikh regiments were often held on the grounds surrounding the Anarkali tomb and on one such instance "Maharaja Ranjit Singh attended the concluding ceremony himself, and was pleased to inspect the show of the army. He awarded rupees two thousand to the French officer, rupees one hundred to each soldier, and rupees one thousand for the repairs of the Anarkali Cantonment."[97] The most telling event is recorded by Lala Sohan Lal Suri, a 19th century Sikh court historian, who witnessed the ceremony held by Ranjit Singh in the garden of the Anarkali Tomb to declare his son Kharrak Singh Crown Prince:

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[95] Niazi 2008, 50-51.

[96] For. & Pol. Dept. Misc. Vol. No. 206, pp. 1125-134 in Niazi 2008, 51. Note that the reference is from unpublished archives of the Government of India that Niazi had special access to.

[97] Fauq 1962, 268 (trans. in Rehmani 2016).

> On 3 *Zilqai'da* the Raja, the abode of felicity went to the tomb of Anarkali. He pitched a special large tent there. He seated his son (the heir apparent), on the government throne, declared him as the chief of the state. He asked all *Sardars* (chiefs) to come forward and present to him their gifts. Following them, the workers (*ahelkar*), clerical staff (*daftri*), attornies (*wakilan*), inscribers (*munshian*), all offered him presents (nazrana) according to their own status and financial position. At last in the afternoon, with the consent and good wishes of the presence, the Prince was mounted on an elephant and taken in a grand processions to the Lahore Fort.[98]

Both the army parade and the ceremony on the ground of the Anarkali tomb are evocative of what Kolb notes as the unique "spectacle-like character" of monuments.[99] In these instances, we can view the Anarkali tomb as a monument that is mediating social and spatial interaction towards collective thought. Recall that one of the spatial-cognitive metaphors that Kolb delineates as the basis of understanding monuments is the metaphor of movement, which is, in part, performative; that is, monuments create collective thought by their spatial practices, one of which is the performance of public spectacles.[100] Kolb explains that "it is the movement though and the use of different portions of a codified monument that enacts shared social practices to broadly forge relationships, ideas, and values among people."[101] The reuse of the Anarkali tomb is, in part, ceremonial and hence performative. While the original structure of the Anarkali Tomb and garden no doubt experienced damaging changes during the Sikh rule, as a location it continued to gain a distinct cultural relevance that cannot be applied to all re-assigned Mughal monuments.

When Ranjit Singh died of ill health in 1839, succession troubles followed. As crown prince, Kharrak Singh took the throne to his father's empire. Often called by historians, 'weak

[98] Suri 1885, vol. 2, 192. (trans. in Rehmani 2016).

[99] Kolb 2019, 3.

[100] Kolb 2019, 23-24.

[101] Kolb 2019, 24.

and ineffectual' compared to the legacy of his father, Kharrak Sing died shortly in 1840, 11 months after being poisoned and was succeeded by his eighteen year-old son, Nau Nihal Singh. While shrewd and eager for ruling power, Nau Nihal Singh did not survive past his own father's funeral since, on his way back from the funeral, an archway of one of the gates of the Lahore fort collapsed on top of him and his retinue. Versions of his death differ, most claiming that he was actually killed during the next two days in which he was kept confined inside the Lahore fort away from all (including his wives and mother) under the directive of being treated for injuries.[102]

The succession struggle continued to spiral in a struggle between Chand Kaur, Nau Nihal's mother, and Sher Singh, Ranjit Singh's second son until the infant son of Ranjit Singh, Dalip Singh was crowned king at the age of six in 1843, with this mother as queen regent. During this time and years following the British made advances against the Sikh rule, until, finally, in 1848 they gained Lahore and the British Residency established in 1849. For a short period following this, the tomb of Anarkali was used by the British as an office with rooms added around it for residence of clerical staff. The most drastic changes to the tomb came in 1851 when it was converted into a Protestant Church and a thousand rupees were sanctioned for equipping it for such use. Rehmani summarizes the changes the tomb underwent:

> All eight arched openings were blocked, and the paneled work in the lime plaster throughout the exterior redone without consideration for its original facade. Thus the entire surface embellishment in the shape of fresco lining, stalactites, and the ribbing on the shell of the dome disappeared. Previously, the marble cenotaph had been removed to a bay to create more accommodation space. At this time the grave was opened, the remains exhumed and relocated elsewhere to cleanse and purify the atmosphere in the church. At the same time the original tessellated floor, disturbed during the process of digging the grave, was shabbily redone using leftover pieces in strips as these could not cover the whole area; the remaining part was paved with bricks. Similarly, the finishing of the interior was changed by plastering the surface anew and providing a wooden

[102] Singh and Rai 2008, 209-227.

> railing to all the arched openings of the upper story. The altar and other paraphernalia was placed under the southeastern bay, while the main entrance to the church was created from the opposite bay, and desired seating arrangement made inside. A cross was fixed on the pinnacle. [103]

The church was consecrated in 1857 as the St. James's Church by the visiting Bishop of Madras who was "glad to find that the tomb of Anarkali, in which he preached in 1847 as Archdeacon of Calcutta, had been neatly fitted up for Divine Service."[104] With increasing size of attendees to the Sunday services more changes were made to accommodate seating. Once the Lahore diocese was created, St. James church continued as the "mother church" of the diocese until the cathedral on Mecload Road was completed at which point the tomb lay empty until in 1891 when it was once again turned into an office for storage of Secretariat records. During the next few decades attempts at restoration were made by the British Archeology Department that opposed the tomb's use by the Punjab Government as a records office and moved to remove all the additions made by the Church. After the ongoing tension about the custody of the tomb, Sir John Marshal, the Director General of Archaeology in India visited the tomb himself in mid 1920s:

> I took the opportunity of my recent visit to Lahore to examine the Tomb of Anarkali and to discuss the question of its use as a record office with Mr. H.L.O. Garret. I agree with Mr. Hargreaves (Superintendent Archeology) that is most undesirable that the Tomb should be used any longer than is absolutely necessary for the purpose to which it is now being put and which are inconsistent with its quasi-religious character.[105]

The changes that John Marshall conditioned the tomb's use on included: no bathrooms on the premise of the tomb, that any electrical fans and lights must be temporary and not be attached to the original structure, and that the stone cross be removed from the dome. After much reluctance by the Archeology department, the Punjab Government received clearance to use the tomb as a

[103] Rehmani 2016, 158.

[104] Chaudhry 2011, 25.

[105] Grey and Garrett (1929) in Chaudhry 2011.

records office. To this day, the tomb remains the Records/Archives Office of the Civil Secretariat.[106]

What sets the tomb of Anarkali apart from other surrounding Mughal tombs in Lahore is the historical continuity it maintains both under the Sikh and the British. With the exception of a few periods of disuse, the tomb remains a culturally relevant place of experience and interaction. In his seminal work on space and place, Tuan clearly notes that the status of place is not necessarily permanent; a 'place' can lose its status and reverse back to 'space'.[107] This loss of status can be applied to many Mughal tombs in ruin. The tomb of Anarkali not only remains a place, a center of 'felt value', but continues to propagate itself as the tomb of Anarkali in the memory of those interacting with the monument. That is, as noted above, both Sikh and British sources continue distinctly to reference the site as the tomb of 'Anarkali' whether in the context of Karrak Singh's crowning ceremony or the British Church's consecration. Even as it was repurposed and refitted, under all the changes, the site itself always remains the 'Tomb of Anarkali' and continues to perpetuate itself as that. It embeds itself as a place of memory, a *lieu de mémoire*. On the broadest level, Nora defines a *lieu de mémoire* as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."[108] Especially noteworthy is the double character of a *lieu de mémoire* that Nora describes when he states that a *lieu de mémoire* is "a site of excess closed upon itself, concentrated in its own name, but also

[106] For a detailed account of the records currently housed in the Archive see Niazi (2008).

[107] Tuan 2011, 164.

[108] Nora 1996, xvii.

forever open to the full range of its possible significations".[109] It is a site that is both a purely, self-referential sign and historically, physically present. The tomb on Anarkali is exactly this double. While it is indeed physically present with a tangible historical continuity, it is also its own referent. I argue that as a *lieu de mémoire* the tomb of Anarkali is self-referential in the topophilia of Lahore.

Yi-Fu Tuan introduced the term 'topophilia' into humanistic geography broadly defining it as all conscious (emotional, psychological, etc.) connections between any physical environment and its people.[110] It is the "affective bond between people and place or setting."[111] In her book *Lahore: A topophilia of space and place*, Suvorova is most interested in its application to a city, a place she sees as the intersection of two spaces: "the chronological (geographic) space and the symbolic space of consciousness."[112] For Suvorova, "a city is a place that is oversaturated with meaning, history, recollections, and signs" and that the topophilia of a city then is the "phenomenological experience of a consciousness "or the "sense" of the city.[113] Analyzing Lahore in particular, she argues that topophilia is highly applicable to Lahore and essential in understanding the city and the identity of its people: "Lahore's cultural and chronological space is extremely vast and full of cultural artifacts, symbols, and signs of the past and present. One cannot grasp it in its entirety but only live in it as a phenomenological experience…"[114] Lahore is invested deeply in its topophilia.

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[109] Nora 1996, 23.

[110] Tuan 1990.

[111] Tuan 1990, 4.

[112] Suvorova 2011, 8.

[113] Suvorova 2011, 5.

[114] Suvorova 2011, 17.

In the introduction to a 2005 narrative collection on Lahore titled *Writings on Lahore*, the renowned American-Pakistani author Bapsi Sidhwa highlights the acute awareness of the topophilia of Lahore that defines its identity for its residents. She writes that "to belong to Lahore is to be steeped in its romance, to inhale with each breath an intensity of feeling that demands expression."[115] In the same collection, Kurshey contributes a short re-telling of the story of Anarkali and, capturing the sentiment the tomb evokes for the inhabitants of Lahore, she writes:

> There are far grander monuments in Lahore, but few as evocative of romance and tragedy as the tomb of the ill-fated Anarkali, the courtesan who won the heart of a prince only to face the wrath of a Mughal emperor...or so the legend goes. Who can visit it without wanting to discover the myths that still cling to it, like moss to an old stone?..no matter what future uses lie in the destiny of this monument, for the people of Lahore it will always be the tomb of Anarkali; the city that named a bustling bazaar after the courtesan will continue to be entranced by the story of her short life.[116]

The tomb of Anarkali belongs to the experience of Lahore and to the 'sense' of the city. In one of the last lines of the Imtiaz Ali Taj's seminal play *Anarkali* (the focus of chapter three), Salim's mother consoles him over the loss of Anarkali by claiming that "this Lahore will keep her name alive" (*yeh lahore us ka nam kinda rakhey ga*).[117] To divest the site (the tomb) from its association with Anarkali would mean to deprave Lahore (and its residents, past, present, and future) from a foundational experience of the city.

The work of collective memory in preserving the 'sense' of Lahore is not unique to the Tomb of Anarkali. Wescoat's field research on Mughal gardens in Lahore in 1988 brought him in contact with a vast reserve of local stories about "legendary tunnels" that allegedly once connected Mughal gardens and sites and were used by armies, princes, and princesses. These

[115] Sidhwa 2005, xi.

[116] Kureshy 2005, 84-88.

[117] Taj 2012, 149.

stories, some more fantastical than others, have been passed down for generations. A lack of any physical evidence of such tunnels makes most archeologists and scholars skeptical of these stories. But, for Wescoat, a lack of physical evidence does not detract from the value of these tunnel stories as a "body of social evidence about Mughal Lahore."[118] Compiled together, the "underground memory" of these stories constructs a map of Mughal Lahore undisturbed by modern changes, a map that highlights the prominence of gardens in the orientation and the alignment of the city.[119] Furthermore, Wescoat argues that the collective memory of these tunnel stories is a "subconscious will to remember Lahore when it was powerful and whole" since they preserve a more cohesive urban landscape compared to modern urban changes.[120] For Wescoat, then, the "imaginary landscape" of these tunnel stories can offer real evidence for reconstructing historical landscapes and offer insight into the critique of modern urban landscape.[121] But they do more than that. The persistence of these stories, I suggest, preserves a sense of self for the inhabitants of Lahore as the inhabitants of *Lahore* and, by extension, preserves a 'sense' of the city Lahore itself. In preserving the collective memory of these tunnel stories, the inhabitants of Lahore partake in the performance of the city. Paul Makeham, analyzing urban studies through the lens of performance, suggests that the urban life of a city is invariable tied to performance not only in the traditional sense of public spectacle, but also in the cultural performance of collective memory.[122] He writes that "indeed, cities as a whole can be understood as sites upon which an urban(e) citizenry, in the 'practice of everyday life', performs its collective memory, imagination

[118] Wescoat 1991, 3.

[119] Wescoat 1991, 5.

[120] Wescoat 1991, 13.

[121] Wescoat 1991, 14.

[122] Makeham 2005.

and aspiration, performing its sense of self both to itself and beyond."[123] The inhabitants of Lahore perform their collective memory of these tunnel stories upon the landscape of Lahore, performing both a sense of their own self (as the inhabitants of Lahore) and that of the city of Lahore itself.

This applies to the Tomb of Anarkali as well. Recall here Kureshy's words, "for the people of Lahore it will always be the tomb of Anarkali". The inhabitants (past and present) of Lahore perform their collective memory of this site as the 'Tomb of Anarkali' upon the city of Lahore and in doing that they are, again, performing both a sense of their own self (as the inhabitants of Lahore) and that of the city of Lahore itself. It is then of no real significance to question 'why' the site is known as the tomb on Anarkali or try to determine how it became associated with Anarkali (whether person or pomegranate blossoms). The origin of the site's association with Anarkali is non-consequential. It does not matter if we cannot locate the site's referent in reality. Rather, what is significant is that this site is *remembered* as the tomb of Anarkali and continues to invoke that collective memory by having become its own referent. And as its own referent it banks within it the compounded memory of the Anarkali *dastan*. The tomb and the *dastan* occupy the same space of collective memory for the inhabitants of Lahore and for the city itself; a space that we can understand best as 'third space', a coming together of architecture, narrative, memory, performance, history, topophilia. But this 'third space' of Anarkali's tomb is preserved not just in collective memory, but also in the environment itself. In *The Meaning of the Built Environment,* architect Amos Rapoport explicates the mnemonic characteristic of the environment, one in which the environment can impart cues that can then

[123] Makeham 2005, 151-152.

invoke from a person a certain behavior.[124] These cues, he notes, can be passed on through enculturation or acculturation, hence they are culture specific.[125] Mundane or small scale examples include how we adjust our behavior when we move from a lecture hall to a cafeteria to an upscale restaurant by automatically decoding the cues implicit in those environments.[126] This mnemonic function of the environment "takes the remembering from the person and places the *reminding* in the environment."[127] And, as Rapoport notes, this can also apply to more significant sites in an environment. The Tomb of Anarkali, in part, possess this mnemonic function as well; it elicits its own identity as well as the *qissa*. Recall here the earliest record of the site in William Finch's writings where the tomb that he sees elicits the narrative he records. The preservation and propagation of this monument as the 'Tomb of Anarkali' is an exchange between the remembering of the people (collective memory) and the reminding of the environment (mnemonic memory). The effect is that the Tomb of Anarkali is an experience of the city of Lahore. To partake in the memory of the site as the tomb of Anarkali is to live the city of Lahore.

[124] Rapoport 1990, 80-86.

[125] Rapoport 1990, 81.

[126] Rapoport 1990, 86.

[127] Rapoport 1990, 81.

Chapter Two

Early Sources and the Anarkali *Qissa*

If we understand the Tomb of Anarkali in Lahore not as evidence for the historicity of Anarkali, but rather as complicit in the narrative of Anarkali, we then must delve deeper into what exactly constitutes that narrative. If Anarkali isn't a historical personality, then who is she and where, when, and how does she surface? This chapter traces the earliest sources that mention Anarkali and tracks the evolution of her narrative as it was transmitted from foreign accounts to local histories. The evolution of Anarkali's narrative shows that it is far from a scandalous story of romance. I shall argue that, contrived under the male gaze, Anarkali emerges as a medium that channels anxiety for the dysregulation of not only the Mughal Emperors, but for society as a whole.

Early Travel Accounts

The first recorded accounts of Anarkali occur in the early seventeenth century travel writings of two Englishmen, William Finch and Edward Terry, as they traveled through India. This means the earliest references to Anarkali come to us from *outside* the culture, through a Western or Euro-centric ethnographic lens, a detail that will become vital not only in processing these specific accounts, but also in decolonializing Anarkali in general.

Not much is known about William Finch before he joined a merchant ship sailing for India in 1608. His travel writings cover his various trading assignments through India from 1608-1611, including a stay in Lahore.[128] While at Lahore, he records that he saw

[128] Foster 1968. In his introduction to the compilation of these early travel writings of Englishmen in India during the 16th and 17th century, Foster notes that we have no surviving manuscripts and that his sources

> ...a faire monument for Don Sha his mother, one of the Acabar his wives, with whom it is said Sha Selim had to do (her name was Immacque Kelle, or Pomgranate kernell); upon notice of which the King (Akbar) caused her to be inclosed quicke within a wall in his moholl, where shee dyed, and the King (Jahangir), in token of his love, commands a sumptuous tombe to be built of stone in the midst of a foure-square garden richly walled with a gate and divers roomes over it.[129]

Finch does not name any sources for this account of Anarkali. But there is no reason for us to assume that Finch is entirely responsible for purposefully conceiving or constructing this narrative about Anarkali, especially since it is corroborated by another near contemporary Englishman, Edward Terry. Finch's note that this account is something that "is said" hints to what must already be a circulating narrative. But what remains to be seen is what role Finch and Terry potentially play in the transmission and/or elaboration of this narrative. Finch's account lays out two significant aspects concerning Anarkali. The first is the transgressive nature of Salim's relationship with Anarkali and the second is Anarkali's immurement. I would like to first address and unpack Finch's detail about Salim's transgressive relationship with Anarkali and shall return to the second detail (Anarkali's immurement) in due course.

Transgression and Anarkali

Finch identifies Anarkali as one of the wives of Akbar and the mother of "Don Sha." "Don Sha" is commonly identified as the Mughal prince Daniyal Mirza (1572-1605), one of Akbar's three sons and younger brother to Salim.[130] But Daniyal's mother is historically attested

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have been the first printed editions of these travel writings in various sources. See Foster's introduction for details.

[129]Finch in Foster (ed.) 1968, 166.

[130] Foster 1968, 166 n.5; Eraly 1997, 911.

to be one of Akbar's concubines. His birth to one of Akbar's concubines (*khwas*) is recorded by Jahangir himself in his memoir *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*:

> On the night of Jumada-l-awwal 10th, A.H. 979 (September 1572), another son was born to one of the concubines. As his birth took place at Ajmir in the house of one of the attendants of the blessed shrine of the reverend Khwaja Muʿinu-d-din Chishti, whose name was Shaikh Daniyal, this child was called Daniyal. [131]

We can safely assume that Daniyal's mother was indeed one of Akbar's concubines because Salim was Akbar's only son by a wife, which afforded Salim certain special privileges. Note that children born to a royal concubine were considered wholly legitimate and could very well claim the throne. That being said, when many of Akbar's children died in childhood, he went to great spiritual lengths to in hope of having a son be born to his wife Mariam-uz-Zamani.[132] While Daniyal and Murad (another son by a concubine) were born after Salim and could legitimately vie for the throne, Salim held a special status as crown prince not only as the eldest, but also because of his maternal lineage which gave him backing from the *haram*. Finch's use of the word wife to describe Daniyal's mother likely stems from a misconception of the workings of the *haram*, a point I shall return to shortly. Jahangir does not name the concubine who bore Daniyal nor is her name historically attested. Whether or not this concubine was called Anarkali, the takeaway from Finch's description of her as the mother of Daniyal is that she was clearly someone Akbar had a sexual relationship with. Paired with the detail that Jahangir built a tomb for her as a "token of his love," Finch's account is putting forth a narrative of a triangular relationship between Salim, Akbar, and Akbar's royal concubine ('Anarkali'). It is casting Salim as having at least a romantic, if not a sexual, relationship with the same woman as his father.

[131] Rogers and Beveridge (trans.) 1997, 34.

[132] See Balabanlilar (2020) for the 'miraculous' circumstances of Salim's birth.

Let us take into consideration as this point also Edward Terry's account. Edwards Terry spent two and half years (1616-1619) traveling through India as chaplain to the then English ambassador, Thomas Roe. He writes that "Achabar-sha had threatened to disinherit the present King [Jahangir], for abuse of Anar-kalee (that is Pomegranate Kernell), his most beloved wife; but on his death-bed repealed it."[133] Terry too identifies Anarkali as Akbar's wife, which again likely stems from misconception of the stratification of women within the *haram*. Terry's description of the nature of Salim's relationship with Anarkali is not as explicit as Finch's. Terry briefly notes it as Jahangir's "abuse of Anarkalee." But this phrase indicates a misuse or an improper 'use' of Anarkali by Salim; that is, it implicates Salim in a 'use' of Anarkali that is not authorized for him, that is transgressive. The extreme impropriety of Salim's "abuse" of Anarkali can be measured by the severity of Akbar's reaction, the threat to disinherit Salim, which would essentially take away Salim's claim to the throne after his father.

Historically, in the decade before Akbar's death, Akbar and Salim had an increasingly strained relationship and Akbar did, in fact, threaten to disinherit Salim after his rebellion in 1600 CE. Their relationship began deteriorating in 1590s when Salim, to expand his own network of influence, began to favor individuals that had fallen out of Akbar's grace and make alliances with groups alienated by Akbar.[134] In 1600 CE, Salim openly rebelled against his father and, seizing Allahabad, instituted himself as ruler. Balabanlilar suggests that, given the expansive size of Akbar's army and influence, it is unlikely that Salim was seeking to overthrow his father, but rather was vying to establish his own independent appanage under the Mughal

[133] Terry in Foster (ed.) 1968, 330.

[134] See Faruqui (2012) chapter 4.

empire.[135] Akbar and Salim's eventual reconciliation was advanced by the influential women in Akbar's *haram*, namely Akbar's wife, Sultan Salima Begim, and Akbar's mother, Maryam Makani. [136] Salim was amenable to this reconciliation effort, in part, because of his own close relationship to Akbar's *haram*. Akbar's imperial *haram* was dominated by a stratum of influential women (Akbar's mother, wives, and aunts) who had not only showed unwavering support of Akbar, but also of Salim. Faruqui explains that "compared to his younger brothers, Salim had many more opportunities to meet, fete, and cultivate relationships with the senior women of the imperial *haram*," whose investment in Salim aided his accession to the throne.[137] But rebellion was common among Mughal princes and while Akbar and Salim's relationship experienced its share of strain, it was not particularly severe.[138] And Akbar does declare Salim his legitimate successor on his death bed in 1605, avoiding a succession war. By including Akbar's threat to disinherit Salim and his eventual reconciliation with Salim on his death bed, Terry's account already conflates Akbar and Salim's political tension with Salim's relationship with Anarkali.

There has been a strong desire to interpret these early travel accounts as evidence for a sexual tension between Akbar and Salim. Or, more specifically, to assign Akbar and Salim's well-attested contention to a sexual rivalry. Eraly, whose late twentieth-century writings on the

[135] Balabanlilar 2020, 28-30.

[136] Balabanlilar 2020, 34.

[137] Faruqui 2012, 148.

[138] Jahangir's punishment of his own son, Khusrau's, rebellion was much worse: forced to watch the execution of his supporters, Khusrau was then blinded and imprisoned. Faruqui notes that "ultimately, no Mughal emperor would escape some level of noncompliance and even outright rebellion from one or another royal son or relative, but neither was an emperor ever killed by a prince" (182).

lives of the Mughals has strongly colored modern interpretations of Finch and Terry's accounts of Anarkali , is convinced that the strife between Salim and Akbar arose from an Oedipal conflict: "the Mughal court was rife with rumors about the tension between the two, because of Salim's escapades and Akbar's resentment over them... the very fact that such rumors persisted is significant, and indicates that probably there was some sex-related tension between Akbar and Salim."[139] Eraly also cites an interesting episode that places Salim in a curious position:

> The improbable story, as Abul Fazl tells it, is that a mad man had wandered into the harem because of the carelessness of the sentinels, and Salim caught him, but was himself mistaken for a stranger and set on, and that Akbar came upon the scene and was about to strike with his sword when he recognized Salim. It is incredible that a stranger, that too a lunatic, could enter the royal harem undetected, that Salim was not immediately recognized, and that he did not identify himself when attacked. The incident remains a mystery.[140]

Due to the sheer improbability of such an episode, Eraly would like to suggest that it was Salim himself, instead of a stranger, who was caught in a compromising position as he tried to enter Akbar's *haram*. In the *Akbarnama*, Abul Fazl does indeed detail such an episode of confusion, but the prince in question is not Salim, but Daniyal, the same one whose mother is identified by Finch as Anarkali:

> In this year Prince Sultan Daniel was saved by the Divine protector from a sudden danger. A great uproar occurred in the female apartments. The souls of the servants there melted. The world's lord came out to offer prayers. At evening there was some carelessness on the part of the sentinels. A madman thought it was the public hall and entered the harem. The prince saw him and ran after him. Near the inner pigeon-house he flung him on the ground and got on the top of him. Thinking the man might use a weapon, he held both his arms tightly, and twisted them. The inner servants, who were Circassians, Qalmaqs, Russians, and Abyssinians, rushed after him, and taking the prince for a stranger they attacked him with sticks and clods. From promptitude, the prince did not let go the man. At this time His Majesty came out and saw the affair. He stated: "When I approached, I thought of using my sword, and so drove off the girls. A beam

[139] Eraly 1997, 237.

[140] Eraly 1997, 237.

> which had been left at the pigeon-house prevented me from doing what I intended. Thinking that the prince was a stranger I seized him by the hair, and dragged him, and wanted to prick him with the point of my sword. Suddenly, my wrath subsided, and mighty love seized the skirt of my heart." At the same time, it appeared that the prince had thought the madman was an evil-intentioned man in his senses and so was holding him down. The lunatic was let go.[141]

This passage has been mis-quoted not only by Eraly, but in almost all subsequent scholarship. Eraly's positioning of Salim, instead of Daniyal, at the center of this strange episode stems from a long tradition of eroticizing the lives of the Mughals and originates with the eroticizing gaze that colors early travel writings such as those of Finch and Terry. We must ask what critique we should approach these travel accounts with and what concerns might be tainting their narratives especially concerning Mughal women.

European travelers to India through the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century found themselves in a difficult situation regarding documenting the lives and lifestyles of Mughal women. The *purdah* (domestic seclusion) of Muslim women essentially deprived the foreign traveler of any interaction with upper class Muslim women and severely limited their observation of them.[142] This inability to provide a first-hand account was for the travel writer a conscious failure towards their audience and readership. This inaccessibility was as particularly applicable to the royal Mughal *haram*. Francois Bernier, a French physician, who served the Mughal court for twelve years in the late seventeenth century concedes to his reader this gap:

> It would afford me pleasure to conduct you to the Seraglio, as I have introduced you into other parts of the fortress. But who is the traveller that can describe from ocular observation the interior of that building? I have sometimes gone into it when the King was absent form Delhi, and one pretty far I thought, for the purpose of giving my

[141] Beveridge, H. (trans.) 1899, v.3, 994.

[142] As Teltscher (1995) notes, European travel writings espoused a general opposition or dichotomy between the seclusion of Muslim women and the accessibility of Hindu women: "The jealously guarded Muslim woman in purdah is set again the Hindu woman, ostentatiously bejeweled, freely on show" 38. On the treatment of Hindu women by European travel writers see Teltscher 37-73.

> professional advice in the case of a great lady so extremely ill that she could not be moved to the outward gate, according to the customs observed upon similar occasions; but a *Kachemire* shawl covered my head, hanging like a large scarf down to my feet, and an eunuch led me by the hand, as I had been a blind man. You must be content, therefore, with such a general description as I have received from some of the eunuchs.[143]

As a court physician, Bernier most likely stood in the most privileged position to have an interaction with women of the *haram*, but even during those rare instances, he is a "blind man." The inability to provide an 'ocular' or eyewitness account deprives the travel writer of his vital claim of authority. Teltscher suggests that "the seclusion of the Muslim woman deprives the travel writer of his essential role as observer, and also denies him his customary masculine prerogative of visual (and implied sexual) possession of women."[144] Being visually removed communicates that the Muslim woman is also sexually removed from the travel writer. Thomas Roe (the English ambassador to Jahangir's court) writes about a telling moment in which his attempt to observe royal women in turned upon himself. While at court he catches a glimpse of the Emperor's wives:

> at one side in a window were his two principall Wives, whose curiositie made them break little holes in a grate of Reed that hung before it, to gaze on me. I saw first their fingers, and after laying their faces close, now one eye now another sometimes I could discerne the full proportion, they were indifferently white, blacke haire smooth up, but if I had no other light, their Diamonds and Pearles had sufficed to shew them: when I looked up they retyred and were so merry, that I suppose they laughed at me.[145]

In this rare moment, it is Roe that holds the amusing position of the exotic. He becomes aware that his desire to observe the royal wives is reciprocal, but that while he can only catch a glimpse of them, they can see him clearly, which underscores his lack of visual accessibility.

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[143] Bernier 1914, 267.

[144] Teltscher 1995, 38. See also Kundra 2014, 80.

[145] Roe in Teltscher 1995, 42.

This "blindness" of the travel writers to Muslim women, and to the royal *haram* in particular, paired with a growing obsession to "see" them, creates a vacuum which allows for an Orientalizing narrative construction about women. "The travel writer's exclusion provides the space for speculation and fantasy," Teltscher argues, and that "writers are divided over Muslim purdah: does this confinement indicate chastity or is it merely an attempt at preventing promiscuity?"[146] As these travel writers speculate and fantasize to fill the vacuum of their blindness to the lives of Muslim women they are forced to rely on secondary information or hearsay as their best source of information. Bernier relied on the descriptions he has "received from some of the eunuchs" while Finch related the account of Anarkali from what "is said." That is, their blindness and inability to gain access to the lives of Muslim women does not curtail their *gaze*, a combination of unattested secondary information and sheer fantastical speculation. While this *gaze* has little veracity it holds considerable authority, or at least the semblance of, due to the license travel writing grants: "travel writing grants considerable license to its authors; its quasi-scientific status confers authority, while the public expectation of foreign outlandishness ensure that sensation stories are happily consumed."[147]

This gaze is also responsible for eroticizing the portrayal of both the Mughal *haram* and the Mughal emperor.[148] Deconstructing this eroticism plays a significant role in decoding both Finch's and Terry's account of Anarkali. In a description of royal lodgings, Finch positions the

[146] Teltscher 1995, 38. Also Kundra, 2014, 80. This preoccupation of European travel writers, Teltscher suggests, flows from the "Woman Question" that dominated England and France particularly in the 16th and 17th century and saw an outpouring of publication dedicated to either parsing feminine virtue or condemning feminine vice (37-38).

[147] Teltscher 1995, 46.

[148] This eroticizing *gaze* of the travel writers often extended to depicting the physical structure of the harem as an inverted world. See Teltscher 1995, 44.

emperor (Jahangir at the time) as presiding animal-like over the sexual subservience of his *haram*:

> …and betwixt each corner and this middle-most are two faire large chambers for his women (so that each moholl receiveth sixteene) in severall lodgings, without doores to any of them, all keeping open house to the kings pleasure. Round by the side goeth a faire paved walke, some eight foote broad; and in the middest of all the court stands the Kings chamber, where he, like a cocke of the game, may crow over all. [149]

According to Finch's, the female lodgings are "without doores" which means that the women that reside there are constantly available for the "kings pleasure" who, in turn, is depicted as a gloating polygynous animal, a "cocke of the game" that "may crow over all." Terry too shares a similar description of emperor's lodging:

> There lodge none in the Kings house but his women and eunuchs, and some little boyes which hee keepes about him for a wicked use. Hee alwayes eates in private among his women upon great varietie of excellent dishes, which dressed and prooved by the taster are served in vessels of gold (as they say), covered and sealed up, and so by eunuchs brought to the King. He hath meate ready at all houres, and calls for it at pleasure.[150]

In Terry's account, the emperor's sexual dominion in his house extends also to the "wicked use" of "little boys." The emperor's carnal sexual appetite for both women and "little boys" is conflated with this carnal gastronomical appetite for "meate" that is "ready at all houres" and available at "pleasure." In these descriptions, the emperor is excessively indulgent in all corporeal desires (food, sex, etc.) and his lifestyles is motivated solely by pleasure.

The reception of the Mughal *haram* as the 'harem' has largely been centered on what Ruby Lal calls the "pleasure principle;" that is, up until recently, the Mughal *haram* has been singularly depicted in terms of pleasure, beauty and sexual indulgence.[151] For example, K.S. Lal

[149] Finch in Foster (ed.) 1968, 151.

[150] Terry in Foster (ed.) 1968, 311.

[151] R. Lal 2005, 3.

produced one of the first studies of the Mughal *haram* and in his rather eroticized account he states that "the harem was not meant for the old and ailing. It was meant to be a bright place, an abode of the young and the beautiful, an arbor of pleasure and a retreat for joy."[152] But K.S. Lal and other early scholars often ignore, as Sharma points out, the "variegated composition of the harem" and do not "seem to realize that not everyone could be sexually related to the emperor."[153] In *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, Ruby Lal traces out the development and the complexity of the Mughal *haram*, noting that it was under Akbar the *haram* took on its well-structured shape as a domestic entity, both in its physical structure and its conceptual framework.[154] She argues that "the construction of order...was a major hallmark of Akbar's empire" and that "in the drive to coordinate all aspects of imperial life, domestic life had to be carefully regulated too."[155] Akbar's preoccupation with order is also highlighted by Abu-l Fazl in his account of the imperial *haram* in *A'in-i Akbari* (*A'in* I.15):

> His Majesty is a great friend of good order and propriety in business. Through order the world becomes a meadow of truth and reality...The imperial palace and household are therefore in the best order...His Majesty has made a large enclosure with fine buildings inside, where he reposes. Though there are more than five thousand women, he has given to each a separate apartment. He has also divided them into sections, and keeps them attentive to their duties. Several chaste women have been appointed as *daroghahs*, and superintendents over each section, and one has been selected for the duties of writer. Thus, as in the imperial offices, everything is here also in proper order....The inside of the Harem is guarded by sober and active women; the most trustworthy of them are placed about the apartments of his Majestry. Outside of the enclosure the eunuchs are placed; and at a proper distance, there is a guard of faithful *Rajputs*, beyond whom are the gates. Besides, on all four sides, there are guards of Nobles, Ahadis, and other troops, according

[152] K.S. Lal 1988, 152.

[153] Sharma 2009, 156.

[154] R. Lal uses *haram* as the proper transliteration from the Arabic and one that distances itself from the eroticism that colors the term 'harem'.

[155] R. Lal 2005, 177.

> to their ranks...Notwithstanding the great number of faithful guards, his Majesty does not dispense with his own vigilance, but keeps the whole in proper order.[156]

At the top of the social hierarchy of the Mughal *haram* were the revered senior women of the household such as the emperor's mother, foster-mothers, stepmothers, aunts, older wives, and other elder relatives who not only on occasion took on positions of public authority, but also acted as counselors and intercessors on public and private matters.[157] All other female relatives of the emperor (sisters, daughters, etc.) also resided in the *haram* and held positions of eminence. Of all its residents, only the royal wives and concubines were sexually related to the emperor.[158] At the very bottom of the social order was the serving class and entertainers.

Akbar's regulation of domestic life extended beyond the meticulous ordering of the *haram*. Regulation of proper sexual behavior was also addressed. Akbar's own sexuality is portrayed, by court chroniclers (including Abul-Fazl) as extremely disciplined and as one part of his overall physical discipline which extends over food and sleep as well. Akbar is lauded for reserving his sexuality primarily for reproduction. The "only appropriate, sanctioned form of sexual behavior" then becomes a disciplined sexuality reserved for reproduction within a

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[156] Blochmann (trans.) 1873, 44-45.

[157] R. Lal 2005, 178-207.

[158] Children born from a concubine were free and legitimate heirs to the throne. In *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri,* Emperor Jahangir (Salim) openly records the births of his siblings from Akbar's concubines: "Three months after my birth my sister, Shahzada Kahnam, was born to one of the royal concubines (*khwasan, kanizan*); they gave her over to his (Akbar's) mother, Maryam Makani. After her a son was born to one of the concubines (*khwasan-o-khidmatgaran*), and received the name Shah Murad...On the night of Jumada-l-awwal 10th, A.H. 979 (September, 1572), another son was born to one of the concubines (*khwas*). As his birth took place at Ajmir in the house of one of the attendants of the blessed shrine of the reverend Khwaja Mu'inu-d-din Chishti, whose name was Shaikh Daniyal, this child was called Daniyal." Rogers and Beveridge (trans.) 1978, 34. The Persian terms that have been translated into English as "concubines" are *khwasan, kanizan,* and *khidmatgaran*. All of these are rather generic terms that denote as sense of servitude on behalf of the concubines.

marriage, a regulation that is drawn directly from the model behavior of the emperor."[159] This emphasis on order through the "institutionalization of the *haram* and a more general regulation of the Mughal domestic world," Lal suggests, "mirrored the making of new imperial order under Akbar."[160]

But I suggest that the connection between Akbar and the regulation of the imperial *haram* and Mughal domestic life in general is even more intimate than that. The basis of these regulations is drawn directly from the disciplined and highly regulated body of Akbar himself as is the case for what constitutes appropriate marital sexual behavior. The *haram* and domestic life are, in essence, an extension of Akbar's self, his body, his person; his self-regulation is their regulation. So that not only is the regulation of the *haram* and domestic life representative of the empire/imperial order as a whole, but it is also representative of Akbar himself. I propose that Finch and Terry's early accounts of Anarkali should be read with this context so that Salim's 'abuse' of Anarkali is a dysregulation of the domestic life and the functioning of the *haram* to which Anarkali belongs (recall Finch and Terry's identification of her as one of Akbar's 'wives'). Hence, Salim's described transgression is not so much a sexual scandal as it is a transgression against Akbar himself and the empire at large. I suggest that, in Finch and Terry's accounts, Anarkali is already a medium that conveys the real tension of Salim's affront to Akbar and the anxiety of his dysregulation of Akbar's empire during his rebellion. The narrative of Anarkali is one of disruption and disorder. Even in its earliest forms, the significance of Anarkali

[159] Lal 2005, 154.

[160] Lal 2005, 214.

does not lie in her identity, but rather in the anxiety she represents—the potential for dysregulation.[161]

Immurement and Anarkali

This threat of dysregulation and a desire to contain it lies also at the heart of the second significant aspect of the Finch's original account: the brief description of Anarkali's immurement. Finch records "that King (Akbar) caused her to be inclosed quicke within a wall in his moholl, where shee dyed." Anarkali's fate of being walled-up and left for dead on the orders of Akbar is a strange detail to place contextually. Not only is immurement not attested as a practiced form of punishment under the Mughal empire, but it also seems uncharacteristic of an emperor known for his clemency and distaste for punishment.[162] What Finch describes is immurement, the act of walling a person up, though he does not use that term. Yet, we do find the term being used by other European travel writers to describe episodes of imprisonment. Thomas Coryat, a well-educated Englishman traveling through India from 1612-1617, describes Prince Khusrau's imprisonment by his father Emperor Jahangir:

> Sultan Cursaroo hath but one wife; for which one principall reason is that during his imprisonment the King, intending to make a hunting progresse of foure moneths, consulted how to keepe him safe in his absence; at last resolved to build a towre and immure him within it, without gate, doore, or window, except some small holes to let in

[161] Dysregulation is commonly used as a medical/psychological term for emotional behavioral disorders. My use of the term here is to communicate the meaning of the term, i.e., the inability to regulate.

[162] See Sangara (1967) for penal practices in Mughal India. Also c.f. Akbar's outrage at severe punishments enacted by Salim. Balabanlilar (2020) recounts a "notorious atrocity" by Salim in which he, as punishment for secret relationship between eunuch and a courtier, had the apprehended beaten, castrated, and flayed in front of him. When news of this reached Akbar, "the emperor was deeply affected, sending a strongly worded criticism to his son that not only emphasized his horror at the severity of the punishment, but his own inability to witness such a dreadful act as flaying – even were it to be performed, he claimed, on a dead goat. Akbar's reaction was one of obvious disgust and loathing" (35).

> ayre, higher then he could come unto; putting in all sorts of provision whatsoever, both fire, clothes, etc., with some servants to abide with him for that time.[163]

According to Coryat, Jahangir "immures" Khusrau in a tower, but it is not with the intention of killing Khusrau nor is he walled-up in place like Finch's description of Anarkali. In fact, Khusrau is given provisions for survival along with servants to wait on him. Here, the sense of immurement underscores the structure of the tower as having no outlets (no gates, no doors, no windows) apart from unreachable air holes. Khusrau's immurement is part of a heightened form of his on-going imprisonment.

In 1606, a year after Akbar's death and Jahangir's accession to the throne, Khusrau, Jahangir's eldest son, rebelled against his father in an attempt to gain control of the throne. Jahangir brutally crushed the rebellion and punished his son not only by imprisoning him, but also blinding him. Faruqui notes that even within the father-son tensions of the Mughal family "Emperor Jahangir's blinding of his oldest son Khusrau in 1607 stands out for its unprecedented severity" and "stands in sharp contrast to his own father Akbar's unwillingness to punish Salim for either a plot to poison the emperor in the early 1590s or even his five-year-long rebellion." [164] Coryat tells us that Jahangir 'immures' Khusrau during his extended absence of four months "to keepe him safe." This is not to keep Khusrau safe from others, but rather to keep him safe from escape; that is, to keep him safely imprisoned. Khusrau's immurement is a means to keep Khusrau and his potential for rebellion contained, literally. We find ourselves back to this threat of rebellion and the anxiety of the disruption of established power between father and son, emperor and prince.

[163] Coryat in Foster (ed.), 277.

[164] Faruqui 2012, 197.

We see an almost identical repetition of this episode during the succession war among Emperor Shah Jahan's sons, in particular between Aurangzeb (future emperor) and Dara Shikoh. Aurangzeb eventually had his older brother Dara Shikoh captured and beheaded in 1659 and Dara's son and active supporter, Sipihr Shikoh, imprisoned. The French physician Bernier records that once Dara Shikoh was caught and beheaded, "Sepe-Chekouh (Sipihr Shikoh) was immured in the fortress of Goualeor (Gwalior Fort)."[165] Earlier in his writing of this account, Bernier notes that with Aurangzeb's permission, "it was ultimately decided that Dara should die, and that Sepe-Chekouh should be confined in Goualeor."[166] Again, immurement is used to describe a confinement or imprisonment. It was also not the mode of Sipihr Shikoh's eventual death in 1708 which is attributed to poisoning:

> This is the potion generally given to Princes confined in the fortress of Goualeor, whose heads the Monarch is deterred by prudential reasons from taking off…This drink emaciates the wretched victims; who lose their strength and intellect by slow degrees, become torpid and senseless, and at length die. It is said that it was by this means, that Sepe-Chekouh, the grandchild of Morad-Bakche and Soliman-Chekouh, were sent out of the world.[167]

The imprisonments noted as immurement by both Coryat and Bernier are not just any imprisonments. They are confinements of agents of a power struggle; confinements that contain disruptive potential. In that it shares the impulse reflected in the walling-up of Anarkali. If Anarkali is the medium for communicating the threat of disruption or dysregulation caused by Salim towards Akbar and the empire as a whole, then her walling-up is an attempt to contain and confine that threat.

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[165] Bernier 1914, 103.

[166] Bernier 1914, 100.

[167] Bernier 1914, 106-107.

There is another avenue through which to unpack Anarkali's walling-up, as it is described by Finch, which is the literary motif of immurement particularly in medieval European architectural folklore. These often recount the necessary immurement of a young woman for the successful completion of a building. We can consider the very real possibility that the detail of Anarkali's immurement could be a literary import since it is first recorded by a traveling Englishman and since, as already mentioned, there is no indigenous contemporary historical or literary comparison or context for it. The Urdu scholar Anna Suvorova, writing on the topophilia of Lahore, cites several examples of the sacrifice of the "immured bride" in European architectural folklore and concludes that Anarkali's immurement is a manifestation of the same.[168] Suvorova's intention is to draw a parallel between Anarkali and other "scarified" women, but she does not unpack how Anarkali's punishment fits into this sacrificial paradigm; that is, Anarkali's immurement is clearly described as a punishment, not a sacrifice. How then do we understand it partaking in such a literary tradition? I suggest that in order to understand Anarkali's immurement in the context of the literary motif of immurement in architectural folklore, we have to shift the focus from the person to the architecture. That is, we need to take in to account where the person is immured. In doing so, let us first consider more closely the folklore in question.

In the *The Walled-Up Wife*, folklorist Alan Dundes presents a casebook that records the diverse iterations of the same basic song: the ballad of the 'walled-up wife'. The plot usually always involves the willing or unwilling (knowingly or unknowingly) sacrifice in the form of

[168] Suvorova 2011, 109-117.

immurement of a woman to ensure the successful building or function of an architectural body (building, bridge, well, etc.).[169] While Eastern European (Balkan) and Greek iterations of this ballad are among the more commonly known, it also surfaces in Northwest India and South India. Not recorded by anthropologists until the twenthieth century, it is unclear how to date these Indian ballads. But independent of their unknown chronological origin, it is their thematic concerns that are of significance to us. Northwest Indian ballad called "Kulh" (The Waterway) was recorded by anthropologist Kirin Narayan in the 1990s in Kangra. The basic plot is outlined as follows:

> "Kulh": about a spring in Garoh, near Dharamshala, where a wealthy man was told that if this was to flow, it needed a sacrifice. Not a broom [as sacrifice] because this is Lakshmi [goddess of fortune] in a house; not a cat, because the sin would not lift for seven lives; not a grandson, because the family line would be finished off; but a daughter-in-law. She is told that the *puja* [worship] will be done by her hands. She gets all ready. As the Nain [female barber] prepares her, someone sneezes. An inauspicious omen. Then the cows low, the birds cry out. She assures them that she'll feed them *puris* [fried bread] on her way back. She is pushed in [to the foundation] and starts to be bricked up. But he implores that her breasts not be covered so her son can suckle, her neck not be covered so that her daughter can embrace her. She is relentlessly bricked up. Then the children go running for their Mama [maternal uncle]. He arrives and kills the Saura [father-in-law]: it's from his blood that the waterway flows. He [the uncle] takes out his sister and cremates her.[170]

The motif of immurement is laid out quite clearly in this ballad that details the walling-up of each part of the daughter-in-law's body. She is bricked in starting from the foundation up and dies there, though it is eventually the blood of the father-in-law that actually gets the water flowing and the waterway working. The South Indian Kannada ballad called "Keregehara" (A Feast for the Well) also concerns the function of a watering body. A man digs a well to find not a

[169] Dundes 1996. For the history of scholarly interpretation of this ballad and the discussion of the genre of ballad in mutual existence with "unsung" narrative genres see ix-xi.

[170] Narayan in Dundes (ed.) 1996, 112-113. Narayan notes that not all sung versions match this outline exactly, but it provides a general summary.

drop of water and is told that it needs the sacrifice of his youngest daughter-in-law who enters the well knowing this and as she descends water appears and rises to match her level of descent until it submerges her completely:

> And so she walked briskly to the well,
> Briskly to the well and took the plate.
> She climbed a step and the water came up.
> She climbed two steps and the water touched her feet.
> She climbed three steps and the water touched her knee.
> She climbed four steps and the water touched her waist.
> She climbed five steps and the water browned her.
> The youngest daughter-in-law, Bhagirathi,
> She became a feast for the well.[171]

In this ballad, though the daughter-in-law is not walled up with bricks, the effect is the same. The water rises to cover parts of her body starting with her feet upwards until she is completed covered and drowns. It is as if the water is the agent of immurement in this case. In both ballads, while the daughter-in-law as the immured victim is the prime character, it is also important to account for the location of immurement. That is, the immurement of these young women would be meaningless if it were just anywhere. The immurement is meaningful *because* of where it takes place. It is the waterway and the well that require this immurement. The immurement brings about the successful functioning of that specific location. This holds for all other iterations of the 'walled-up wife' ballad as well. Where the 'wife' is walled up is just as significant to the narrative as the act of her walling-up. If we consider the immurement of Anarkali a possible manifestation of the same ballad or at least the same impulse, then the location of her immurement is meaningful in understanding the 'sacrifice' of her punishment. Recall that Finch records that Akbar has Anarkali walled up "in his moholl [mahal, 'palace']." She is not immured in a removed setting, but rather directly in Akbar's palace. Her immurement lends itself to the

[171] Dundes (ed.) 1996, 123. Unknown original author.

functioning of his domestic domain. Any dysregulation caused by Salm's actions is re-regulated in Anarkali's immurement. While Anarkali's immurement is described as a punishment, it can in fact be understood as a sacrifice.

In summary, there is a need to disengage the early travel accounts of Finch and Terry from their scandalous superficiality. A critical understanding of the Orientalizing *gaze* of these foreign travel writers and baggage of their own narrative influences helps unpack the enigmatic appearance of Anarkali allowing us to glean the underlying anxieties that she represents. Salim's relation with Anarkali is essentially an encroachment against Akbar and, by extension, Akbar's empire. More specifically, we see that both Anarkali and her immurement are a manifestation of the power struggle between Akbar and Salim; the tension between Akbar's reigning control and Salim's potential for the dysregulation of Akbar's imperial order.

Transmission of the Anarkali Narrative

Finch and Terry's early travel accounts are the only near contemporary references to Anarkali that we have. There are no direct contemporary references to Anarkali in any imperial memoires or by any Mughal historians. The next earliest references to Anarkali that we have are not until the mid-nineteenth century, at which point we find two different strains of the narrative (see summary in Table 1 below). Note that while historians have continued to transmit accounts of Anarkali well into the twenty-first century, I record and consider here the transmission of the Anarkali narrative up until Taj's production of his play *Anarkali* in 1922 as means of unpacking the various states of the narrative till that point.

Date	Source	Narrative Strain
1608-11	William Finch	Strain 1
1616-1619	Edward Terry	Strain 1
1842	Alexy Soltykoff	Strain 1
1884	Kunhya Lal	Strain 2
1892	Sayd Latif	Strain 1
1906	Nur Ahmad Chishti	Strain 2

Table 1: Chronological order of early Anarkali accounts.

The first strain, related in the writings of the Russian Prince Alexy Soltykoff and the Lahore historian Sayd Latif, loosely follows the accounts of Finch and Terry. Soltykoff traveled to Lahore in 1842 and writes about Anarkali's immurement, though her name is not mentioned: "I think I have already told you of a miserable woman buried alive for adultery. Her tomb is near here and I have been to see it. They discovered later that she was innocent and a mausoleum as big as a church was erected over her remains." [172] Not only is Anarkali not mentioned by name, but she is also not given a royal role. This is significant for the evolving dissolution of the royal standing Anarkali holds in Finch and Terry's early accounts. In Soltykoff's account she is just a "woman" who has been wrongly punished for a sexual transgression she did not commit. The account also does not implicate Akbar or Salim. Latif, writing in 1892, relates the account of

[172] Soltykoff in Garrett 1997, 105. Suvorova (2011) cites a variation in which immurement is mentioned more directly: "I haven't yet written to you about a miserable woman who was walled-up alive for adultery. Her tomb is no far from our camp. Later it turned out that she was innocent, and a beautiful mausoleum was erected over her grave" (123).

Anarkali in detail as part of his early history of Lahore and, more specifically, in relation to his description of the tomb of Anarkali:

> Anarkali (the pomegranate blossom), by which name the Civil Station is called, was the title given to Nadira Begam, or Sharf-un-Nisa, one of the favorites of the harem of the Emperor Akbar. One day, while the Emperor was seated in an apartment lined with looking glasses, with the youthful Anarkali attending him, he saw from her reflection in the mirror that she returned Prince Salem (afterwards Jahangir) a smile. Suspecting her of a criminal intrigue with his son, the Emperor ordered her to be buried alive. She was accordingly placed in an upright position at the appointed place, and was built around with bricks. Salem felt intense remorse at her death, and, on assuming sovereign authority, had an immense superstructure raised over her sepulcher.[173]

Here we receive a much more detailed account of Anarkali. According to Latif, 'Anarkali' was a title given to a young woman, Nadira Begam or Sharf-un-Nissa, who was a favorite of Akbar within his harem. What exact position she held within the harem and whether it was sexual one with regard to Akbar is unclear. Whereas Finch and Terry's identification of Anarkali as a 'wife' of Akbar clearly communicates a sexual relationship, in Latif's account, the nature of Anarkali's relationship to Akbar is less explicit. As mentioned earlier, only wives and designated concubines were sexually engaged with the emperor, which means that an attendant or entertainer may not be. The triangular narrative of Akbar, Anarkali, and Salim is further de-sexualized and de-romanticized by the detail that upon seeing Anarkali return Salim's smile, he suspects her of "criminal intrigue" with his son. Akbar's anxiety stems from the idea that Anarkali might be in a secret alliance with his rebellious son. He is alert and vigilant to his son's on-going treacherous behavior and of Anarkali as a possible agent of that. Latif's account brings to the forefront the tenuous relationship between Akbar and Salim and singles out Anarkali as the medium of the potential threat lurking there. Akbar orders Anarkali's immurement, which is given in detail by Latif, as a direct attempt to thwart that threat. This rendition highlights the

[173] Latif 1892, 186.

notion that began to take shape when we parsed out Finch and Terry's early accounts: that the narrative of Anarkali has more to do with Akbar and Salim than with either Salim and Anarkali or Anarkali herself.

Latif's account is also the first account to mention the very particular detail of the "apartment lined with looking glasses," which is often anachronistically identified as the famous Shish Mahal in order to provide a 'historical' backdrop to the narrative and strengthen its historicity. But the Shish Mahal was not built until the later reign of Shah Jahan around 1630. The appearance of this detail points more clearly towards a literary development of the narrative than a historical setting. Mirrors and the reflections they cast have a complex, but long-standing role in Islamic art, literature and philosophy as a medium of conveying the Real versus the illusionary.[174] Nizami attributes the discovery of the mirror to Alexander and narrates the mirror's invention as process that first yields distorted results until perfection as perceived by the viewer is reached:

> Mirrors were unknown before Alexander and were initially prepared through his wisdom. The first try failed. One poured silver and gold in a mold and polished the casting, but one could not see one's own form. Then followed experiments with all other metals. Each showed distorted images until iron came into use, when the image shown from the substance. As he polished it, the blacksmith who made it became a painter, because the essence of things delighted and as the metal shone it showed all forms just as they are. Then they gave the mirror all possible forms, in which no real image emerged. If it was wide, then it showed one wide, if one looked at it oblong, it lengthened the forehead. A square appeared cross-wise, a hexagon deformed. As one made the form round, a shape was achieved with no deformity. Wherever one stood, the reflection was evenly good, so one left it at that. With such techniques the king unlocked clear reflection from opaque metal. [175]

[174] See Shaw (2019) chapter 5 for an in-depth survey of the evolution of Islamic thought in relation to art and reflection, painting and mirrors.

[175] Nizami 1991, 93-94.

The mirror is eventually able to unlock "clear reflection" one that is not distorted in any way. Moreover, the "clear reflection" retains the self-reflective presence and so makes it distinctly different from an image such as a painting. Shaw notes that "story invests the gaze into the mirror with a creative capacity not merely seeing the world but seeing it in exemplary form. The mirror resembles a painting, but its power lies in the transparency of its deception: its demonstration that it is not a painting depends entirely on the self-reflexive capacity of the observer."[176] A reflection, then, has the ability to reach beyond the visual into a reality that, in Islamic thought, is often seen a possibility for partaking in the one true eternal Reality. Akbar does not see Anarkali return a smile to Salim directly, but rather sees "her reflection in the mirror" which implicitly evokes his own presence as the observer as well. The reflection allows Akbar to see beyond the visual into something that would otherwise remain veiled. Anarkali's reflection offers him a reality that only a reflection can.

The second strain of the narrative is related by two other historians of Lahore. In *Tarikh-i-Lahaur* (The History of Lahore), Kunhya Lal writes:

> Anarkali was a very beautiful servant (*kaniz*) in Akbar's palace. Her real name was Nadira Begam. The emperor gave her the title Anarkali because she was so beautiful and had such a healthy complexion. In the days when the emperor was busy in Deccan and Khandesh, she became sick and died in Lahore. Some say she was poisoned. Under the emperor's orders this great tomb was built…[177]

According to Lal, Anarkali died either because of sickness or poisoning. Her death was not a punishment enacted by Akbar, nor is there any appearance of Salim in this rendition. Lal is writing in 1884 (before Latif, but after Finch, Terry, and Soltykoff; see Table 1), which makes his account of Anarkali not only the first to appear in a history of Lahore (as opposed to travel

[176] Shaw 2019, 147.

[177] Lal 1884, 314.

writings), but also the first to be related by a native historian. I will return to the appearance of Anarkali in the genre of history (*tarikh*) shortly below, but the fact that Lal is, to our knowledge, the first native historian to mention Anarkali could very well mean that he is transmitting a distinctly different circulating version than the one recorded by the foreign traveler. It is a version that bypasses both the anxieties of a power struggle between emperor and prince and the punitive wrath of Akbar. It is also significant that, in this version, the tomb of Anarkali is built by Akbar, not Salim—who the tomb is built by dictates whose legacy it represents. This version is taken up in further detail by Nur Ahmad Chishti in 1906. Chishti relates that

> It has been learnt that Anarkali was a beautiful slave girl of Akbar. Her real name is said to be Nadira Begam or Sharifun-Nisa, but Akbar gave her the name of Anarkali (Pomegranate Blossom) for the reason that she was very beautiful. The dome of the tomb is very fine, pleasing, octagonal in shape, and very lofty. Originally there were four graves under the dome, one of them being that of Anarkali and three of other slave girls. As the king loved her the most she was ever in his attendance with the result that other Begums began to envy her. Now, some say that she was poisoned, while others hold that when Akbar had been on an expedition to Deccan, she died of some disease. First an ordinary tomb was built over her remains, but when the King returned and heard the sad news of Anarkali's death, he was very much grieved and erected this tomb…about the remaining three tombs, it is related that one of them was that of her compatriot from Yaman and two other slave girls. When Anarkali died in the absence of the King, both these two slave girls committed suicide for the fear that if the king would know the death of Anarkali, he would surely put them to trouble. This shows that Anarkali was most probably poisoned.[178]

Chishti seems to lean more towards the possibility of Anarkali having been poisoned because of the inner politics of the harem. Akbar's preference of Anarkali brings about the jealousy of the other "begums" (ladies). The suicide of the other slave girls that are buried in the same tomb implicates them in a pre-mediated plot against Anarkali. This version in which Anarkali's downfall is caused by malicious actors within the harem plays a vital role in Taj's dramatization which, as we will see, essentially attempts to combine both strains of the Anarkali narrative.

[178] Chishti in Nabi Khan (trans.) 1997, 95-96.

Taj's play, first written in 1922, will be the next main account of Anarkali. But, to take a step back, we need to first consider how we understand this transmission of the Anarkali narrative from its earliest records by travel writers to Taj's first full dramatization. Note that historians do continue to revisit and re-present the account of Anarkali after the publication of Taj's play, but this chapter is interested in exploring the space specifically between the earliest records and Taj's publication in order to situate the significance of Taj's work and its future adaptations.

Focusing in on this period of transmission, there has been an impulse to see these individual accounts as manifestations of some yet undiscovered, 'true' record of Anarkali; one that can be uncovered if versions can somehow be reconciled or integrated or even discredited. That is, the idea that we can somehow still find out who Anarkali truly was and what actually happened. This impulse arises essentially from a genre confusion. As mentioned above, due to the early reception of travel writings as "quasi-scientific" they are channeled into history as opposed to literature, fiction, etc. Beyond the travel writings, accounts of Anarkali become packaged in histories of Lahore (Kunhya, Latif, Chishti), in part stemming also from the need to explain the physical presence of the Tomb of Anarkali. The genre confusion does not lie in the accounts of Anarkali being channeled into history, but rather in the misunderstanding of the malleability of the genre of history in Islamicate India. The genre of *tarikh* (history) could be and was often permeated by another genre: the *qissa*.

The Anarkali *Qissa*

The *qissa*, like the *dastan*, was, on the most general level, a genre of "verbal art" in that its most defining feature was its performativity.[179] Khan uses "verbal art" as a translation of the

[179] Pasha Khan 2019, 1-2.

Persian terms *sukhan* and *kahlam*, borrowing also on the use of the term "verbal art" by folklorists Bascom (1955) and Bauman (1975). On the delineation between the term *dastan*, *qissa*, and *hikayat*, Khan notes that there is "bound up with each of these words is a vague idea of a narrative of a particular length."[180] While *hikayat* are quite consistently very short stories, *dastan* has been used to reference both long narratives, but also shorter but sections of longer narratives. Khan offers that "we can only say that the preponderance of evidence suggests that the definitions of both words [i.e., *dastan* and *hikayat*] slide towards each other along a continuum, at the center of which there is a considerable area of overlap in the term *qissa*."[181] The *qissa* was the art of storytelling, embodied by professional storytellers called *qissa-khvans* or *dastan*-gos. The Persian words for 'story', *qissas* and *dastans*, often though not always related wonderous and adventurous tales. This genre whose origin extends back to medieval Iran found its way into South Asia through the Persian language and not only took a strong foothold in India but blossomed into other languages including Urdu.[182] Its dissemination in India, however, was not restricted to oral performance and often took written form especially after the boom of commercial publishing in the 1860s. In tracking the evolution of the *qissa* as a pre-print genre in print culture, Orsini notes that "the mass printing of qissas should not be taken as evidence of a linear transition from oral recitation to silent reading."[183] *Qissas* continued to be narrated and heard, while *qissa* texts also showed characteristics and constraints of oral narration in written

[180] Pasha Khan 2019, 9.

[181] Khan 2019, 10.

[182] For the introduction of the *qissa* and *dastan* genre into South Asia and its legacy thereon see Pritchett's formative works *Marvelous Encounters* (1985) and *The Romance Tradition in Urdu* (1991). For the Persian *dastan* tradition see Hanaway (1971).

[183] Orsini 2009, 110.

form. Neither was the *qissa* restricted to wonderous tales. In the later part of the nineteenth century especially, *qissas* often related tales of ordinary characters in relatable situations. Orsini suggests that this may be evidence for two distinct genealogies of the *qissa*. One that stems from courtly oral performances of high-adventures and famous heroes, while the other from the genre of the *naql* that related short prosaic stories.[184]

Pasha Khan, in his in-depth exploration of the *qissa*, suggests that perhaps the best understanding of the *qissa* genre comes from viewing it in both its opposition to, and participation, in other genres such as *tarikh* (history), *aklaq* (ethic), and *madh* (pangerics).[185] In relation to history (*tarikh*) in particular, *qissa* held a paradoxical position: as a genre it stood both in radical opposition to history (*tarikh*) and in co-existence with history. Khan notes that "one system, shaped by a rationalist worldview, defined the mendacious *qissa* in opposition to the veracious *tarikh*. But another system, perhaps a more prevalent one, if less familiar to us, treated the *qissa* and history as close cousins with porous limits."[186] As an example of the latter, Khan quotes an episode from an alternative seventeenth century *Jahangirnama* in which the Emperor Jahangir encounters and vanquishes a dragon while exploring a cave in Ajmer.[187] According to Khan, the presence of this *qissa* (i.e. the marvelous encounter with a dragon) in a *tarikh* (i.e. the historical *Jahangirnama*) would have been easily recognizable by South Asian audiences. The appearance, then, of *qissas* in histories (and history in *qissas*, for that matter) did not necessarily invalidate either genre. The "porous limits" of *qissa* and *tarikh* provides us with the ability to

[184] Orsini 2009, 109-154.

[185] Pasha Khan 2019, 133

[186] Pasha Khan 2019, 134.

[187] Pasha Khan 2019, 134.

understand the appearance of Anarkali in historical accounts. I suggest that we should view the story of Anarkali as a *qissa* that makes an ongoing appearance in history; that is, it is not itself a historical account. Such an approach radically shifts, once again, the lens of analysis away from establishing the historicity of Anarkali and towards finding the meaning of Anarkali. We can even go a step further. The appearance of the Anarkali *qissa* in the histories of Lahore not only shows the circulation of more than one strain of the narrative, but also relates narrative evolution within those strains; for example, the inclusion of Anarkali's 'real' name, the mirror in which Akbar spots Anarkali's smile to Salim, and even the implication of other slave girls in her poisoning. This points towards the possibility that the Anarkali *qissa* may have existed in its own right outside these appearances within histories, perhaps even in much fuller versions in which, alternatively, history made an appearance as the setting of the *qissa.* It is also likely that the Anarkali *qissa* was transmitted as an oral story which would not only account for the stories heard by our early travel writers, but also by Imtiaz Ali Taj, the playwright of *Anarkali*.

Sayyid Imtiaz Ali Taj (1900-1970) first wrote *Anarkali* in 1922, while still completing his bachelor's degree at Lahore Government College. Taj originally intended the play to be performed and submitted it to Lahore theaters with the hope of seeing it staged. But none of the theaters accepted the play in its original form. In the preface to his eventual publication of the play, Taj explains that "I wrote *Anarkali* in 1922, but the theaters did not accept it in its present form. The changes that they proposed were not acceptable to me."[188] After waiting almost ten years, Taj eventually published the play in 1931. In his biography of Imtiaz Ali Taj, Naushahi notes that Taj was not disheartened during those interim years as he searched for a theater that would accept his play because, during that time, he sought the advice of the renowned poet and

[188] Taj 2012, 5.

playwright Agha Hashar, who upon reading the play, proclaimed that "I used to think that after me drama would die, but the spring of Urdu drama has only now begun."[189] And, indeed, once published, Taj's play not only single-handedly gave rise to, what Anna Suvorova calls, the "genre of Mughal melodrama," but also became the basis of countless successful theater productions, television dramas, and blockbuster feature films about Anarkali that followed in rapid succession.[190] Most importantly, Taj's play is the first full textual iteration of the Anarkali narrative. But while Taj may have given rise to a new genre and given the narrative of Anarkali its foundational dramatic form, he does not lay any claim to narrative himself. In his preface, Taj explains that his "drama (*drama*) is concerned only with tradition (*rivayet*)" and that his drama was conceived from "stories" (*ferzi kahani*) about Anarkali that he has "heard" (*suntay*) since childhood.[191] *Rivayet* can be best translated both as tradition and narrative in that it indicates something that has been transmitted. It is perhaps closest to the phrase "narrative tradition." Taj explains further that this *rivayet* or "narrative tradition" has been transmitted to him orally in that he has "heard" (*suntay,* from the verb *sunna* 'to hear') the stories. The stories themselves he calls *ferzi kahani* or "fictitious stories" and so is not making any historical claims of the narrative source. Taj explicitly notes earlier in his preface that "to my knowledge this tale has no historical foundation" (*jahan main tehkik kar sakah hoon tarikhi etebar se ye qissa bey bunyad hai*).[192] I argue that Taj is activating here, as his main source, a partly oral storytelling tradition of the *dastan* or *qissa* genre. Taj consistently calls his own work *drama* while using terms such as

[189] Naushahi 1999, 40.

[190] Suvorova 2011, 127.

[191] Taj 2012, 6.

[192] Taj 2012, 5.

dastan, *qissa*, and *kahani* to refer to the "narrative tradition" of Anarkali. While *kahani* is a rather generic term for story, both *dastan* and *qissa* tap into a complex genre whose transmission is both written and oral. This means that in producing his own *drama* of Anarkali, Taj is tapping into a *qissa* tradition that we can only glean through its scattered and sparse appearances in various histories and, in choosing to prioritize the *qissa* as his source Taj is making a conscious rupture from history.

Chapter Three

The Playwright and the Play: Imtiaz Ali Taj's *Anarkali*

Taj's *Anarkali* is seminal because it is the first, fully published textual iteration of the Anarkali narrative and, as such, it occupies a unique place in Anarkali's *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Even though not published until 1931, it often seems to reach into the past, supplying the basic storyline to string together the sparse written early accounts of Anarkali especially since it taps into, as a source, the Anarkali *qissa* that may have birthed those early accounts. It becomes the entry point for all aspects of Anarkali, the linchpin that holds together the entire tradition. Once published, it is almost impossible to approach any iteration of Anarkali independent of Taj's work, which is what establishes its cultural and literary significance. But, most importantly, this chapter argues that, far from a scandalous love story, the play itself strengthens the proposition of Anarkali as a construct and medium for presenting the anxiety of the subversion of the Mughal empire and its ultimate decline. In his preface, Taj mentions that those who have heard this story disagree about whether "this is a tragedy of Salim and Anarkali or a tragedy of Akbar the Great" (*yeh tragedy salim aur anarkali ki hai ya akbar azam ki*).[193] I argue that the tragedy of Anarkali *is* the tragedy of Akbar and, by extension, the tragedy of the Mughal empire.

In this chapter, I first unpack the construct of Anarkali within Taj's text and, in doing so, I consider the possible influence of another comparable narrative tradition known as the 'Courtesan Tale', which revolves around the dangerous liminality of the courtesan figure. This comparison brings to light a comparable dangerous liminality of Anarkali at the cross-section of music, love, and duty, demonstrating the subversive social and imperial anxieties packed within

[193] Taj 2012, 6.

the concept of Anarkali. I then turn to Taj's figure of Akbar who is the ultimate target of these subversive anxieties and suffers the tragic loss of his son's love which foreshadows the unraveling of Akbar's empire. I begin first with a brief overview of Taj's life and a short summary of the play.

The Playwright

Imtiaz Ali Taj was born in 1900 in Lahore to parents who were already well established in the Urdu literary circle of Lahore. His father, Sayyid Mumtaz Ali, was a renowned scholar from Deoband, Uttar Pardesh, who was given the title of "Shams-ul-Ulama" (the Sun of Scholars) by the Government of British India in 1934. Mumtaz Ali had moved to Lahore after his education to find his own publishing house as well as several journals, one of which was co-edited by his wife and Taj's mother Muhammadi Begum. Born in Lahore, Taj would go on to spend his entire life in Lahore. His connection to Lahore is tangible in how he approaches the Anarkali *qissa* and his own role in its transmission. Recall that in his preface to his play *Anarkali*, Taj begins by situating the narrative in conjunction with the Tomb of Anarkali in Lahore. He writes:

> The version of this dastan that stands in a frame, from the Department of Archeology, in the tomb of Anarkali in Lahore, is this: 'The civil station of Lahore is known by the name of Anarkali. This title [Anarkali] was given to Nadira Begum or Sharif al-Nisa Begum, a favorite courtesan [kaniz] in Emperor Akbar's harem. One day Akbar was sitting in the Shish-Mahal and a young Anarkali was busy in his service when he saw in the mirrors that she was responding to Salim's signs with smiles. On account of inciting his son to rebellion he gave the order to have her buried alive. Accordingly, in carrying out the order she was made to stand straight on an appointed spot and around her a wall was cemented. Salim was saddened beyond measure by her death. After taking the throne, he had built on top of Anarkali's grave a very grand building. Its tombstone/cenotaph is made of a single piece of pure marble. With respect to its beauty it is unusual and with respect to its features it is a wonder of the world. According to Mr. Eastwick, it is one of the best examples of stone carving in the world. On top of it are inscribed the 99 names

of Allah. On its border is inscribed the following verse, the one that Anarkali's lover Emperor Jahangir spoke himself:

Ah! could I behold the face of my beloved once more
I would give thanks to my God until the day of Resurrection
(Majnun Salim Akbar)'

In another frame are written the dates of this building that note in which time/year what service the building was used for. In this record, the date of Anarkali's immurement is given as 1599 and date of the tomb's completion is given as 1615.[194]

Lahore main mehkmeh asar kadmi ki taraf se anarakli key maqbare main is ki jo dastan ek frame main lagi hoi hai us ka tarjumah ye hai: Lahore ka civil station anarkali ke nam se mashoor hai. Yeh khitab shehenshah akbar ke harm main nadira begum ya sharif-al-nisa begum ek manzoor nazar kaniz ko mila tha. Ek roz akbar shesh mahal main behta tha naujawan anarkali is khidmat main masroof thi. To akbar ne ainoon main dekh liya ke salim ke asharoon ka jawab tabasam se de rahi hai. Betey seh mujarmaneh sazish ke shobeh par shehenshah ne usey zinda gard deneh ka hukum deya. Chunachan hukum ki tameel main usey maqrah maqam par sedah kharda kar keh us ke gird dewar chun di gaye. Salim ko us ki maut ka behhad sadmah hua. Takth par betne ke bad us ne anarkali ki kabar ek nehayat alishan amarat bunwa di. Us ka taweez khalas sang-e-marmar ki ek hi sil se bana hua hai. Jo apne husan ke etbar se gher mamuli au naksh ke etbar se nadir rozgar hai. Beqwal eastwick ke yeh taweez dunya main sang-e-tarashi ke behthareen namunoon main se hai. Is ke upar allah-tallah ki 99 safat kandah hain. Pehloon par ye sher khuda hua hai. Jo anarkali ke ashiq shah-e-jahangir ne khud kaha tha.

Ah! agar man baz binam rui yar khuish ra.
ta kiyamat shukar guim kard gar khuish ra
Salim Majnun Akbar

Ek dusare frame main is amarat ki tarikh likhi hai ke kis zamane main is amarat se kya kam liya geya. Is silsale main anarakli ke zinda gardne ki tarikh 1599 aur maqbareh ki takmeel ki tarkikh 1615 darj hai.

As I mentioned briefly in chapter one, Taj's acknowledgment of the tomb in his preface is an oblique one. He acknowledges it by quoting a version of the narrative that has been framed inside it by the Department of Archeology. Taj does not discuss the tomb any further nor does he offer any insight into its physical presence. Most importantly, he does not engage with tomb as historical evidence for Anarkali. In fact, in his preface, Taj clearly states that he does not believe that the episode of Anarkali has any historical veracity: "As far as I have been able to research,

[194] Taj 2012, 6-7.

this story has no historical basis" (*jahan main tehkik kar sakah hoon tarikhi etebar se ye qissa bey bunyad hai*).[195] If Taj does not believe in the historicity of Anarkali, then why does he not simply ignore the Tomb of Anarkali? How can his acknowledgement, though oblique, of the tomb co-exist with his opinion that there is no historical basis to Anarkali? The answer is precisely what I have argued in chapter one, that the tomb of Anarkali has little to do with history and more to do with the topophilia of Lahore. For Taj, a life-long resident of Lahore, the tomb of Anarkali is not historical evidence that needs explanation, but rather a place where the Anarkali *qissa* is banked and (re)performed. It is then no coincidence that Taj begins at the tomb of Anarkali; it marks the perfect point from which to initiate his own reperformance of the *qissa.* Moreover, Taj shows a keen awareness his own role in the transission of the *qissa* when he states his "drama (*drama*) is concerned only with tradition (*rivayet*)" (*mere drama ka taluq mehz ravayet se hai*) and that it was conceived from "stories" (*ferzi kahani*) about Anarkali that he has since childhood (*bachpan se anarakli ki ferzi kahani suntey rehne se...*).[196] The tradition (*rivayet*) of the Anarkali *qissa* is not for Taj to invent or lay claim to. Just like the tomb itself, Taj, in composing his play, is taking part in the transmission of the *qissa.* I go a step further to suggest that also like the tomb, in reperforming the *qissa* Taj is essentially partaking in the topophilia of Lahore. The deep connection between Lahore and the Anarkali *qissa* is felt by Taj, a native of Lahore. But this will be subject to significant change, as I shall discuss in the next chapter, when the *qissa* is taken up by Indian cinema. For now, I suggest that by framing his play with the tomb of Anarkali, Taj shows an acute awareness of the role of the Anarkali *qissa* in the topophilia of Lahore.

[195] Taj 2012, 5.

[196] Taj 2012, 6.

Taj wrote the first version of his play, *Anarkali*, in 1922 at the age of twenty-two. He was then still completing his bachelor's degree at Lahore Government College, two kilometers away from the Tomb of Anarkali. Taj had originally hoped to see his play performed on stage. But when he submitted it to Lahore theaters, it was not accepted by any. Taj explains that "I wrote *Anarkali* in 1922, but the theaters did not accept it in its present form. The changes that they proposed were not acceptable to me" (*main ne anarkali 1922 main likha tha. Is maujudah surat main theatroon ne ise kabool nah kia. Jo mashware tarmeem ke liye unho ney pesh key unhey kabool karna mujhe gawara nah hua).* [197] Taj does not record what the requested changes included only that they were not something he was willing to indulge at the time. But we do know that Taj did eventually make some revisions to the play before publishing it in 1931. What they were exactly is unclear. Désoulières suggests that Taj

> …did listen to some literary criticism, and he may have enlarged the descriptive passages of his play since they read like passages from an historical novel, with a plethora of colorful details particularly the first introductory descriptive passage about the royal garden and daily life in the women's quarters and the presentation of Salim's palace and apartments. Naturally these passages emphasize the local color and add to the realism of the play. He must have also revised the poetic passages...[198]

While it is difficult to surmise the revisions that Taj made before publication, it is important to note that he did not give up on pursing a performance of his work. By 1928, Taj had convinced the Great Eastern Film Corporation to produce a silent film version of his entitled *The Loves of a Moghul Prince.* The film was directed by Charu Roy and was directly based on Taj's play. Taj himself took the on-screen role of Emperor Akbar. Unfortunately, the film was overshadowed by a more successful, rival film entitled *Anarkali* released the very same year (1928).

[197] Taj 2012, 5.

[198] Désoulières 2007, 129.

Before Taj wrote *Anarkali* in 1922, he was already an active literary figure during his years at Lahore Government College. Keenly interested in Shakespeare in particular, he translated into Urdu *A Midsummer's Night Dream* under the title *Sawan Rain Ka Sapna.*[199] Works of theatrical performance, his own and in translation, constitute one of Taj's main literary interests and highlight again his investment in performance. After completing his studies, Taj would go onto join his father's publishing house, contributing to the children's literary journal, *Phool.* In 1926, Taj published *Chacha Chakan,* a satire written as a comedy for children. The play that would become a famous addition to his corpus. Children's literature makes up the other significant part of Taj's literary pursuits invoking an investment in story-telling similar to the ones, as he notes in his preface, he heard as a child about Anarkali. Taj would remain an active figure in both the literary world of Lahore as well as in the theatrical circles until his tragic death in 1970. Taj was killed in his sleep during a home invasion by unknown thieves. His wife, Hijab Imtiaz Ali, was injured as well, but survived. Since no ulterior motives were found, it is assumed that Taj's death the result of a very unfortunate criminal event.

Summary of *Anarkali*

Set in the spring of 1599 at the royal palace in Lahore (Lahore Fort), the play is divided into three acts: love (*ishq*), dance (*ruqs*), and death (*maut*). As the play opens, we find Dilaram, a servant-girl of the royal harem, brooding over the fact that while she was away, tending to a sick family member, she was replaced by Anarkali as Emperor Akbar's chosen servant-girl. Anarkali's musical debut at the court celebration while Dilaram was away makes her the palace's

[199] While it would be fruitful to consider Taj's translation with respect to his own writing, *Sawan Rain Ka Sapna*, to the extent of my research, is no longer in publication or circulation. No archives on Taj's works holds the title either.

newest sensation. When Dilaram finds out that Anarkali and Prince Salim are in love with each other, she plots to disgrace Anarkali. But when the prince confronts her about her plot against Anarkali, Dilaram reveals her own love for the prince and promises to assist the prince in his meetings with Anarkali if he will not disgrace her (Dilaram) by disclosing her secret love for him. But Dilaram's commitment is disingenuous. At the celebration of the spring festival (*jashn-e-nau ruz*), Dilaram drugs Anarkali right before her dance performance and, adding a decorative mirror, re-arranges the seating of the hall in such a way that Anarkali's emboldened gestures towards the prince become visible to Akbar in the mirror's reflection. When Akbar sees this exchange between Anarkali and the prince, he is furious and orders that Anarkali be imprisoned. Salim threatens his way into the prison, but as he plans to escape with Anarkali, the prison guard betrays him to Akbar and reports, falsely, that he heard Anarkali inciting Salim to rebellion against his father. When Dilaram joins in with these false accusations, Akbar, alarmed, commands that Anarkali be buried alive within a wall.

Taj's Anarkali

Taj's Anarkali is not the proper name of an individual, but rather a conscious construct fitted upon a young girl of fifteen named Nadira. In the first scene of the play, we see two other servant-girls, Unbar and Marvareed, recounting for Dilaram how Nadira was given the title of Anarkali during the previous night's court celebration that Dilaram missed. While Nadira is exceptionally beautiful, it was her singing that captured Emperor Akbar attention. As Unbar and Marvareed recount, Akbar declared

> 'Nadira! You really do appear to be an *Anarkali* [pomegranate bud]'…and then pleased with her singing and quickness he bestowed upon her his pearl necklace as a prize. Then what. Within seconds the whole palace began to resound with the name of Anarkali.

> *Nadira tum to ain main anar ki kali maluum hoti ho...aur is kay ganay aur hazir jawabi sey kush ho kar apna motiyoon ka har anam main bakhsha. phir kya tha. pal bhar main tamam mahal anarkali key nam sey gonj udha.*[200]

Kali is a bud and *Anar,* the pomegranate fruit and flower, which is widely cultivated in South Asian; the pomegranate bud denotes delicateness and a richness of hue. From that moment on, Nadira is known to everyone as Anarkali. Only her mother and her little sister continue to call her Nadira and that too only in private and direct dialogue. But Anarkali is more than just a title. It is a persona ladened with expectations. As soon as she is given the name Anarkali, she is expected to uphold the emperor's favor by making appropriate social appearances especially to the royal women of the *haram*. When we first meet Nadira, it is the morning of after the court celebration and while the royal women are waiting for her to make an appearance before them, she remains aloof. Her mother scolds Nadira in trying to impress upon her the duties of Anarkali:

> The world's tongue is becoming parched calling out 'Anarkali', 'Anarkali'. And you don't care enough to even say a word of thanks, even just for appearances. What has happened to you?
>
> *dunya ki tu anarkakli anarkali kehtey zaban kushk hoy ja rahi hai aur tujhey itni bhi tofiq nahain keh juthey moon do bol shukriya hi key keh dey. yeh akhir tujhey hua kya hai* [201]

Nadira realizes the expectations foisted upon Anarkali. There is almost an unwillingness on her behalf to take upon herself the identity of Anarkali. Yet she is compelled to do so. Her short monologue when her mother exits, shows both a narrative and meta-narrative awareness of what being Anarkali entails:

[200] Taj 2012, 14.

[201] Taj 2012, 19.

> My mother, where shall I find a heart that can be happy? How can I explain to you my sadness? I wish, somehow, I could put my heart into your chest. Then I would see how you can say 'You are Anarkali, why aren't you happy?' How can I tell you that indeed I *am* Anarkali and that is why I cannot be happy? You can't understand. Oh, my mother, you can't understand…. someone born to be a servant-girl, how can she be happy? She fears dying out of love, she is scared to even look at the prince lest he sees the love in her eyes. Then tell me, how does it matter then if she is Anarkali.
>
> *meyri ma main kush hunay wala dil kahain say laoon? tumhay kaisey samjahoon kay main kayoon amgeen hoon. ay kash main apna dil kisy tarhan tumharey senay main rakh dayti. phir daykhti tim kaysey kehti ho. tu anarkali hai tu kush kayoon nahain hoti. main kaysey batayoon main anarkali hoon. main isy liye kush nahain hoti. tum nahain samaj saktein. meri ama tum nahain samaj saktein…jo kaniz banay ko payda hoi ho. phir vo kush kayoon ho? vo to mohabbat mein jal marney say bhi darti hai vo to ek shahzaheh ki taraf is dar key marey nazar bhi nahain uthathi key kahein is ki ankhoon main mohabbat nah dekh ley. phir bata tu vo anarakli hoi to kaya.* [202]

In this one lucid moment, Nadira seems cognizant of what it means to be Anarkali both to the characters in the play and to the audience. In the narrative, as the emperor's favorite, Anarkali is expected to present herself as a pleasant presence (laugh, smile, make small talk, show proper etiquette, etc.). But in this short monologue, she is also aware of what being Anarkali means on a meta-narrative level; what it means to an audience that knows Anarkali's doomed fate. She is unhappy *because* she is Anarkali ("indeed I *am* Anarkali and that is why I cannot be happy"). Being Anarkali won't save her from the dynamic that has already been set: she, a servant-girl, is in love with the prince. The most poignant sentiment lies in her fear of Anarkali's inevitable, on-coming fate. Again, on a narrative level, she is afraid of both unrequited love ("dying out of love") and being found out ("lest he [the prince] sees the love in her eyes"). But on a meta-narrative level, her fear extends to the fact that being the emperor's favorite, being 'Anarkali', won't save her from the impossibility of her situation ("how does it matter then if she [the servant-girl] is Anarkali"). By making Nadira conscious of donning the loaded persona of

[202] Taj 2012, 20.

Anarkali with its pre-fixed narrative and meta-narrative expectations, Taj presents Anarkali as a construct rather than an organic character, which captures the impulse of the earlier accounts of Anarkali in which we observed that the accounts had more to do with funneling a commentary on Akbar and Salim and less to do with the actual person of Anarkali. This construct of Anarkali that Taj highlights in Nadira's hesitation to become Anarkali is what makes her such a potent medium for positing anxieties and lies at the heart of her continued relevance in South Asian popular culture, especially in the numerous films that proliferate through the second half of the twentieth century.

Taj's construct of Anarkali relies on one main aspect: her status. We have already seen how Anarkali's status begins to shift in the early account from a royal wife to a servant girl (*kaniz*) as early as Kunhya Lal's account in 1884. Taj's Anarkali is also a *kaniz* and her duties are those of an entertainer. She is supposed to sing and dance for the royal audience especially at court festivities. She is *not* presented as a royal concubine.[203] Taj's positing of Anarkali as a *kaniz* has less to do with sexual exchange than with the idea that she occupies the lowest rung of the courtly social ladder, especially in contrast with Salim. Anarkali (as *kaniz*) and Salim (as prince) occupy two extremes of the social order and two spheres that cannot be bridged. The distance between them is presented as an impossibility. During their first tryst, Anarkali calls Salim's declaration of love a cruel joke, but when he maintains that his feelings are true, Anarkali responds:

> Well what was I to understand? That the new moon of Hindustan desires a *chukar* [partridge]? How laughable! Ah, you are a prince, a great one, a very great one. I am a servant-girl, worthless, extremely worthless. Will the prince desire a servant-girl? How laughable!

[203] See also Désoulières (2007, 83) who agrees that that Taj's use of the term *kaniz* (servant-girl) "does not imply that she was a courtesan, but her duties are to dance and sing, especially for the royal festivals."

> *phir main kya shamajti? hindustan ka niya chand ek chukar ko chahta hey. keysi hansi ki bat! ah tum shehzade ho barey, bohat barey. main ek kaniz hoon. nachiz, bey-had nachiz. shehzadah kaniz ko chahey ga? keysi hansi ki bat!* [204]

The chukar, a type of partridge, is said to be in love with the moon and survives on moonbeams. It represents a natural paradigm for unrequited love where the beloved is far removed, exists on a higher plane, and is, quite likely, unaware of the desires of the lover. [205] For the moon to desire a *chukar* or to even return the *chukar's* love is an impossible reversal of this dynamic, as impossible as a prince desiring a servant-girl. It is an inversion that would signal the collapse of the natural order of things. Salim's desire for Anarkali is framed as an impossible inversion that is almost unnatural. We should spell out here that Salim's desire for Anarkali is not portrayed by Taj as a singularly sexual desire. What is at stake is Salim's desire to *marry* Anarkali.

When the queen comes to console Salim after Anarkali's imprisonment she explicitly voices the disgrace he would suffer for marrying a servant-girl:

> Is there so much poison in your little heart against your mother and father? Only because they don't want you marry a servant-girl of the harem and disgrace yourself in the eyes of the world!
>
> *is naney sey dil mein ma bap key khilaf itna zehr bhar giya? siraf is liye keh vo nahin chahatey tu ik haram ki kaniz sey shadi karey or duniya ki nazaroon mein apney ap ko sobk banaley* [206]

Marriage lies at the heart of the impossibility of Salim and Anarkali's union and that is because it would bring with it a status change for Anarkali from *kaniz* to royal wife. Concubinage would not hold the same threat as marriage in terms of the implosion of the entire social spectrum. But

[204] Taj 2012, 79.

[205] See Temple (1990) for uses in Indian legends. See also Oxford Urdu-English Dictionary.

[206] Taj 2012, 159.

what is the threat of a *kaniz* bridging the social order and becoming a royal wife? Why is Salim's desire to marry a *kaniz* depicted as an unnatural impossibility? What is the underlying anxiety of what might happen if this were to come to pass? These questions are best answered by exploring another potential strain of popular story-telling that Taj is absorbing, one known as the 'Courtesan Tales'.

Status and Gender

What the scholar Katherine Schofield dubs the 'Courtesan Tales' are essentially accounts written by Mughal chroniclers (domestic and foreign) between 1556 and 1748 that present a cautionary, moralistic commentary on the scandalous and quite frequent relationships of Mughal noblemen with courtesans.[207] To begin with, it is important to contextualize the courtesan as a rather generic translation of a slew of Urdu and Persian terms that designated female musical performers during the Mughal empire. This includes delineating the blurry line of sexual exchange between female performers and their patrons since the question of sexual status seems to have been linked to their musical role. The designation of female performers depended largely on the type of audience for which they performed, and the rather strict boundaries maintained between those audiences and, by extension, between female performers. In the highly segregated Mughal society, female performers could only perform in one of three kinds of spaces: inside the *haram* (to a completely female audience with the allowance of royal male relatives), in male-only spaces, and, by special sanction, in both female and male spaces (on occasions such as royal births and weddings). Those who could perform in both female and male spaces were unique.

[207] Schofield (2012) views the 'Courtesan Tale' as the direct precursor to *tawaif* literature and the *tawaif* figure of Colonial North India, 151-152. For the *tawaif* figure see Waheed (2014). For the South India counterpart of *devdasis* see Sharma (2007).

Usually called *domnis* (*dhadhis* being their male counterparts), they seem to have been free of any expected sexual exchange with male patrons, which, as Schofield argues, is what allowed them the unique "cultural freedom" to pass in and out of the *haram*.[208] The other two groups of performers were not awarded such "cultural freedom" of movement through designated spaces largely because both were involved in a sexual exchange with their male patrons. Performers inside the *haram* had a variety of terms, but their defining feature was that they resided inside the *haram* only and were considered sexually available to the male patron of the house or palace. They were the exclusive sexual property of their male patron and, as a result, were not allowed to enter other male spaces which would signal a sexual availability that extended beyond their household patron. The *British Museum Mirzanama*, an anonymous seventeenth century treatise on etiquette for princes and noblemen explicitly states that a *mirza* "should totally abstain from giving a chance to his male friends and companions to listen to the singing of his private concubines; otherwise, it will amount to pandering, and may lead to a great deal of mischief." [209] Though loosely translated as prince or nobleman, the title *mirza* has a complex cultural history that demonstrates the changes socio-economic dynamic of the Mughal empire as well as the changing understanding of masculinity and manliness.[210]

Those who performed in male-only spaces were commonly termed *lulis* or *kancanis*. They provided open sexual entertainment or sexual exchange to their male patrons at musical gatherings (*mehfils*) but could also be attached to a single male patron. It is this group of

[208] Schofield 2012, 155. Schofield dubs them "auspicious singers" or ritual singers since their main appearances were connected to "life-cycle events" that called for auspicious rituals.

[209] *BM Mirzanama* (trans. Ahmad), 1975, 101.

[210] See O'Hanlon, 1999.

performers that are often designated by the term 'courtesan'. Compared to other female performers, courtesans had access to a lifestyle that was otherwise only available to men of the elite class. Schofield notes that they could possess "independent wealth, property, patronage, political influence, a level of male respect – and cultural sanction to mix freely with unrelated men and to pursue sexual encounters without legal bonds" but that "the courtesans paid for their liberty from feminine norms [of physical seclusion and male ownership] by being permanently exiled from female space."[211] Having been part of a male-only space, barred the courtesan from entering a female-only space. That is, just as *haram* performers could not enter male spaces, courtesans could not enter the *haram*.

But the singular ability of courtesans to appear in male-only spaces and wield societal possessions usually afforded only to elite men was, at the same time, undercut by their social status. Brown concedes that while the appearance of musicians in elite male spaces, as attested in Mughal writings as well as Mughal paintings, may indicate a high status, musicians were consistently regarded as low-ranking and "low-born" independent of their wealth.[212] While a musician may be highly accomplished and independently wealthy, it did not change their status and their presence in elite spaces deepened largely on the value attached to musical patronage for noblemen. Otherwise, such a social dynamic would not be permissible. The seventeenth-century *Mirzanama* (British museum) again advices on status segregation expected of a *mirza*:

> He should not allow a mean person to be his companion; he should not look at such a person if he stands in front of him; and he should regard his presence as disturbing to the mind… He should not speak to a person of low or mean origin without necessity; and he

[211] Schofield 2012, 157. For the uniquely independent economic lifestyle of courtesans see Oldenburg 1990.

[212] Brown 2006, 27-30. For the appearance of female dancers in Mughal art in the context of crossing gender boundaries see Wade 1998, pg. 84-86. Wade (1998) also addresses the cultural impact of the depiction of Indian versus Turkish female dancers.

> should try to communicate with him [only] by signs or gesture. If such a person does not understand his gestures, he should not retain him in his service. [213]

For the Mughal society that valued above all segregation by gender and social status, courtesans, then, as low-ranking (though wealthy) females in elite male spaces created a unique, and, potentially dangerous, arena of social liminality. In this arena of social liminality, the courtesan's performance serves as a moment of subversion of the status-quo of the constraints of gender and status. When navigated successfully, it can provide an opportunity to flirt with the subversion in a cathartic manner. The merits of the princely patron could depend on how well he navigates his *mehfil* through the courtesan's performance:

> ...the time and place of musical performance, the *mehfil*, was therefore a liminal space, in which both the low-ranking performers and the elite could momentarily play-act the crossing of social boundaries in a way that both explored the cherished universal theme of Indo-Persian high culture, and acted to diffuse its threat, reinforcing the status quo and preventing these incursions from crossing over into the 'real' music. If the prince successfully negotiated the rules guiding the patron's conduct in the *mehfil* while managing to flirt safely with the social boundaries of his world, the *mirza* demonstrated to his peers his high rank and his unshaken power over men and women of low rank.[214]

In flirting with this subversion and not enacting it, a prince or a nobleman could reaffirm the social boundaries that highlight his own power, status, and breeding. We find again in the anonymous seventeenth-century *Mirzanama* the strong advice for a *mirza* to understand the boundaries of his social gathering and that after having partaken in it with his guests, he should mark a clear end to the festivities:

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[213] *BM Mirzanama* (trans. Ahmad) 1975, 101.

[214] Brown 2007, 33-34.

> [He] …should keep his feast colorful; so that whoever departs from it may feel that he has been to the feast of a *mirza*; that is to say, he should depart bearing the fragrant smell of scent and flower After smoking the tobacco from a pipe, and after the perfumes have been served in the party and he has listened to some music, he should rise, making the excuse that it is time to go to bed; and then he should say farewell to his [departing] guests.[215]

The advice here is more than a simple note on how to usher the end of a social gathering. It intimates a certain distance that the *mirza* should keep and a sense of the containment of activities that is necessary for him to uphold. But, quite frequently, a prince or a nobleman would go too far. Here we return to the 'cautionary' courtesan tale in which a high-ranking member of the court falls in love and attempts to *marry* a courtesan and the tragedy that ensues.

In analyzing the courtesan tale, I do not suggest a direct applicability to Anarkali. She is not portrayed as a courtesan in the terms discussed above, nor do I believe that Taj is consciously drawing from a *historical* category of female performers, though Anarkali herself is depicted having musical abilities in the play. Most importantly, it is the anxieties that the courtesan tale embodies, as we will see, that resonate throughout Taj's work and help unpack the stakes of Salim's desire to marry Anarkali.

Schofield argues that while Mughal chronicles abound with a particular nobleman falling in love with a particular courtesan, the courtesan tale is essentially a narrative convention, a vehicle, a medium with the stock figures of *a* courtesan and *a* courtier.[216] It is not unlike what I have argued for regarding the construct of Anarkali. Anarkali is not so much an individual as a medium, and her appearance has less to do with her and more to do with the anxieties of Salim

[215] *BM Mirzanama* (trans. Ahmad) 1975, 102.

[216] Schofield 2012, 159.

and Akbar. Similarly, Schofield points out that the courtesan tale is less about the courtesan and more about the anxieties of the *courtier*. The tale usually goes as follows:

> Prince X – let us call him Mirza Khan – begins to neglect his duties as a righteous Muslim nobleman. This neglect is proven and further exacerbated by his excessive attachment to one, or often all, of the following: wine or other intoxicants, music and attractive women or young men… As soon as these stock topoi appear in the story, the reader is forewarned that Mirza Khan is about to get his comeuppance for abandoning his duty as a member of the ruling order… our courtier Mirza Khan then compounds his dereliction of duty by falling in love with a courtesan – let us call her Khanum Jan – who uses her erotic power to enhance her own social status, and often the political status of her undeserving male relatives, by bewitching Mirza Khan to marry her against his honor.[217]

Instead of reaffirming the social boundaries through the liminal persona of the courtesan, the prince, by marrying the courtesan, crosses an essential social boundary: the courtesan, as wife, can now enter the *haram.* She can now cross from a male-only space to a female-only space, a transition that is not sanctioned (in either direction). The inability of the prince to maintain and re-affirm social boundaries not only shows his ineffectiveness as a ruler, but the marriage signals a collapse of the entire social order in that "the violation of the sacrosanct separation of male and female space is seen as proof of a rupture in the fabric of the empire."[218] The stakes, then, of engaging in a marriage that crosses an established social boundary are extremely high: it stands to jeopardize the stability of an entire empire.

While Anarkali is not posing a parallel transition from male to female space (or vice-versa) and is certainly not a courtesan, I argue that it is the same stakes that plague Salim's desire to marry Anarkali. Salm's marriage to Anarkali and her status change from a servant-girl to future empress would enact a similar kind of boundary crossing that undermines the social fabric

[217] Schofield 2012, 159-160.

[218] Schofield 2012, 160.

of the empire. In the narrative itself, Anarkali is essentially part of Akbar's *haram*, and, whether considered sexually available or not (a register that Taj does not indulge), she is his property. Her transformation from servant-girl to princess would then enact both a change of social status and of male patronage, which pulls on the same two realms of social stratification as the 'courtesan tale': status and gender. One of the more notorious historical cases of the 'courtesan tale' was that of the Mughal emperor Jahandar Shah and his consort Lal Kunwar. Jahandar Shah ruled for the short period from 1712 to 1713, during which he married a courtesan (*kalawanti*), Lal Kunwar (later given the title Imtiaz Mahal), making her empress. Jahandar Shah and his short reign were characterized by frivolity and decadence, much of which was attributed to Lal Kunwar's predilection for indulgent festivities and her pervasive influence over the emperor.[219] Kamwar Khan, a Mughal chronicler of the post-Aurangzeb period, describes Lal Kunwar's ascent as an unnatural inversion: "the owl dwelt in the eagle's nest, and the crow took the place of the nightingale."[220] Recall here the inversion that Anarkali poses as a metaphor for Salim's desire for her, the moon's unnatural and impossible love for the chukar. Salim's desire to marry Anarkali is an unnatural inversion that threatens the social fabric of the entire empire.

The cautionary moral of the 'courtesan tale' lies in the tragedy that this unnatural inversion summons. Both the courtier and the courtesan usually meet a tragic end as symptomatic of societal decay. Jahandar Shah, for one, was overthrown by his nephew, imprisoned, and eventually strangled to death. The courtesan's fate is less meticulously detailed. She either suffers a similar fate or simply disappears from the pages of the chronicles, which

[219] Irvine 1921, 192-197.

[220] Kamwar Khan (1980) in Irvine 1921, 193.

again highlights how the 'courtesan tale' is essentially about the weight of the courtier's actions and the anxieties attached to them.

Love, Duty, and Music

If the courtier or prince's action of marriage across boundaries threatens social order and signals societal decay, then it is vital to take a step forward and questions what instigates that action to begin with; that is, what *is* the courtier's draw towards the courtesan. What is Salim's draw towards Anarkali? A sexual exchange most definitely has something to do with it, but the more dangerous aspect of the draw lies in a particular kind of love he experiences: *ishq*. *Ishq* was understood as a kind of excessive, passionate love that could be dangerous in its pervasiveness; it is all-consuming. The *only* proper or acceptable recipient of *ishq* was God. In Sufi thought, *ishq* is the only true form of divine love because its pervasiveness and excessiveness lead to the annihilation of the self into God. Farid-ud-Din Attar, in *The Conference of Birds (mantiq al tayr*) famously describes seven valleys of spirituality as: Quest/Yearning (*talb*), Love (*ishq*), Insight into Mystery (*marifat*), Detachment (*istifhna'*), Unity (*tawhid*), Bewilderment (*hayrat*), Annihilation of self (*fanaa*). In the spiritual journey the transfer of control that *ishq* initiates plays a vital role in dissolution of the self. But the Sufi use of *ishq* was also controversial since it was 'non-Koranic' especially in place of *hubb*, the Koranic Arabic root work for love.[221]
If directed towards an individual *ishq* "was construed as enslavement to the beloved, involving a transfer of control and agency from nobleman to object of desire."[222] This transfer of control could undermine the courtier's political and social power and could again threaten the balance of

[221] See Pourjavady 2011.

[222] Schofield 2012, 158.

the empire. More specifically, *ishq* could compromise the courtier's loyalty to his duties. His inability to tend to his duty becomes symptomatic of the excessiveness of his *ishq.* He is left unfit to fulfill his political and social role. *Ishq* stands in contrast to *mohabbat*, a love that was valorized for its unthreatening eternal affection.[223] The term *mohabbat* comes from the Arabic *hubb* (love) which is a Koranic term for the love between God and human begins. The originally Arabic term *ishq* is a non-Koranic term that describes the amorous relationship between two human begins, and among early Muslim philosophers "there was even a belief that *ishq* was a kind of mental derangement or insanity (*junun*) and lovers were looked on as socially abnormal and mentally disturbed people."[224] The tension between *mohabbat* and *ishq* is preserved in Taj's play. Both Anarkali and Salim consistently denote their love as *mohabbat.* But the first Act in which we are introduced to their love is named *ishq*. From the outset then, Taj is invoking the misgivings of a potentially dangerous excessiveness or derangement. In the first Act, we also already see Salim's inability to tend to his duties. Salim's sudden disinterest in his duties is shown as a concern for his health. Akbar thinks his son is ill, and he cannot comprehend why, if not ill, he has been shirking his duty:

> If you are not ill then why do our people complain about your carelessness: you're neither concerned about your education nor about your important hobbies. You don't go riding. You don't go hunting. You're not even seen around the dinner table…
>
> *tu alil nahain tu phir yeh kaya hai sheikho. keh har ek tumharey bey tawajo ka shaki hai. nah tumhain apni taleem ka khayal hai na zaruri mshaghal ka. sawari ko tum nahain nikaltey. shikar ko tum nahain jatey. tum dastarkhwan tak par nazar nahain atey* [225]

[223] Schofield 2012, 158. Schofield notes that in Persian ethical literature (*akhlaq*), *mohabbat* was considered of higher value than even justice. For the general conception of love in terms physical and mental dispositions under Akbar see also O'Hanlon 2007.

[224] Pourjavady 2011, 127.

[225] Taj 2012, 32.

Salim tries to reassure Akbar that his health is fine, but he seems shaken and unnerved. He has become fragile. When Akbar scolds him for being too careless, Salim begins to tear up. Akbar is shocked and outraged at Salim's emotional response. Speaking of himself in third person, Akbar says:

> He can see Mughal princes mad with political anxieties. He can see them caught in the ambitions of conquest. He knows what to do with their wounds. He knows what to do with their decapitated corpses. But tears! Tears! Go, go to your mother. You can only sell these tears to her. Go Salim!
>
> *vo mughal shehzadoon ko siyasat ki uljhanoon main majnun dekh sakta hai. vo unhain hos-e-mulk giri main dekh sakta hai. vo janta hai vo un kay zakhmoon sey kya karay. vo janta hai un ki burdah nashoon ko kya karay. magar ansoo! ansoo! ja apni ma key pas ja. in ansoon ko to us key hath baych sakta hai. jao salim!* [226]

Both Salim's irresponsibility and emotional fragility are unacceptable for his position as crown-prince and are presented as symptomatic of his attachment to Anarkali, invoking the threat of *ishq* (the Act's title) more so than *mohabbat*. Salim is not the only one disengaged from his duties. We have already seen above that Nadira, even as Anarkali, cannot seem to meet the demands of her social duties.

The misgivings of *ishq* are furthered by another aspect of Anarkali, that of her music. Taj is the first one to explicitly make Anarkali a musician. As we have seen, her status has already declined during the transmission of the early Anarkali accounts, and she is often referred to as a servant-girl, but her musical prowess is never mentioned in those surviving written accounts. Given that not all female servants of the *haram* were musicians, Anarkali's role as a musician becomes significant especially since it once again resonates so closely to the musical prowess of the courtesan in the 'courtesan tale'. The courtesan's efficacy lies not only in her social

[226] Taj 2012, 61.

liminality, but also in the potency of her musical sound. For the Mughal *mefil* (musical gathering), music was more than a medium for poetic expression. Musical sound itself carried the ability to sway emotion and incite love from the listener. The musician then, especially the female courtesan, was seen as the erotic embodiment of that ability, making her listener fall in love with her musical sound and, by extension, with her.[227] Again, if correctly navigated this subjugation to the courtesan and her music could be flirted with only to reiterate its impossibility to take hold in reality. But if and when this inversion of the status quo did take hold in reality and spilled out of the setting of the *mehfil*, that action itself signaled an excess that was symptomatic of the courtier's *ishq*. The courtier's *ishq* then embodies itself in an excessive attachment to the conflation of the courtesan and her musical sound. Schofield take one step further to suggest that music itself could replace love in some 'Courtesan Tales' and that it is the excessive attachment to music in general rather than to a courtesan or the conflation of the two that drives the downfall of a courtier. She cites the tale of Baz Bahadur (ruler of Malwa in the mid-sixteenth century) as narrated by Abul-Fazl: "He brought the whole of Malwa in subjection to himself ... but occupied himself in pleasure and dissipation. He let the foundation of his power go to the winds and waves, that is, he became so addicted to wine and music that he made no difference between night and day and gave heed to naught except these two things." [228]

But for Salim, it is only Anarkali's musical sound that stirs him. When we meet Salim for the first time (after the celebration at which Nadira was given the title Anarkali and when Salim supposedly fell in love with her), two other servant girls, Zafran and Sitara, are trying to

[227] Brown 2006, 62. For music as a symbol of power in general in the courts of Mughal India see Wade (1998). For the female musician as the essence of Muslim India in European imagination see Brown (2000).

[228] Schofield 2012, 162.

entertain him by dancing to their tambourine, but Salim is oblivious to them: "They are aware of Salim's brooding disinterest…" (*magar un ko ilm hai key salim motavajeh* nahain).[229] When Zafran suggests to Sitara that they leave, Sitara hesitates since they would have to answer to the Queen why they left early. Zafran suggests: "Then we can reply and say that he was enjoying the dance of the river waves. Could we dance and sing to the walls?" (*keh dain gey bo tu dehkh rahey they lehron ka nach. hum diwaron key agey nachtey gatey*).[230] Their musical sound has no effect on Salim, it does not stir any emotion or hold any sway. It is as if they were performing to an inanimate object. We can compare that to when we hear about Salim's reaction to Anarkali's debut singing at the celebration. Unbar, another servant girl, is recalling the night to Dilaram who had been absent and notes that Salim was present at the celebration as well: "Even His Excellency [Salim] was praising her by swaying his head from side to side" (*jhoom jhoom kar anarkali ko daad dey rahey they*).[231] Salim is overcome by Anarkali's musical sound and, by extension, by Anarkali herself. Again, an experience of this subversion of the status quo (being overcome by the musician and her music) during the performance would not jeopardize boundaries. But once Salim carries that conflated attachment (to Anarkali and her music) outside the musical performance, the deed of excess (the *ishq* of Act 1) has been initiated, to which his duties and self-control will fall prey.

Act 2 is titled *raqs* (dance) and features the Spring Festival (*Nau-ruz)* at which Akbar comes to witness the candor between Anarkali and Salim. It is the climax of the play. To briefly summarize the plot, there are a few musical performances before Anarkali takes center stage.

[229] Taj 2012, 24.

[230] Taj 2012, 24.

[231] Taj 2012, 15.

Once the focus is set on Anarkali, we see from her three performances. The first is a song (*git*) where Anarkali sings (she has not been intoxicated by Dilaram yet). The second is a dance performance accompanied by music but not song. It is here, before the third performance, a poem (*ghazal*), that Anarkali becomes intoxicated, and it is during this third performance that Akbar will catch her insinuations towards Salim. I shall consider here the implication of each of Anarkali's three performances and how the conflation between love, music, and intoxication is presented.

After her first song, Akbar praises Anarkali's voice. He tells her that "for the words of a song, your voice is a wine" (*geet kay lafzoon kay liye theri awaz ek sharab hai*).[232] Her voice can fuel the intoxication of the words of a song. She intoxicates the song, or rather, can make the song intoxicating. Akbar's compliment recalls the idea discussed above that a musician is a powerful figure during her musical performance for the effect she can enact upon the listener; her music can intoxicate the listener. Akbar's conflation between music and wine is not novel. Love, music, and wine/intoxication have a complicated and rich relationship in Persian and Urdu literature. Persian Sufi poetry regularly invokes the consumption of wine as a metaphor for the experience or journey of divine love. The metaphor taps the inebriated dissolution of the self as the key to positioning divine love. Pourjavady explains that "the metaphor of wine is used by Sufi poets not only for the immediate 'tasting' of love, but also for the whole process of the cultivation and growth of love in the mystic's soul. As a lover, the mystic goes through different states of sorrow and joy, fear and hope, expansion and contraction, the pain of separation from the beloved, and the joy of losing his or her ego in approaching the beloved. The most powerful

[232] Taj 2012, 95.

metaphor that the Sufis have found to express the different psychological states of the lover (technically called *aḥkām-i vaqt)* is wine drinking and its affect on the person."[233]

The complicated relationship between love, music, and wine/intoxication also surfaces in the "worldly realm of human relations" especially under Mughal reign.[234] When navigated correctly and in appropriate settings they can create the ideal atmosphere. In his memoirs, Jahangir comments on one celebration of *Nau-ruz* in 1606 that provided the opportunity for the co-existence of these elements:

> From the first day of the Naurūz to the 19th degree of the Ram (Aries), which is the day of culmination, the people gave themselves over to enjoyment and happiness. Players and singers of all bands and castes were gathered together. Dancing *lulis* and charmers of India whose caresses would captivate the hearts of angels kept up the excitement of the assemblies. I gave orders that whoever might wish for intoxicating drinks and exhilarating drugs should not be debarred from using them.[235]

Yet, at the same time, these elements are connected by the constant threat of excess; if not navigated in proper moderation they can wield a dangerous influence. The intoxicating potency of Anarkali's music, especially her singing, that is drawn out by Akbar's praise of her first song signals the potential danger of the setting. That is, whether it will be navigated appropriately or wear to the excess.

Anarkali's next performance is a dance called the Peacock Dance. Taj describes the dance as follows:

> It is the dance of a peacock who has been surrounded by hunters. And whose mate, in the confusion, has been separated from her. In fear of her life she wants to run, but love for her mate pulls her back. Afraid, she is looking for her mate. Wide eyed, she searches. Pushing out her neck, she searches. But she doesn't find anything anywhere. She wants to

[233] Pourjavady 2011, 132-133. In addition to Pourjavady's chapter on the metaphor of wine in Persian Sufi poetry, see also other chapters on metaphor and imagery in Persian poetry in Seyed-Gohrab (2011).

[234] Brown 2006, 61.

[235] *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*: Or, Memoirs of Jahangir (Volume 1 of 2), 48-50.

> call out, but afraid, her voice fails her. Standing, she is panting and shaking. The hunters are approaching. Her time is tightening. Dread is increasing. Out of control she runs away, desperate she runs back. Confusion has taken on the face of frenzy. In another while, love makes her hopeless. Without her mate life seems dark. Swelling up her chest, she advances towards the hunters. An arrow pierces her chest and lovestruck the peacock collapses...as soon as Anarkali collapsed, several princes jumped up. Salim, worried, stood up.
>
> *Jungal ki morni ka raqs jise shikaryoon ne gher liya hai. Aur jis ka nar afrathafri main us se bichard giya hai. Jan ke khauf se bhagna chahti hai magar nar ki mohabat khench lati hai. Sehmi hui apne mor ko dhund rahi hai. Ankhe phard phard kar. Gardan bardha bardha kar har tarf takti hai. Magar kaheen kuch nah paya. Pukarna chahti hai magar khauf ke mare awaz halq se bahar naheen ati. Kari kari hamp rahi hai aur kamp rahi hai. Shikari dam be dam kareeb ah rahain hain. Arse hayat tang ho raha hai. Weshat bard thi ja rahi hai. Beqabu ho kar dorthi aur betab ho kar laut thi hai. Kashmakash ne ek junoon ki surat ekthayar kar li hai. Zara der main mohabat be bas kar dal ti hai. Nar ke begher zindagi andheri nazr ati hai. Senah phula kar shikaroon ki tarf barti hai. Seney main tir lagta hai aur mohabat ki mari morni dher ho jati hai...anarkali ke girte he shehzadeh apni jagan se uchal pard te. Salim ghabra kar khara ho gaya.* [236]

This dance stands apart from Anarkali's other musical performance. While Anarkali sings twice at the Spring Festival, she only dances once. And while Anarkali's singing and musical voice/sound is assigned potent agency and effect, especially on Salim, her dance is devoid of any musical sound from her person (it may be accompanied by music, but no musical sound it produced by Anarkali). It is only a dance, a *raqs*. The dance performance seems an outlier to Anarkali's song performances. Yet it is what resonates most directly with the entire second Act which, recall, carries the name '*raqs*' (dance). Desoulieres suggests that Anarkali's peacock dance is not an invention of Taj, but builds on established role of folk dance in Mughal court culture:

> This is a detailed description of the Peacock Dance, prevalent in Indian folk dance. The wild peacock is a common motif in popular Hindu folklore; the story of the female peacock killed because of her love for the male peacock may well be yet another avatar of the Krishna-Radha stories. In today's Punjab, peacock feathers are present in many shrines, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh shrines alike. The peacock is also a symbol of royalty,

[236] Taj 2012, 96.

> perhaps from Maurya times and certainly in the Mughal Empire. This is embodied in the famous "peacock throne" of Emperor Shah Jahan, the *takht-e-taus* crowned by a peacock studded with jewels with its wings opened. The peacock as the imperial symbolic bird, replaces the Persian Homa or phoenix (suggested by the very name of Mughal Emperor Humayun). In any case, the stage-drama viewer, may well assimilate the peacock fabula as a metaphor for the drama that is taking place within the Mughal family, even if the actual chronology is not respected.[237]

While the peacock dance may very well function as a folkdance representing tragic love and may carry implicit resonance with imperial symbolism, I consider here a closer reading of Taj's description as it applies specifically to Anarkali. I shall argue that the dance signals a shift from liminality to excess and that, in doing so, it already scaffolds Anarkali's last song in which her relationship with Salim is revealed to Akbar.

In the description of the dance the female peacock occupies an in-between space: "she wants to run, but love for her mate pulls her back" (*bhagna chahti hai magar nar ki mohabat khench lati hai*), "she wants to call out, but afraid, her voice fails her" (*pukarna chahti hai magar khauf ke mare awaz halq se bahar naheen ati*), "out of control, she runs away, desperate she runs back" (*beqabu ho kar dorthi aur betab ho kar laut thi hai*). Every action or desire for action is negated by an opposite action or desire. The peacock is not only caught in a liminal space, but she is caught within liminality itself. I suggest that Anarkali, by stepping into the role of the peacock, is partaking in the performance of her own liminality between Akbar and Salim. I am not suggesting a transposing of Salim onto the peacock's mate and of Akbar onto the hunters. Anarkali's liminality, in conjunction with her liminal role as a musician, functions in the space between Akbar and Salim, the space of social order or disorder between emperor and heir apparent; that is, the space of regulation or dysregulation between Akbar and Salim that is the anxiety, as I have argued in the previous chapter, in the early sources on Anarkali. But the

[237] Désoulières 2007, 142.

liminality of the peacock/Anarkali in the dance is not sustainable. The peacock/Anarkali's decision to advance towards the hunters, to break out of the bounds of liminality, is initiated by when her "confusion" (*kashmakash)* turns into "frenzy" (*junoon*). *Kashamakash* if often translated as confusion or dilemma, but it is literally the simultaneous feeling of push and pull. It rather accurately captures the liminality the peacock/Anarkali experiences. *Junoon* is a passionate frenzy, but more accurately it is a sort of possession, a state of possession. The etymological root of *junoon* is the Arabic root *jnn,* which signals a state of possessed insanity. This state of possessed insanity is most closely associated with *jinns,* who, in Arabic mythology are non-human beings made of fire and who have the capability of possessing humans and animals. But the state of possession that is brought on is excessive in degree and, often, dangerously excessive. For example, the same Arabic root (*jnn*) is the etymological root for the word *majnoon,* which, as a common noun, denotes a lover possessed and, as a proper denotes the character Majnun from the Arabic tale of *Layla and Majnun,* most notably recorded by the Persian poet Nizami. But Majnun (the character) wasn't always Majnun. In the tale, the boy Qays becomes Majnun once he falls in love with Layla and his unfulfilled love (because he can't be with Layla) drives him out of society to live in the wilderness among animals as an ascetic devoted only to Layla. Majnun is Majnun because he is the ultimate *majnoon,* a lover possessed. But Majnun's love is excessive, one that drives him out of society, the realm of domesticity and civilization and one that is conflated with both his and Layla's tragic death. Recall that we have encountered the figure of Majnun already in chapter one on the Tomb of Anarkali where saw that the cenotaph within the tomb is signed *Majnun Salim Akbar*. In the signature on the cenotaph, Majnun, I have argued, is employed by Emperor Jahangir (Salim) to position himself not only as a stylized lover, but as a harmonious ruler with hegemony over both the human world and the

animal world. It is not Majnun's excess that is highlighted in Jahangir's appropriation of the figure, but Majnun's harmony with the animal world. But now the shared root (Arabic *jnn*) in the peacock/Anarkali's *junoon* invokes the excess of the Majnun or any *majnoon.* That is, the peacock/Anarkali's *junoon,* a state of possession, is characterized by excess so that the transformation from *kashmakash* to *junoon* is that from liminality to excess. What this transformation signals, then, is the entirety of what is pending on the horizon: Anarkali's liminality is about to take a dangerous turn towards excess where all the conflated elements of love, music, and intoxication will upend her liminal status quo.

There is yet another aspect of the dance that signals a dangerous change from liminality towards excess. At the end of the dance, when Anarkali's collapse as the peacock is so realistic that the audience thinks that Anarkali has collapsed in reality: "several princes jumped up. Salim, worried, stood up" (*anarkali ke girte he shehzadeh apni jagan se uchal pard te. Salim ghabra kar khara ho gaya*).[238] It is a moment of transcendence, where Anarkali does not merely perform the role of the female peacock but *becomes* the female peacock, blurring the boundary between performance and reality. Recall that in the 'Courtesan Tale' it is a similar blurring of the boundary between performance and reality that constitutes the potential danger of a musical performance and musician; that is, when the nobleman extends his relationship with the musician (courtesan) beyond the musical performance into reality, an act of excess. The collapse of performance and reality itself is indicative of the shift from liminality to excess because the liminal space of the musical performance has collapsed into the real world. The entirety of the peacock dance, I suggest, prefigures Anarkali's last song.

[238] Taj 2012, 96.

The third and last performance by Anarkali is the lyrical recitation of a love poem (*ghazal*) and it is before this performance that Anarkali is intoxicated. Anarkali is unaware that by Dilaram's design, she has been given alcohol instead of water. Intoxicated, when she sings her love poem, she begins to displace the poem onto herself and Salim; that is, she intimates herself as 'I' and clearly points towards Salim as her 'sweetheart'. When Salim tries to stop her, Akbar, guided by Dilaram sees their interaction as a clear sign of an existing relationship. Instead of intoxicating the song, Anarkali has been intoxicated herself as if she has fallen prey to her own musical sound. Her musical performance again becomes the moment of ultimate excess that crosses the boundary of social enactment into the realm of social reality. Dilaram's treachery of intoxicating Anarkali invokes also the poisoning of Anarkali from one strain of the early accounts. Recall that from the sources that pre-date Taj, two historians, Lal and Chishti, attribute Anarkali's death to poisoning by others within the harem. It is as if underneath Anarkali's intoxication, there is the undercurrent of something much more malevolent and fatal which makes Anarkali's moment of excess grim. The moment Akbar sees the interaction between Anarkali and Salim, he shouts and stands up and the "silence of a tomb" (*skut-e-mizar*) descends upon the entire festival, conjuring both the death of the poisoned Anarkali in the early sources and the eventual fate of Taj's intoxicated Anarkali.

Taj's Akbar

What exactly Akbar sees in the mirror between Salim and Anarkali illuminates the tragedy that enfolds the fate of Anarkali: the tragedy of Akbar. When Dilaram alerts Akbar to the mirror, "Salim is seen trying to signal to Anarkali to stop. He [Akbar] can't bear the discovery of this conspiracy" (*Salim isharoon sey anarkali ko roktha hua nazar ata hai*. sazbaz *ki ankshaf par*

akbar sey nahin raha jata).[239] The key term here for what Akbar sees in the interaction between Salim and Anarkali is *sazbaz*, 'intrigue, plot, conspiracy'. *Sazbaz* is a compound stemming from the base noun *saz*, which has a variety of meanings ranging from 'musical instrument' to 'weapon' to 'harmony' to 'intrigue'. Tracing *saz* to Persian gives an insight into the connection between these varied meanings. At its root, *saz* invokes an apparatus; this could designate a musical instrument, which is among its most common uses, but it can also designate a weapon or a domestic tool. The particular designation is usually highlighted by some compound combination (ex. *sazi kar* 'a workman's tool', *sazi kina* 'arms'). The underlying relationship is that of a constructed artifice, one that can be agreeable and espouse 'harmony' or one that can arouse 'deceit'. Recall here our consideration of Anarkali not only as an artifice, but also as a musician; a construction whose production of musical sound plays a crucial role in the balance of societal harmony. The *sazbaz* that Akbar sees captures within its folds the artifice of Anarkali as an unstable apparatus of the imperial social order, conflating Anarkali's potential for dysregulation with conspiracy. This conflation is spelled out explicitly when the prison guard reports, falsely, to Akbar that he heard Anarkali inciting Salim to overthrow Akbar. The prison guard emphasizes that while Salim's plan was simply to escape with Anarkali and not look back, Anarkali insisted on a more permanent solution to their problem. He reports that

> the prince wanted to take Anarkali and run. But Anarkali wanted Hindustan. She said, "Don't cut these chains. More chains will follow. Instead, pull down the wall that stands between you and me."
>
> *shahzada chahata anarakli ko ley kar bhag jaey. leykin anarkali hindustan chahati thi. wo boli yeh zanjirain na kato. aur zinjirain pard jain gi. merey aur tumharey darmiyan jo dewar khardi hai us ko dhaho*.[240]

[239] Taj 2012, 100.

[240] Taj 2012, 132.

The "wall" (*dewar*) is Akbar. The prison guard's report is similar to what Dilaram falsely reported to Akbar as well, that Anarkali's true desire was to incite Salim to overthrow Akbar and instate himself (Salim) as emperor with her (Anarkali) as his empress. This would be an act of clear rebellion. It invokes the very real historical anxiety of almost every Mughal emperor: a power struggle with their own son. It is also crucial to note that both Dilaram and the prison guard insist that the prince is innocent and was purposely misled and goaded by Anarkali towards rebellion. So that while Salim might be the actor of the potential rebellion, the agent is clearly framed to be Anarkali. She is the one that carries the threat, she is the instigator.
I note above that both Dilaram and the prison guard 'falsely' accuse Anarkali of inciting Salim. While it is true that within the narrative the character of Anarkali does no such thing and what Dilaram and the prison guard report is an intentional fabrication for their own individual gain, their accusations precisely hit the chord of who Anarkali is. If Anarkali is the potential for the dysregulation of the social fabric of the empire, then an act of rebellion that would overthrow the emperor himself would be the ultimate manifestation of that. While the character of Anarkali may not have had such lines, her sheer existence conjures the anxiety that Dilaram and the prison guard present Akbar.

Akbar momentarily hangs on the word "wall'' (*dewar*), repeating it to himself. When he has heard enough, he proclaims death as the sentence for Anarkali, death by being walled-up alive: "bury her, bury her alive in a wall (*dewar*), bury her alive in a wall" (*gard do, zinda dewar main gard do, zinda dewar main gard do*).[241] As we have already seen, Anarkali's immurement has been a facet of her narrative from the earliest accounts. In analyzing the early iterations of

[241] Taj 2012, 134.

her immurement, I have argued that her immurement in the specific location of Akbar's palace ("mohol" as recorded by Finch) serves the proper functioning of Akbar's domestic domain and, by extension, his empire. Here Anarkali is to be buried alive in a wall (*dewar*), just as Akbar is a wall (*dewar*) that stands between Salim and Anarkali. It is as if Akbar *is* the wall that will enclose Anarkali. When Akbar proclaims the death sentence, he calls it upon "the one whose dance has shook the imperial throne of Hindustan. The one whose song has set aflame the royal house" (*jis kay raqs nay hindustan key takht-e-saltanat ko larza dya. jis kay naghmay nay aevan-e-shahi main sholay bhurd ka diay*).[242] Once again, we come back to the vital role of Anarkali's potentially dangerous musical sound, one that has disrupted imperial order and boundaries instead of re-asserting them. Her "dance" and "songs" have shaken the imperial throne and burned the royal house, highlighting that the threat of her musical sound is built into the *sazbaz* (conspiracy, rebellion) that Akbar sees.

But Akbar does not simply witness this *sazbaz*: he sees it in a mirror. In the early accounts of Anarkali, we saw that it was Latif, writing in 1892, who first mentioned the "looking glasses" that betrayed the interaction between Anarkali and Salim. As mentioned then, mirrors in Islamic art (especially art in narrative) and philosophy play a significant role in the transmission of the ultimate truth. I have discussed before Nizami's attribution of the invention of the mirror to Alexander where the mirror is worked on until it is cleansed of all distortion and becomes a medium for channeling the true image because it holds within it the self-awareness of the observer. In Islamic philosophy there is another well-known anecdote concerning the reflective potency of a mirror or polished surface. It is recorded, with minor changes, by numerous Islamic writers including al-Ghazali, Nizami (in which Alexander makes another appearance as well),

[242] Taj 2012, 134.

and Rumi. Al-Ghazali in his treaties, *The Balance of Action (Mizan al-Amal)*, records the anecdote to elucidate the superiority of divine inspiration (through Sufi practice in particular) over philosophical deduction as the proper means for acquiring knowledge. He records it as follows:

> It is said that the Chinese and Romans were competing before a king over the highest skill in drawing and painting. The king decided to give them a vault in which the Chinese could paint one wall, and the Romans the other. Between them a curtain would be drawn to prevent each group from observing the other. As soon as they were finished, the curtain would be lifted, both sides would be judged, and the winner would emerge. And so it came to pass. The Romans collected innumerable rare colors, while the Chinese, without using any colors, made their side polished and smooth, such that the observers wondered at how they could want no colors. When the Romans announced that they were done, the Chinese said they were as well. The Chinese were asked, "How could you be done, when you have used neither colors nor have painted?" They repeated, "Don't worry! Lift the curtain, and we will prove ourselves." The curtain was lifted. Then one saw their side shining and full of the same colors as that of the Romans, because in its purity and clarity, it functioned as a mirror. The side of the Chinese excelled through more clarity; on it appeared what the Romans had also tried. So it is with the soul in relation to the record of divine knowledge. You have two possibilities to create these impressions: the first is the appropriation of drawing itself (that is called art), as with the Romans. The second is the readiness to apprehend the drawings from outside.[243]

For al-Ghazali, "the readiness to apprehend the drawing from the outside" channels divine inspiration. While the image is mimetic, the reflection supersedes the image because it encompasses its mimesis. The truth then lies in the reflection and not in the image, though the image is necessary for the reflection to exist. As with the narrative of Alexander's invention of the mirror, reflection has the potency to channel a higher level of truth than the image itself. The observer of the reflection, the one that gazes upon it also plays a crucial role in the exchange because even if there is no self-reflection of the observer, her presence is folded within it; that is, the reflection invokes from the observer self-awareness. The reflection that Akbar sees in the mirror not only captures the artifice of Anarkali, which is more threatening for its potential of

[243] Al-Ghazali in Shaw (trans.), 2019. See also Al-Ghazali 2006, 114-115.

dysregulation than lovelorn servant girl, but also brings to the forefront Akbar's self-awareness of his own presence.

Throughout Taj's play, Akbar carries with him an acute awareness his own isolation as the emperor. He confides to his queen that "I am very tired and alone" (*aur main buhath thak gayya hoin aur akayla hoin*).[244] He is alone in his vision for his empire, which rests on Salim. Akbar longs to see Salim acknowledge his father's *mohabbat* and his own role as crown prince. Recall that while *ishq* is an excessive love whose threat lies in the dissolution of duty, *mohabbat* is an unthreatening, eternal affection. But, from the start of the play, Akbar remains unconvinced of Salim's loyalties: "But for now who knows…But he is my everything, I can't say how dear he is to me. If only he could understand my dreams [for him]" (*liken abhi kon janta hai…liken mera sab kuch vohi hai, mein nahain key sakta mujhey kitna aziz hai. kash vo meray kuwaboin ko samajhey)*.[245] Akbar's "dreams" for Salim are for him to become emperor and continue Akbar's legacy. He wants to see Salim return his *mohabbat*, which, for Akbar, signals Salim's implicit acceptance of his duty as the future emperor of the Mughal empire. For Akbar *mohabbat* and duty are inextricably bound together. When Anarkali is imprisoned, the queen tries to convince Akbar to let Anarkali go and to let Salim marry her as the only way for Akbar to gain Salim's love. Akbar considers the prospect: "a servant girl, if she chooses, can bestow on me my own son's *mohabbat*" (*meray he betay ki mohabbat agar ek kaniz chahey to mujhko baksht saktey hai*).[246] Anarkali is here the agent of directing Salim's *mohabbat*.

[244] Taj 2012, 76.

[245] Taj 2012, 77.

[246] Taj 2012, 128.

I return here to the point that the tragedy of Anarkali is essentially the tragedy of Akbar; Anarkali serves as a medium through which to position Akbar's sacrifice to his empire. By the end of the play, it is Akbar that stands to have lost the most in his attempt to serve his duty. He orders the immurement of Anarkali having been misled by Dilaram and the prison guard. He no longer has the support of his queen who wrenches from Akbar his role as a father, declaring that he is "an emperor, only an emperor" (*ap shahnsha hain, sirf shahnshah*).[247] Anarkali's mother (Nadira's mother), in pleading for her daughter's release berates him as an emperor, leaving him with the self-reflection of a "disappointed father and a miserable emperor" (*namourad bap aur mayus shahnsha*).[248] The worst loss comes from Salim. Far from returning his father's *mohabbat*, Salim not only disowns Akbar, but calls him a murderer: "Sheikho [Salim] doesn't have a father…you are a murderer, murderer of Anarkali, murderer of Salim" (*sheikho ka koi bap nahain… tum katil ho, anarkali kay katil, salim kay katil*).[249] As the last Act closes Salim finds comfort with his mother, leaving Akbar alone. Before the final scene we see "Akbar climbing the stairs, crying and with a broken heart as if he is ruined by his despair and he has accepted it as his fate" (*akbar dil shakista aur ansoo behata hua yuin serdian chard raha hai. goya is kay uper namurdi aur gham nasibi ka varana hai. aur us nay apnay liye isi ko pasand kar liya hai*).[250] Akbar's despair is the despair of an empire; he has lost his son's *mohabbat* and the future of his empire as he would have imagined it.

[247] Taj 2012, 126.

[248] Taj 2012, 127.

[249] Taj 2012, 147.

[250] Taj 2012, 150.

It is Akbar's loss that is partly monumentalized in Anarkali. In his preface to the play, Taj mentions that he has asked his friend and renowned artist Abdur-Rahman Chughtai to paint a cover for his play and that the portrait produced by Chughtai has brought to life Taj's "dead words." The portrait of Anarkali (Figure 5) appeared on the cover of the 1931 publication of the play.

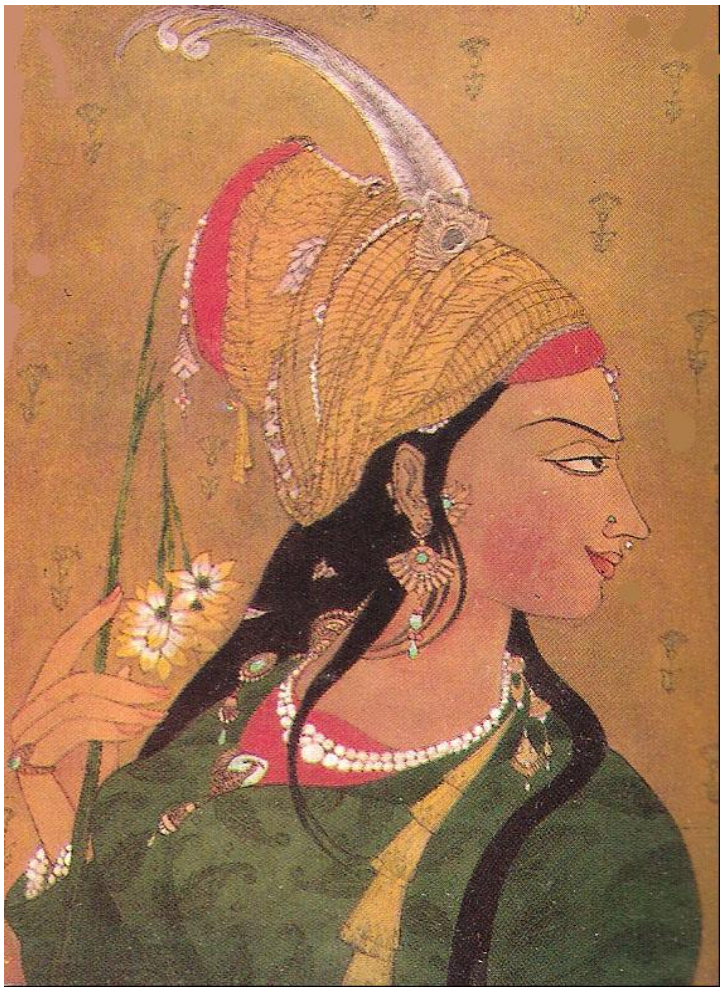


Figure 5: Portrait of Anarkali by A.R. Chughtai. Originally published as the cover of Taj's 1931 publication of *Anarkali*. Reproduced on 2012 publication by Sang-e-Meel.

A.R. Chughtai's style was heavily inspired by Islamic Art, especially Persian and Mughal miniatures, as well as by Art Nouveau, both of which can be seen in his portrait of Anarkali. Chughtai's art often channeled a nostalgia for the Mughal era similar to the conjuring of the

Ancien Régime in France by artist such as Watteau, Boucher, and Fragonard.[251] But in conjuring the aesthetics of the Mughal era, Chughtai struggled with complexities of self-orientalism as a symptom of colonialism. Aware and well versed in the inundation of European art, Chughtai would note the pervasiveness of colonialism "not only to have soiled our civilization and heritage, but burnt it to ashes in such a manner that, now being crippled and helpless, it has no recourse except to worship the West and imagine that only by imitation will it be able to find a way out."[252] But Chughtai was bent upon forging an artistic path away from Western imitation and, in doing so, "attempted to re-create Persian and Mughal classicism in an age of nationalism, capitalism, and decolonization, an age when addressee and patronage were in transition."[253] As part of his artistic endeavors, Chughtai welcomed producing cover art linking him closely to literary circles. In his cover art for Taj, Chughtai chooses to focus on a female portrait. Désoulières points out the peculiarities of this painting, suggesting how these details may connect it specifically to Taj's play and to modern sensibilities:

> Even more revealing of the dramatic theme of the picture is the quite unusual, almost defiant demeanor of the lady—like so many Mughal princes and princesses, she is holding a flower in her right hand, but that flower is broken. Also instead of looking straight ahead, her head is turned to the left, in contrast to the orientation of her body which is facing the spectator. Her face is seen in profile, and although her traits are the traditional ones (revealed by the way the painter has drawn her lips, nose and eyebrow), she is depicted as looking at someone else. Also her jewelry does not remind us of the jewelry in vogue among low-class dancers of the Mughal Court, there is too much of it. And the style of the painting evokes "art nouveau" portraits; for example, the long, elaborate locks of her hair, one of them being parallel to the rather unusual loose curving end of her turban that underlines her breast in the absence of a veil.[254]

[251] Dadi 2010, 83.

[252] Chughtai in Dadi 2010, 85.

[253] Dadi 2010, 89. Dadi also notes Chughtai's effort to re-define the relationship of artistic patronage through the effort to ease general accessibility to art especially through the use of print culture.

[254] Désoulières 2007, 75.

Many, if not most, of Chughtai's paintings feature a central female figure which are often unapologetically objectified pointing to the fact that Chughtai had no qualms eroticizing his subject. Yet, at the same time, the objectified female figures did undermine the norm of masculinity because they displaced Mughal images of virility (war, hunting, etc.). Chughtai's refusal to paint male figures of authority or common Mughal scenes of battles and hunting "marks a crisis of masculinity" in his work, a concept that, I suggest, is central to understanding Chughtai's portrait of Anarkali as it serves to destabilize the norm of Mughal masculinity and, by extension, Mughal social order.[255]

Furthermore, Chughtai's portrait of Anarkali is unique for his body of work depicting female Mughal portraits. We may compare, for example, his etching titled 'Mughal Lady' (Figure 6).

[255] Dadi 2010, 88.



Figure 6: Etching by Chughtai (signed lower left corner) label "Mughal Lady" (lower right corner). Part of Chughtai's collection as the Grosvenor Gallery, London. https://www.grosvenorgallery.com/artists/52-abdur-rahman-chughtai/works/

The similarities between the portrait of Anarkali and etching are striking: the facial features, the strands of hair, the posture, the adornment. There are two features that stand out for their opposition: the orientation of the profile and the vitality of the flower. Within his body of work, Chughtai's portrait of Anarkali is unique both in the ruptured flower and the facial profile that stands in opposition to the orientation of the body highlighting the "crisis" of Anarkali: a threat of imperial and social destabilization that signals the deterioration of an empire. Chughtai's portrait monumentalizes the destabilization that characterizes Anarkali and, by extension, characterizes the tragedy of Akbar, the eventual loss of an empire, the loss of the Mughal era.

Chapter Four

Anarkali and Film

This chapter focuses on two specific films that engage with the Anarkali narrative: Nandlal Jaswantlal's *Anarkali* (1953) and K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). These two films are by no means the only films that engage with the narrative of Anarkali. Anarkali has been the subject of several films and tv productions across different South Asian film industries (Pakistani Cinema and Telugu Cinema to name two). Both Nandlal Jaswantlal's *Anarkali* (1953) and K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) are products of one specific film industry, the Indian Cinema based in Mumbai (formerly Bombay Cinema). The choice to focus on these two films has, in part, to do with their commercial success: *Anarkali* in the year of its release was the top grossing film at the Indian box office and *Mughal-e-Azam's* box office record was not broken until 1975 by Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay*. Though it should be noted that 'commercial success' is not directly indicative of the number of people that watched the film. Box office success is correlated to the to the cost of production of a film and whether a film can break even with or make profit over its cost of production. Hence, these two films are often termed 'blockbusters' not only because of their box office success, but also because of the unprecedent scale of their productions. *Mughal-e-Azam*, for example, totaled a colossal production cost of fifteen million rupees and mobilized immense battle scenes unlike anything the industry had seen before. But aside from their 'commercial success', the more pertinent reason for focusing on these two films stems from the fact that they constitute a larger early to mid-twenthieth century cinematic trend of films set in the Mughal period. As this chapter explores, the context of these two films within that specific

cinematic trend is crucial to understanding the re-performance of the Anarkali narrative as a setting that taps into the interpersonal lives of the Mughal emperors.

At the same time, both *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-*Azam (1960) cannot be lumped together. Each film exhibits a distinctive performance of the Anarkali narrative. The most telling difference in their approach to Anarkali lies in their titles. *Anarkali* focuses, as the title suggests, on the figure of Anarkali; that is, the plot of the film revolves around the Anarkali as the focal point. *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), translated simply as 'The Great Mughal', focuses on the great Mughal Akbar. While Anarkali is a crucial *part* of the plot, she is not the focal concern of the film. A crucial contextual factor here is the historical background of both films. The productions of both *Anarkali* and *Mughal-e-Azam* span the decades surrounding the Partition (1947), the division that separated British India into two independent nations: India and Pakistan. The Partition deeply destabilizes the reception of the heritage of the Muslim Mughal Empire which spanned across post-Partition India and Pakistan. While it is not in the purview of this chapter, it must be noted that both films are contextually significant for their cultural relevance to the then nascent Indian national identity as it negotiated its own Muslim Mughal heritage.

The concern of this chapter is the study of the performance of the Anarkali narrative on screen through a close reading of the two films *Anarkali* and *Mughal-e-Azam.* The aim is, as it has been throughout this work, to further unpack the question 'what is Anarkali'. I center the close reading of each film around what I delineate as three crucial aspects of Anarkali: the draw of Anarkali, the dance of Anarkali, and the death of Anarkali. I shall elaborate here how I define each of these three aspects. The 'draw of Anarkali' questions exactly that: what do the films *Anarkali and Mughal-e-Azam* frame as the draw of Anarkali? Does Anarkali represent beauty, desire, power or is she simply a convenient means of access to a sentimentally familiar Mughal

backdrop? The draw of Anarkali unpacks not only how Anarkali is introduced as a character in each film, but also what role she plays as a *setting* for the narrative. What I refer to as the 'dance of Anarkali', is the vital scene, in each film, that presents a musical performance by Anarkali during which her love for Salim is put on display for Akbar. In the narrative plot of each film, it is the turning point that instigates Akbar to imprison Anarkali and pits Salim against his father. But, more importantly, the dance of Anarkali signifies a simulated space in which the boundaries of social status are suspended. It is a space during which Anarkali, as the musical performer, has the potential to, for the duration of her performance, confront and even invert the given social dynamics; that is, during her dance, Anarkali is temporarily in control, at least theoretically. Recall, as discussed in chapter three, that the Mughal courtesan figure (which denotes the musical vocation that allows her to enter the male-only sphere) is allowed and expected to confront dynamics of social status especially in regard to her male noble patron as a temporary simulation, one that eventually reasserts the reality of social boundaries once the performance ends. But the danger of the courtesan figure, as explored in the 'Courtesan Tales', comes when this simulation runs into reality, when boundaries are not restored, but rather upended permanently, when the male noble patron becomes, not temporally, but permanently subservient to the courtesan. In looking at the dance of Anarkali in each film, we question how this simulated space is re-negotiated. Lastly, the 'death of Anarkali', both in *Anarkali* and *Mughal-e-Azam,* is not off-screen. This aspect of the *qissa* is brought into full visibility by both films as the immurement of Anarkali is put on show. Yet, the way each film presents Anarkali's immurement is vastly different. For one, in *Mughal-e-Azam,* Anarkali's doesn't die when immured, but is rather allowed by Akbar to escape through underground tunnels. How do we then understand the death of Anarkali and the end of this Mughal episode? I shall focus on how, in both films, the

last scenes of the 'death of Anarkali' round back to the beginning of each film, evoking not only the innate facet of reperformance of the *qissa*, but also the essential draw of Anarkali.

Before I proceed to the close reading of each film, I first elaborate on two important methodological concerns below. The first delves into understanding how the medium of film functions in relation to the (re)performance of a textual and oral narrative; that is, how is narrative visibility negotiated on screen? The second considers the complexities of past scholarship on *Anarkali* and *Mughal-e-Azam* and questions whether there can be different lens through which to approach unpacking these two films.

Anarkali and the Filmic Sign

Following Taj's composition of *Anarkali* in 1922 and as the film industry began to gain momentum shortly thereafter, the Anarkali narrative found yet another medium of representation: on-screen. Up until that point, the transmission of the Anarkali narrative had been largely textual or oral (considering its possible dissemination as a *dastan* or *qissa*) and even Taj's initial dream of having his play staged was never realized as he hoped. The presentation of the Anarkali narrative on screen brings with it the additional novel component of the visual, providing the opportunity to re-present the narrative as an "audiovisual" language. For Nichols, this "audiovisual" language is universal in that it is our communal fascination with "moving images" that underlies our engagement with films/movies and contributes to a "sense of belonging."[256] Nichols suggests that "films frequently appeal because they give us tangible images of things that would otherwise not be visible…[they] give us entry in worlds we would not otherwise be able to enter, even those of fantasy and science fiction, and in a vivid and

[256] Nichols 2010, 5.

emotionally absorbing manner that is unique to the cinema."[257] But the visibility that the screen lends to "things that would otherwise not be visible" doesn't only apply to tangible depictions of the imagination or "worlds" removed from our everyday life. It also applies to the visual adaptation of the narrative itself; a narrative that before that point is most likely only textual, i.e., a screenplay. An on-screen (or even on-stage, for that matter) production literary visualizes the narrative. The Anarkali *qissa* (both in its textual and oral form) has no visual component until its on-screen adaptations. With this visibility of the narrative comes a slightly altered application of semiotics since film is not necessarily a language, as much as it is "like" a language. Like a language, film functions on a system of signs (signifier and signified), but *unlike* a language "the sign of the cinema is a short-circuit sign" where the distance between the signifier and the signified is considerably more limited than it is in the arbitrary sign of the Saussurean linguistic model.[258] Film semiotician Christian Metz initially argued that film is not a language system because, for one, it lacks the arbitrary sign of the Saussurean linguistic model. He identified the filmic sign as having a "short distance" between signifier and the signified.[259] For example, reading the word "mirror" may invoke for a reader different mental images as well a variety of signified meanings or associations, but the on-screen image of a particular "mirror" is presented to the audience as a much more concrete signifier, i.e. the same "mirror" is being viewed by all members. While the "power of language systems is that there is a very great difference between

[257] Nichols 2010, 9-10.

[258]Monaco 2000, 158. Cf. Barthes' (1960) consideration of the short distance between the signifier and the signified of a filmic sign.

[259] Metz 1974, 62-63. For an in-depth discussion of the evolution of Metz' semiotic approach to the filmic sign see Stam (1986).

the signifier and the signified; the power of film is that there is not."[260] For Noth,"The more the distance between the signifier and the signified is reduced in filmic empathy, the more film approaches magic communication."[261] This doesn't mean that the on-screen presentation of the "mirror" doesn't allow any room for a spectrum of meanings or associations. Individuals may very well view an image differently, but once the creator of the film has consciously chosen to depict a particular image of the "mirror" from the vast variety of options available, the distance between the signifier and the signified has been limited; while individuals may interpret the image of the "mirror" differently, the form of the "mirror" is identical for everyone.

The shared visual aspect of the signifier on screen offers a shared visibility of the narrative overall, but also possesses the capacity to control the visibility of the narrative; that is, not all parts of the narrative may be visualized equally, or a visualization may only serve to highlight the invisible. The filmic signifier, then, conjures a tension between the visible and the invisible components of the narrative. Similarly, on a meta level of film creation, Christian Metz in his later work on film semiotics calls the filmic signifier an "imaginary signifier," because its presence is essentially defined by its absence.[262] While its presence plays "on the perceptual registers of the spectator," it is absent "because it is only a replica of what is no longer there, 'made' furthermore of nothing more than shifting patterns of light."[263] It is under this over-arching friction between the visible and the invisible, the present and absent, brought about by the filmic sign that this chapter delves into the performance of the Anarkali narrative on screen.

[260] Monaco 2000, 158.

[261] Noth 1990, 466.

[262] Metz 1982.

[263] Stam 1986, 113.

The focus of this chapter is *not* the cinematic adaptation of Taj's play, but rather the performance or *re-performance* of the Anarkali *qissa* as the narrative engages with the elasticity of visibility. The aim of this study of the (re)performance of the Anarkali *qissa* remains the same; to ask, what is Anarkali? To exercise this study, we first need to detach the film experience of the Anarkali *qissa* both from the authority of Taj's play and from national ideology.

To date, any scholarship on the on-screen presentation of the Anarkali narrative has been defined by one of two characteristics: either that of Taj's authority over the 'authentic' narrative or that of national ideology of Indian cinema. In looking at the complexities underlying each of these avenues, I question whether there is another way to approach understanding the on-screen performance of the Anarkali narrative. I shall suggest that a close reading of both films in the context of the Anarkali *qissa* sheds light on how Anarkali is repeatedly employed as versatile medium to explore the interpersonal space between Akbar and Salim.

Taj's Authority

While neither *Anarkali* (1953) or *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) explicitly or officially acknowledge any inspiration from Taj's play, the implicitness of the inspiration is usually taken for granted by the few sources that address the topic. This assumption that the films *must* have been inspired by Taj's play comes in part from the sheer prevalence of Taj's published work and our lack of quantifiable evidence for the oral transmission of the Anarkali *qissa.* The assumption of the dependence on Taj' work is further complicated by the fact that between completing his play in 1922 and publishing it in 1931 (after he was not able to see it theatrically staged), Taj did successfully engage the Great Eastern Film Corporation to produce a silent film version of his play in 1928. Entitled *The Loves of a Moghul Prince* and directed by Charu Roy, the film was

directly based on Taj's play, and even featured Imtiaz Ali Taj himself as Emperor Akbar. Unfortunately, the film went largely unnoticed as it was overshadowed by a more successful, rival film entitled *Anarkali* released the very same year (1928). Produced by the Imperial Film Company and directed by R.S. Choudhry, the film was a relatively better commercial success in part due to its better-known cast. Choudhry remade the same film again in 1935. But neither Choudhry's 1928 film nor his 1935 remake explicitly acknowledges any inspiration from or adaptation of Taj's work. Nor are Choudhry's films a direct replica of Taj's play as was Roy's *The Loves of a Moghul Prince* (the film brokered by Taj himself). The scant research (Desoulieres 2007) that addresses Roy and Choudhry's films in relation to the larger Anarkali narrative posits them as linked and self-aware adaptations due to both their chronological proximity and, again, due to the singular authority assigned to Taj over the Anarkali *qissa* While Taj's work is fundamental and, as mentioned in the precious chapter, does become the linchpin for the Anarkali narrative, I suggest that it is also reasonable to approach the films as not simply adaptations.

Firstly, it is quite reasonable to assume that the inspiration for Choudhry's films could have had sources other than Taj's work (which remained unpublished until 1931); if Taj is able to cite his own source of the Anarkali *qissa* as orally transmitted stories, the same could very well hold true for others including Choudhry. Secondly, Choudhry's filmography shows his keen interest in and success at directing the historical romance genre in general, which undermines his work on Anarkali as an anomaly.[264] Indeed, the sheer volume and variety of on-screen presentations of the Anarkali narrative that surfaced in the following decades (from obscure TV series to full-scale Telugu films) could not simply have depended only on Taj's play. It is more

[264] Cf. Choudhry's work on *Shirin Khushrau* (1929) and *Shaan-e-Hind* (1936).

worthwhile to consider the popularity of the Anarkali narrative on-screen in relation to the concurrent proliferation of the medium of film which found its momentum in the 1920s; that is, it is less likely that Taj's play (which, again, was not commercially published until 1931) spurred a singular fascination with Anarkali and more likely that an already well-known narrative found a new medium of representation in the boom of the film industry. Furthermore, as we'll see, the medium of film quickly developed an obsession with historical royal narratives of Mughal rule, again eclipsing the assumption that the production of the Anarkali narrative was an anomaly.

The assumption of the authority of Taj's play as the singular inspiration for all on-screen performances of the Anarkali narrative extends also to the two films that are the focus of this chapter: *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). Again, Désoulières, the only scholar to touch upon these films in conjunction with one another, approaches the films as adaptations of Taj's play. While conceding minimal creative embellishments by the directors of the two films, Désoulières firmly places with Taj not only the conception of the plot in its entirety, but also the creation of the aesthetic details and Urdu dialogue that capture the Mughal historical setting:

> For now, we may credit Imtiaz Ali Taj for conceiving a plot based on the 'eternal triangle,' that is, the lovers and the jealous rival, acting within the framework of the impossible marriage, with supposedly historic characters out of a popular tale. No doubt Imtiaz Ali Taj also paved the way for the cinematic construction of the historical drama *Anarkali* through his linguistic and stylistic efforts, with detailed technical descriptions and stage directions, well balanced by romantic and tragic notes, giving flesh to his 'historic characters' by blending ceremonial 'Indo-Islamic' titles and phrases with classical tragic monologues, and vivid dialogues.[265]

The effect of Désoulières' analysis of these films as adaptations is rather circular; more time is spent on comparing dialogue and scenes as they do or do not match up with one another than on

[265] Désoulières 2007, 143. At another point, Désoulières asserts that these films "are known to have been inspired by his drama even though they adapted it or did not acknowledge the influence" (78).

unpacking any evolution of the Anarkali narrative as it shifts mediums of its own manifestation. The approach of this chapter is quite the opposite. While there is no reason to assume that the creative minds behind *Anarkali* and *Mughal-e-Azam* were unaware of Taj's work, it is equally unnecessary to assume that Taj's play served as their sole inspiration for either the aesthetic details, the plot, or the Urdu dialogue.

By the 1920s (during the silent film period) there was already a set cinematic preoccupation with films featuring well-known Mughal personalities and Mughal period settings. These included *Nurjehan* (1923), *Razia Begum* (1924), *Shahjahan* (1924), *Mumtaz Mahal* (1926), *Siraj-ud-Daula* (1927), *Shiraz* (1928), *Adale Jahangir* (1930) and *Chandbibi* (1931).[266] Bhaskar and Allen approach what they term the "Islamicate cultures of Bombay cinema" through three constructed categories: the Muslim Historical, the Muslim Courtesan Film, and the Classic Muslim Social. They designate these three categories as sub-genres of the larger film genres the Historical, the Courtesan film, and the Social; the sub-genres being films that specifically portray an Islamicate culture. But it is difficult to follow their delineation between the categories which seem to blend into each other as the work progresses. Their analysis of *Mughal-e-Azam* falls under 'Muslim Historical' and not 'Muslim Courtesan Film', though a claim could easily be made for it. They also do not consider *Anarkali* (1953) though they analyze both remakes of *Umrao Jaan*.

Bhaskar and Allen note that "by the end of the Silent period the Muslim Historical film with its distinctive iconography was firmly place" and that "this iconography drew particularly from the architectural forms and paintings of the Sultanate and Mughal periods, which the mise-

[266] Bhaskar and Allen 2009, 4.

en-scene of the films used to spectacular effect."[267] This means that the stage for the imagined aesthetic detail that characterized the Mughal period was already set before any film production of the Anarkali narrative (the first being in 1928). In fact, we could query the possible influence of these silent films or film trend on Taj and the progress of his work. While Taj completed his first version of his play in 1922, we know that he continued to make small revisions until the play's eventual publication in 1931 and while the nature of those revisions is not clear, we should allow for the possibility of the influence of the 'imagined' Mughal aesthetics portrayed in film. I say 'imagined' aesthetic detail because, as Bhaskar and Allen themselves note, while once source of the iconography was Mughal art and architecture, another influential source was the inherited "Orientalist imaginary." [268] They describe this "Orientalist imaginary" as arising from "Urdu Paris theatre, from performance idioms like the *mushaira* and *dastangoi*, from Orientalist narratives and motifs of international cinema, and from popular visual and aural culture of illustrated books, pamphlets, monographs and poems within which these stories, imagery and affective forms circulated widely."[269] It should be noted that in this extremely complicated category of all things 'Islamicate', Bhaskar and Allen fail to delineate between the native narrative practices such as *dastangoi* which encompassed the fantasy genre and the highly problematic Orientalizing narratives that were foreign in source.

This trend of films featuring Mughal personalities, especially royal ones, continued well into the sound period of cinema developing with it a familiar stock of Urdu dialogue. The decades surrounding *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) saw several films based on

[267] Bhaskar and Allen, 2009, 4.

[268] Bhaskar and Allen 2009, 5.

[269] Bhaskar and Allen 2009, 5.

Mughal emperor (*Humayun*, 1945; *Shahehshah Akbar*, 1943; *Noorjehan*, 1967; *Shahjahan*, 1946; *Taj Mahal*, 1963) each of which sported characteristic Urdu dialogue.

Films about well-known tragic romances such as *Laila Majnun* (1922, 1927) were also present already in the 1920s enveloping the first productions of *Anarkali* (1928) into a recognizable narrative trend as opposed to an outlier. Furthermore, there was an established prevalence of 'courtesan' films; films portraying a heroine who is some manifestation of a 'courtesan' figure. Starting as early as the famous film *Devdas* (1936; remade in 1955 and 2002), Vanita, in her survey of over two hundered Bombay 'courtesan' films records eleven films before the 1953 *Anarkali* and another twenty-five such films before the 1960 *Mughal-e-Azam*.[270] This shows yet another established narrative lens though which to view the production of *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960).

Taken together, this more complete picture of the film trends already pervasive throughout Bombay cinema starting as early as the 1920s shows that all aspects (aesthetics, dialogue, and plot) of the films *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) attributed by scholars such as Désoulières solely to Taj already had established precedents within the world of film. Hence the focus of this chapter is *not* to approach these two films as adaptations that assume a neat line of transmission directly from Taj's work. By detaching them from the authority of Taj's work, I shall approach the films as a study in the performance of the on-going evolution of the Anarkali narrative in which Taj is a participant rather than the source.

[270] Vanita 2018, 201. A large controversy governing the study of Bombay 'courtesan' films covers the portrayed religious affiliation of the main courtesan figure, i.e., whether she is Muslim or Hindu and the implications of either. For further discussion see Vanita 2018, 161-193 and Bhaskar and Allen 2009, 44-65.

Cinema and National Identity

The second problematic lens that characterizes scholarship on the Anarkali films, and Indian films in general, is that of national identity. Most contemporary scholarship on Indian films falls under the aegis of Indian cinema as *national* cinema, one in which national ideology is pervasive. This critical approach of national cinema stems, in part, from an awareness for the need of articulating Asian film theory as independent from Western film theory. In *The Asian Cinema Experience,* Stephen Teo proposes the need for a film theory that is appropriate to the major film industries based out of Asia (Japanese, Chinese, South Korean, Indian, etc.). He denotes the theory that he propagates in his book as 'Asian Cinema'. While he himself questions both the practical need and even the existential viability of this theory (i.e. does Asian Cinema really exist?), he concludes that its tangible existence stems from the very particular "Asian experience" which Western film theory is simply unable to capture.[271] Teo specifically explores the "Asian experience" through the "monumental style" of historical blockbusters (among which he includes *Mughal-e-Azam*) produced across Asian film industries:

> On the aesthetic level, the 'monumental style' involves elaborate historical period representations of sets, costumes, props, and other paraphernalia. It can also entail the mobilization of human resources on a grand scale to achieve spectacle. However, the style is more devoted to capturing the spiritual essence intrinsic to a people and its history and this is perhaps the more important than the mere details of accuracy.[272]

Teo argues that while the "monumental style" may differ among different Asian film industries, the main encompassing objective of the style is "articulating a relation to nationalism" and that

[271] Teo 2013, 210-211. Teo further suggests that, in being able to capture the Asian 'experience,' Asian Cinema can possibly even overtake theories of World Cinema and National Cinema.

[272] Teo 2013, 53.

this is what sets it apart from Western or Hollywood blockbusters.[273] It is as if, for Teo, that the Asian historical blockbuster becomes a monument in itself, a recognizable cognitive space that captures "the spiritual essence intrinsic to a people and its history." But it goes beyond that. The historical blockbuster becomes a monument, a cognitive space, that serves to articulate nationalism in particular. To be sure, Teo is not alone in viewing historical blockbusters such as *Mughal-e-Azam* as a cognitive space for resolving national anxieties or re-affirming national history. Chakravarty quite similarly argues that Indian films such as *Mughal-e-Azam* "follow a structure of heightened emotional orchestration, where the past becomes the means of resolving tensions in the present...the impulse towards synthesis becomes a means of exploring ideological and psychic disturbances pertaining to the group in question that then get resolved through emotional drama."[274] Bhaskar and Allen assert that " these Historicals provided images of glory that, in a colonial context, could allegorically serve to assert self-worth and value. They served as forms of resistance to colonialism that reaffirmed the value of indigenous culture and history."[275] Or, as Gokulsing, quite simply puts it: "Thus cinema in India is crucially linked with the production of cultural citizenship."[276] What I hope to accomplish in quoting these mainstream scholars of Indian cinema is to highlight the shared sentiment that projects Indian films as a cognitive space for channeling nationalism. But there are two crucial methodological complexities that undermine and upend this critical approach to Indian cinema.

[273] Teo 2013, 55.

[274] Chakravarty 1993, 165.

[275] Bhaskar and Allen 2009, 6.

[276] Gokulsing and Dissanayake 2004, 2.

The first has to do with audience. Almost all scholarship on the topic roots itself in the experience of the Indian 'mass audience' as a monolithic group.[277] There is very little attention given to the mass audience's diversity in terms of cultural, socio-economic, linguistic, educational or religious status. The only aspect that is often mentioned in these studies (Teo, Chakravarty, Bhaskar and Allen, Gokulsing, Vanita, etc.) is that of religious differentiation, but that too rarely goes beyond the singular contention between Muslims and Hindus. That is, the critical approach to Indian films as a vehicle of national identity is not based on the detailed analysis of production, but rather on the *assumed* experience of an imagined, undefined Indian 'mass audience'. Given even just the geographical, cultural, religious, and linguistic vastness of India (pre-and post-Partition), this totalizing approach fails to identity *for whom (if any)* the films may or may not have articulated a certain form of nationalism. This misleading assumption of the Indian 'mass audience' is not unrelated to the second methodological complexity which is the definition of Indian cinema as Bombay cinema.

Most scholarship on Indian cinema focuses only on the Bombay film industry, commonly known as 'Bollywood', essentially marginalizing India's other competing, robust film industries such as the Telugu and Tamil film industries. While it is unclear exactly when and where the term 'Bollywood' was first coined and used, it became most widely known and used in the 1990s. It is commonly assumed that term aimed to project the then Bombay Cinema in some inferior relation to Hollywood. What falls within the purview of 'Bollywood' is complicated to define. Prasad notes that "Bollywood in that sense is not a term with a specific signified: an empty signifier, it can be applied to any set of signifieds within the realm of Indian Cinema."[278]

[277] Pendukar (2003) calls it "India's mass consciousness" (1).

[278] Prasad 2008, 2.

Prasad goes on to note that, as a term, 'Bollywood' gain weight when it becomes self-consciously reflexive in its relationship to Hollywood:

> 'Bollywood' also signals the advent of a certain reflexivity, becoming a cinema for itself as it were, recognizing its own unique position in the word, the contrastive pleasures and values that it represents vis-à-vis Hollywood. This reflexivity is as much a form of self-awareness as it is a know-how that enables the Hindi film to reproduce itself for a market that demands its perpetuation as a source of cultural identity. [279]

The pervasive focus of scholarship on 'Bollywood' means that Indian film theory is almost entirely based on the working of one film industry and that any over-arching conclusions about national identity that arise privilege that one group. Scholars such as Chakravarty and Virdi have proposed that 'Bollywood' is essentially India's national cinema due to its being the main Hindi film industry.[280] This proposal is extremely problematic because it essentially discredits other Indian film industries from playing a role in national cinema, and hence the articulation of national identity, on socio-linguistic lines. Furthermore, as Teo, Ganti, and Rajadhyaksha (among others) note, due to the vast number of competing film industries within India, 'Bollywood' denotes not only the very specific Bombay film industry, but also a very specific mode of narrative presentation one that is most definitely not universal to all Indian film industries.[281]

Given that it is this problematic scholarly lens of Indian cinema that frames the scant research on Anarkali films, it is not surprising that most of it lacks close reading of the films as narrative in preference for overarching claims about national identity. Just as it was necessary to detach the Anarkali films from Taj's omniscient authority, it is also necessary for us to detach

[279] Prasad 2008, 1. On the concept of 'Bollywood' see also Rajadhyaksha (2003).

[280] Chakravarty 1993; Virdi 2003, 31.

[281] Teo 2013, 111; Ganti 2004; Rajadhyaksha 1999, 117.

the films from concepts of national cinema and national ideology in order to prioritize its (re)performance as part of the on-going Anarkali *qissa.* The focus of this chapter is to prioritize film over cinema, where film is the narrative discourse and cinema denotes the realm of the production and consumer industry, distinction already made by Metz in designating film as the object of semiotics. Stam explains that

> the cinema, for Metz, is the cinematic institution taken in its broadest sense as a multi-dimensional socio-cultural fact which includes prefilmic events (the economic infrastructure of the studio system, for example), post-filmic (distribution, exhibition, the social impact of films), and a-filmic events (the décor of the theater, the social ritual of movie-going). Film, on the other hand, refers to a localizable discourse, a text. Thus Metz closes in on the object of semiotics as the study of discourses and texts rather than of the institution, seen as an entity too multiform to constitute a proper object for semiotics. [282]

The goal is to situate the (re)performance of the Anarkali *qissa* as imagined and presented in the two films *Anarkali* and *Mughal-e-Azam.*

Anarkali (1953)

I begin here first with some production context and general details of the film to help situate the close reading. A black and white film with a total run time of 148 minutes, *Anarkali* features eleven song performances in total composed by C. Ramchandra. Released in 1953 by the production studio Filmistan, *Anarkali* is received into a post-Partition reality of India, adding a layer of social complexity to the film's casting. The cast includes Bina Rai as Anarkali, Pradeepkumar as Salim, Mubarak as Akbar, Sulochana as Jodha Bai, and S. L. Puri as Raja Man Singh. While I shall return to discussing the other members of the cast later in this chapter, I focus here briefly on Bina Rai as Anarkali.

[282] Stam 1986, 122-123.

Bina Rai was the stage name for Krishna Sarin who was born in Lahore in 1931. Her family later moved out of Lahore and to Kanpur, Uttar Pardesh. She began her acting career at the start of the 1950s. From early sources to Taj's play, the Anarkali *qissa* has been closely bound to the city of Lahore. And, as I have argued in chapter one, Anarkali herself, through her tomb in Lahore, has been and continues to be a crucial part of the topophilia of Lahore. It seems almost serendipitous that Bina Rai would originally hail from Lahore of all cities. While I am not suggesting that this fact was or is well known enough for it to bear any impact on an actual audience member then or now, it does bring to the forefront the changing role of Lahore in the filmic (re)performance of Anarkali. Each film re-negotiates the role of Lahore in the narrative which becomes pertinent to do so given that Lahore, post-Partition, lies outside the boundaries of India. While renegotiating the role of Lahore might seem simply necessary given the reality of the Partition, it also taps, as I shall argue, into an underlying anxiety about the destabilization of collective memory.

The Draw of Anarkali

I begin my close reading of *Anarkali* with a consideration of how Anarkali is introduced as a character and what her draw is. The film opens with a slow focus on a replica of the Anarkali Tomb. On one level, this means that the film commences with the most potent manifestation of Anarkali's monumentalization which serves to assert Anarkali as the focus of the film. But it also brings into question the setting; that is, where the narrative is located. While the Anarkali Tomb is employed, Lahore is never mentioned. This suggest that Anarkali, her *qissa*, and her tomb can be detached from Lahore or at least are not dependent on Lahore. But perhaps it is not a calculated detachment, but hints more towards the idea that some aspects of

the narrative are being forgotten or are in danger of being forgotten. So that it is not that Lahore is excised out, but that it is somehow not fully remembered. The idea of a potentially destabilized collective memory is already conjured by the singer that sits in front to the tomb in the opening sequence of the film. The singer frames, in song, the narrative the audience is about to watch. He sings that "you may remember or may not remember, but I remember what happened" (*tujhey yad ho ya na yad ho, mujhey yad hay yeh majra*). The singer shows himself as the keeper of the collective memory of the "happening" (*majra*) and it is his memory through song that activates the visual manifestation of the narrative. It is as if the film *is* the visualization of the orality of the Anarkali *qissa*. At the same time, his grasp on the collective memory is put in opposition to the 'you' who "may or may not remember" this "happening" indicating that there is some slippage of memory. There is an underlying danger of forgetting.

But what exactly is specific to the "happening" (*majra*) that is being activated in this performance? It is that Anarkali fell in love with Salim without knowing his identity. We are told that "she fell in love with Salim thinking only that he was a soldier, without knowing that that solider is the heir apparent of Hindustan" (*us nay Salim sey muhabat ki sirf sapahi samaj kar, ye na jantay huey kai sapahi hindustan ka wali ahad hai*). Indeed, when we first meet Nadira (before she is given the title of Anarkali) in the film, we find a confident and bold lover, one that is absolutely elated in her love for her 'soldier' (*sapaya*). Anarkali doesn't know that the 'soldier' *(sapaya)* she is in love with is prince Salim. She refers to her lover only as 'soldier' and has no idea of his true identity until much later in the film. This dynamic puts at the forefront the question of Salim's status in the film's performance of the Anarkali narrative; that is, how much of what Anarkali is, what she signifies, depends on Salim being a Mughal Prince? Or does it not?

The question of Salim's status and its effect on the figure of Anarkali is compounded when Anarkali fails to recognize Akbar as the emperor of Hindustan.

When we first meet Nadira, she is having a blissful lover's meeting with her 'soldier'. Her singing reaches the ears of Akbar and his retinue who happen to be in the area as well. Akbar is drawn by the sound of Anarkali's singing and the 'soldier' (yet unidentified as Salim) flees when he hears Akbar approaching. At first Anarkali doesn't recognize who Akbar is and boldly confronts him for disturbing her and orders him to leave: "who are you? Get out of here!" (*kaun ho ji tum...jalay jao yahan say*). Her pose as she confronts Akbar is noteworthy. She holds a large stick in one hand and boldly positions her other hand on her hip, signaling haughtiness and boldness. Akbar stands in front of her bedecked with his imperial trappings and surrounded by the pomp of an imperial retinue; that is, his social standing/status, unlike Salim's, is in no way disguised. The fact that Anarkali fails to recognize Akbar as the emperor in his imperial presentation, highlights not only that Anarkali is clearly not part of his royal *haram*, but that she is altogether far removed from the life of the royal court. Her status has no dependence on Akbar and she seems to stand outside his sphere of influence. Furthermore, such a blatant misrecognition of Akbar, even as he appears in pomp that should itself signal his identity, suggests a level of deterioration of the Mughal emperor Akbar; it is as if he is losing recognition.

Even after Anarkali realizes who Akbar is she shows no obligation to him. When Akbar asks her to sing for him, she refuses, saying that "it is not I that sings, it is my love that sings, it is not I who dances, it is my heat that dances" (*mey nahai gati meri muhabat gati hai, may nahi nachti mera dil natcha hai)*. She simply cannot do it *for* Akbar. Her singing is an independent force with independent agency. There is a conflation here between the independent agency of Anarkali's music and the independent agency of her status; that is, the fact that her status is not

dependent on Akbar (she is not part of his *haram*) and that her music cannot be controlled by Akbar are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the power of music frames her as a courtesan figure, who, as we've discussed in the tradition of the 'Courtesan Tale', is a uniquely liminal yet mobile agent. Ruth Vanita, who looks at courtesans in Bombay cinema in *Dancing with the Nation*, notes that "courtesan characters constitute the first group of single, working women in films, and they are depicted living alone or in chosen families or matrilineal households. Unconstrained by patriarchal family, they are highly mobile both physically and socially, just like male protagonists."[283] I have already argued in previous chapters that Anarkali embodies a disconcerting liminality one that taps into a potential for social disorder. Whereas her potent liminality was built into the underpinnings of the earlier performances of the narrative, it now takes on a visible role on the film screen. Moreover, I suggest that this initial scene between Anarkali and Akbar also activates a register of distance, as a characteristic of her liminality, that captures Anarkali's varying movements away from and towards the royal palace throughout the film, I point I shall return to shortly.

A crucial moment in this initial scene between Akbar and Anarkali comes when Akbar bestows the name and title 'Anarkali' on Nadira. Once Nadira, or rather her "love", takes up singing again, now in the presence of Akbar, Akbar offers her a reward (*inam*) for the purity of her love (*pyar ki bulandi*). Eyeing the pomegranate stem (*anar-kali*) that Abkar has been holding in his hand the entire time, she answers: *anar-kali*. Akbar, in turn, not only hands her the pomegranate stem he is holding but declares that she shall from now on be known as 'Anarkali': "We shall recall you by the title Anarkali" (*hum tumhe anarkali key khitab se yad kartey hain*). There is clearly a double meaning here between the common noun *anar-kali* (pomegranate stem)

[283] Vanita 2018, 7.

and the proper noun *Anarkali*. We've already seen that the etymological association of Anarkali with a pomegranate stem extends back to the earliest sources of the narrative. So, what is framed in the film as an innocent ask, a pomegranate stem, is not innocent at all because it brings with it the entirety of Anarkali *qissa*. I argue that when Akbar hands Anarkali the pomegranate stem, he is essentially handing her narrative. In that moment, Nadira takes on being Anarkali and everything that persona comes with including the constraints of the narrative. When Nadira accepts the pomegranate stem, she *becomes* Anarkali, and her ensuing narrative *cannot* be anything but the narrative of Anarkali. In chapter three, I showed how Taj's Nadira, in one lucid moment, is fully aware of taking on the persona of Anarkali and the consequences of doing so. In the film *Anarkali*, this reflex of stepping into the persona of Anarkali is comparable to the one in Taj where Anarkali exposed as a construct.

But the film goes a step further. Once Nadira accepts the pomegranate stem (*anar-kali*) and the title 'Anarkali', Akbar and his retinue shout out "*anarkali zindabad*" ("long-live Anarkali"). The word *zindabad* ("long-live") has a strong political connotation. It is most often reserved for political figures or political causes and movements. The expectation of the term zin*dabad* would be to have it apply to Akbar. But instead, it is Akbar that uses it on Anarkali. This inversion feeds into the deterioration of Akbar already noted in Anarkali's lack of recognition of his identity. There is yet another dimension to the use of the term *zindabad.* The term is a compound of the noun *zinda*, which means "alive" or "living," and the optative *bad*, which means "may it be" or "may it happen." The noun *zinda* is also the key word in the phrase that captures Anarkali's immurement in Urdu. The first writer to inscribe Anarkali's immurement in Urdu was Taj who writes Akbar's command at "*zinda dewar main gard do"* ("wall her up alive"). Akbar's command at the end of the film *Anarkali* is very similar: "*zinda*

dafna diya jaye" ("bury her alive"). Linguistically, it is almost impossible to articulate in Urdu the concept of immurement without the word *zinda.* So that when, in the opening sequence of this film, Akbar hails "*anarkali zindabad*" there is something haunting about the term *zinda* because her impending immurement is already folded into it, because that *is* the fate that Nadira accepts when she accepts becoming Anarkali.

To return to the point of Anarkali's visible liminality in the film, I consider here a later scene, but one that is thematically connected to the opening scene because it is again centered on Akbar and Anarkali. I briefly summarize here the plot of that scene: Salim is sent by Akbar to fight in a war in Kabul and while Salim is away, Anarkali get captured in an enemy raid. Salim recovers Anarkali who has end up in his vicinity though she still does not know his true identity. Shortly after, Salim is injured in the war and sent home to Akbar. Anarkali too returns and Akbar asks her to sing because her voice may stir Salim out of his coma. It is at this point that Anarkali finally realizes that her solider (*sapaya*) is the Mughal heir apparent. Anarkali does oblige Akbar this time and sings with the intended effect of successfully reviving Salim from his coma. Anarkali's music has a particularly potent effect on Salim. Recall, from the previous chapter, that Taj's Salim too was stirred only by the musical sound of Anarkali. It is not just any musical sound that has an altering effect on Salim, it is specially the musical sound of Anarkali. Again, we see here the continuing thread of the musical potency of Anarkali that is always also tied to her liminality as a musician. To return to the film scene, upon waking, Salim is careful not to show any recognition of Anarkali in front of Akbar and the queen, Jodha Bai. Visibly heartbroken and in tears, Anarkali begs Akbar to let her leave, but Akbar, distraught at seeing Anarkali in this state, demands to know what has caused her sadness:

Akbar: Anarkali what is your sadness? You used to be in love, blossoming like flowers.
Anarkali: Then my lover was near me.
Akbar: And now?
Anarkali: And now, now he's become a very big man your highness, very high.
Akbar: No matter how high he has become, we will make you higher than him by bestowing royal riches.
Anarkali: No, your highness, now he has gone too far away from me.
Akbar: We will bring me back to you by sending a declaration throughout Hindustan
Anarkali: In the hope of meeting him again is how I spend my days, but now he will never return your highness.

Akbar: Anarkali kia dukh hai tumarah. Tum to muhabat main sershah, phoolon ki tharhain khili raiti thi.
Anarkali: Tub meyra mehbob meyrai pas tha
Akbar: or ab?
Anarkali: or ab, ab vo bhuhat barda admi ho gaya hai jahan panah, bubhat buland
Akbar: wo kitna hi buland kyon na ho, hum tumhay shai mal sey mal-a-mal kar kay, usay uncha dardain
Anarkali: nahin jahan panah, ab wo mujse buhat door ho gaya hai
Akbar: hum hinsdustan main minazi karakay usey thumharay pass bula dain gai
Anarkali: uskey milnain ki umeed may to yeh din katay hain, magar wo ab kabhi nai lotai ga jahan panah.

Anarkali, who at the beginning of the film, stood outside the royal palace, both its sphere of influence and its location, now stands within it. As Anarkali she has been absorbed into the palace and its sphere of influence, which will only continue to pull her in more deeply until the end when Anarkali is once again relegated beyond the palace for her immurement. In the exchange quoted above, the language of distance/distancing in relation to the positioning of Anarkali is significant. Anarkali "blossomed" (*khili raiti thi*) when her lover was "near" (*pas*) her. When her lover was "near" (*pas*), she stood outside the precincts of the royal palace. Now that she is inside the royal palace, her lover is "too <u>far</u> away" (*buhat <u>door</u> ho gaya hai*). Though Salim is physically next to her in the scene, the emphasis is on his inapproachability as heir-apparent; he may be physically there, but he is essentially now removed from Anarkali. He is

"far" (*door*). The language points to a friction between "near" (*pas*) and "far" (*door*) in relation to the positioning of Anarkali. Anarkali can be "near" (*pas*) Salim outside the palace and its sphere of influence, but Salim is "far" (*door*) when Anarkali steps into the palace and the royal sphere. This friction signals the liminality on which Anarkali functions and, I argue, it is this liminality compounded with the potency of her musical sound that is shown as the draw of Anarkali in the film. Moreover, it is also the same liminality that will collapse, as we shall see in the next section, when Anarkali becomes Salim's lover within the precincts of the royal sphere, when the friction between "near" (*pas*) and "far" (*door*) will implode.

The Dance of Anarkali

I now consider the crucial dance scene in the film *Anarkali*, the point when Akbar is confronted with the on-going relationship of Anarkali and Salim. It should be noted that this is not the only musical performance by Anarkali. We've already encountered other moments when Anarkali sings, yet it is this particular performance that instigate the Anarkali's implosion. To recap, once Salim fully recovers from this war injuries, he convinces Anarkali to carry on a clandestine relationship in the palace. The central dance of Anarkali is set to take place during the birthday celebration of Akbar. Salim tells Anarkali that it is a day on which the "state goes to sleep" (*haqumat so jati hai*) and that when she performs, even Akbar will lose himself in her music (*shahinshah jhoom utain gay*). We see here the clear expectation that Anarkali's musical performance will usher a moment in which the standing societal dynamics will be blurred, and it is in this moment that, as Salim tells Anarkali, he will reveal his love for Anarkali to Akbar. The idea is that Akbar would be best primed to accept such a relationship, depicted otherwise as untenable, when boundaries of status are most porous.

When Anarkali readies herself for the celebration it is in the setting of the royal *haram*. This marks a culmination of a transformation that has slowly overtaken Anarkali as the film progresses: she has gone from being introduced as a figure that overtly lies outside the royal realm to a member of the royal palace. There is no explicit reference to this in the film; i.e. there is no point at which Akbar explicitly asks her to join the royal *haram*, yet it seems to happen as an inevitable consequence. As Anarkali's bath is prepared, we see the jealous Gulnar (another member of the royal *haram*), drug the bath water leading Anarkali to become unstable. Her feet are shown stumbling as she comes out of the bath. This is a scene in which Anarkali has been *pulled* into the haram and what this scene effectively does is undermine the potent liminality she possessed at the outset of the film. It undermines, as I mentioned in the previous section, the friction between "near" (*pas*) and "far" (*door*) through which her liminality functions. Secondly, while the drugging of Anarkali shows her as very much embroiled within the intrigues of the palace, it also subverts her dance as a temporary space of control. As she stumbles into her performance, instead of participating in a simulation that allows her elevated control, she is completely out of control. This, in turn, conflates intoxication with the dangerous potency musical sound, a theme we've encountered in the 'Courtesan Tales'. So that while, on one level, we can attribute Anarkali's loss of control to the intoxication/drugging acted upon her by other members of the *haram*, it also recalls the danger of the intoxication of Anarkali's musical sound. And it is not only danger to others, but to Anarkali herself. This conflation is concisely and beautifully captured in the refrain of the song that Anarkali sings:

> *mohabbat me aise qadam dagmaga gaye*
> *zamana ye samjha ke ham peeke aaye peeke aaye*
> *mohabbat me aise qadam dagmagaye*
> *zamana ye samjhaa ke ham peeke aaye peeke aaye*
>
> In love, my feet swayed so

that the world thought I have come having drunk, have come having drunk
In love, my feet swayed so
that the world thought I have come having drunk, have come having drunk

I reiterate here a point I made in chapter three while considering the 'Courtesan Tale' in conjunction with Taj's play: the attraction to and love for the female musician (the courtesan) *is* attraction and love for her musical sound which frames love *as* a musical sound. So, when Anarakli sings "in love, my feed swayed so" (*mohabbat me aise qadam dagmaga gaye*), we can substitute Anarkali's "love" for her own musical sound that sways her so that it is as if she is drunk/intoxicated. She has been intoxicated and destabilized by her own musical sound, a facet of conflating her drugging with her musical performance.

The film also offers a view into a more internal factor of Anarkali's destabilization during her dance before Akbar and Salim. During her musical performance, as she grows more and more unsteady, at one-point Anarkali uses a mirror to relay her love to Salim. Recall that a mirror exposing the relationship of Salim and Anarkali to Akbar's sight has been used before. But here, Akbar has no part to play in the mirror scene. Instead, the reflection in the camera shot is first of Salim and then solely of Anarkali (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Anarkali uses a mirror during her musical performance which first shows a reflection of Salim (left) and then a reflection only of Anarkali (right). *Anarkali* (1953).

The mirror scene is not a moment in which Salim and Anarkali are exposed to Akbar. It is a scene in which Anarkali is exposed to herself and it parallels another mirror scene in the film which occurs much earlier when Anarkali spars with her own mirror image (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Anarkali spars with her own mirror image. *Anarkali* (1953).

In this earlier scene, Anarkali's image taunts her for believing that there is a future with Salim and, most poignantly, the image calls Anarkali 'Nadira', calling into contention the basic identity of the figure. At the same time, Anarkali (outside the mirror) maintains her belief in Salim's love and ends up shattering the mirror. But the voice of the mirror image doesn't disappear. Instead, it seems to escape the mirror and surrounds Anarkali until she faints. I suggest that both mirror scenes serve to bring into contention the identity of Anarkali and that the consequence of destabilizing that singular identity is the destabilization of her control.

Akbar discovers Salim and Anarkali's relationship when, towards the end of her musical performance, Anarkali collapses onto Salim's lap. By collapsing onto Salim's lap, she visibly erases the characteristic friction between "near" (*pas*) and "far" (*door*) and implodes her own liminality. Akbar, in response, had Anarkali imprisoned.

The Death of Anarkali

I move now to looking at the scenes that lead up to Anarkali's immurement. Once, Akbar has Anarkali imprisoned, Salim rebels against Akbar and demands to meet him on the battlefield. The inclusion and depiction of Salim's rebellion is a unique aspect of the filmic (re)performance of the Anarkali *qissa.* Taj, for example, does not mention any rebellion on Salim's part. But historically Salim did attempt a rebellion against his father in 1599 CE and the early sources on Anarkali, especially Finch and Terry, do hint at a conflation between the political tension between father and son and relations with Anarkali. But, as I argued in chapter two, that conflation is built upon Anarkali's potential for social disorder, not on the person of Anarkali. Yet, the film visualizes the rebellion as causal. Akbar ultimately refuses to meet Salim with his imperial army and instead arrives alone offering his life freely to Salim. Salim cannot bring himself to harm his father and surrenders. Akbar then sentences both Salim and Anarkali to death for *bhagavat* (rebellion).

The fiercest defender of Salim during this scene is Raja Man Singh, Akbar's most trusted general. The inclusion of Raja Man Singh is unique to the film. A Rajput himself, Raja Man Singh reminds Akbar of the claim the Rajputs have on Salim. Salim's mother, Jodha Bai, was a Rajput princess. Raja Man Singh goes as far as to threaten Akbar that for Salim, the product of a Hindu-Muslim union, the Rajput's had put down their swords, but that they can take them back up. This explicit claim by Raja Man Singh confronts any singularly Muslim claim that could made on Salim and advocates for an equal Hindu claim on Salim. The Hindu-Rajput heritage of Salim's mother, Joda Bai, is put on equal footing with that of Salim's paternal Muslim Mughal lineage. He is presented as the equal product of the two, a figure of equal unification. The role of casting adds a dynamic layer to the depiction of religious identity. But one actor/character that

stand out is Joda Bai played by Sulochana. Sulochana was the stage name of the actress Ruby Meyers, an Indian Jew. While highly successful actress she represented an extreme minority, one that is rarely referenced in scholarship on Indian Cinema. Not only does Ruby Meyers represent other religious minorities unaccounted for in the religious metanarrative of national cinema in India, but she is depicting on screen a character that is constantly negotiating her own multifaceted role (and loyalty) as a Hindu princess and a Mughal queen.

To return to the film, when Akbar arrives to preside over Salim's execution, he is faced with a "silent rebellion" (*kamoosh bhagavat*) as no one will touch Salim. Enraged, Akbar takes the task into his own hands, but then, in a moment of sudden realization, pardons Salim. Akbar also pardons Anarkali, but Salim is not able to reach her in time because no one knows exactly where she is. The orders given by Akbar were to "bury her alive" (*zinda dafna diya jaye*) in "some other place" (*kisey varaney main*). She is not immured within the palace or even within its boundaries. Her immurement is in some 'other' place that isn't even identifiable by the royal guards that Salim questions. Anarkali's immurement in this 'other' place that is essentially not the palace directly evokes the film's draw of Anarkali in which she stands outside the confines of royal workings. Recall that at the beginning of the film, Anarkali neither recognizes her lover as Salim, nor Akbar as the emperor. Her immurement, then, returns her to her original liminal position that defines the threshold of the royal realm.

Anarkali's immurement itself is shown as a brick-by-brick process where Anarkali stands in the middle and the brick enclosure is built around her. As the bricks reach her face, they become level with the screen so that the last bricks to complete her immurement also cover up the entire screen (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Last bricks that are laid to complete Anarkali's immurement (left) and the completion of the immurement (right). *Anarkali* (1953).

The result is that her immurement is literally being experienced on screen. The name given to her enclosure throughout this scene is *mizar* (tomb). Anarkali isn't immured in just any enclosure, she is immured within her tomb which circles back to the opening shots of the Tomb of Anarkali. Not only does her immurement serve as an etiology of her monumentalization, but it is as if she, and by extension her *qissa*, is literally stored within the tomb. And indeed, the very end of the film once again shows the Tomb of Anarkali and the singer who commenced the *qissa*, so that it is the tomb that perpetuates the (re)performance; it is Anarkali's monumentalization that perpetuates the performance and the reperformance of the *qissa*. Furthermore, Anarkali sings her last song as she is being bricked up and the completion of her the immurement is not only signaled visually by the bricks on screen level, but also audibly when she stops singing. But where her signing leaves off, the *qissa* singer's song picks up. Thus, Anarkali's song *is* the song of the *qissa* singer.

Mughal-e-Azam (1960)

The production of *Mughal-e-Azam* initially began in 1944 and would stretch until its eventual release in 1960. The years in between saw colossal political changes: a transition out of colonialism with the withdrawal of the British as well as the Partition (1947) that resulted in the modern nations of Pakistan and India. After starting in 1944, film production was first halted due to financial troubles not unconnected to the unavoidable upheaval of the on-going political disruptions. The film only moved forward once financiers were replaced. But *Mughal-e-Azam's* production budget too was enormous (15 million rupees at the time) and incomparable to any other film production of the time. The entire scale of the film, the vision for the final product, was a first of its kind. For example, the immense battle scenes that were mobilized for the film were unseen in any film before. The original cast of the film would also end up being replaced after the initial production hurdles. Once production was restarted, the cast would feature Madhubala as Anarkali, Dilip Kumar as Salim, Prithviraj Kapoor as Emperor Akbar. With a run time of 197, the film features twelve songs. Due to financial constraints, the film was not able to be released fully in color so that most of the film was kept in black and white with the exception of one sequence: Anarkali's climactic dance to the film's famous song *pyar kya do darna kya* ('Why fear love'). For that one song performance the film breaks into color which plays a critical role in the reception of the song. The entire film was digitally recolored and re-released in 2004.

Draw of Anarkali

I turn now to how the draw of Anarkali is depicted in the film *Mughal-e-Azam.* The film opens with a personified Hindustan speaking. It recounts that while it has often suffered at the

hands of many throughout history, it has also been loved and protected by a few exceptional individuals, such as Akbar:

> Jalal-ud-Din Akbar was the name of one of those that cared for me. Akbar loved me and, going beyond the walls of religion and tradition, he taught affection among his people and embraced me forever.
>
> *meray chahney waloon mey sey ik insan ka nam Jalal-ud-din Mohammad Akbar tha. Akbar ney mujse pyar kya, muzhab or rasmo-ravayat ki dwar sey baland ho kar insan ko insan sey muhabat karna sekhaya aur humeshan kay liye mujko senay se lega leya*

The film opens and closes with this physical land of 'Hindustan' recalling its own history. But the shape of 'Hindustan' is specifically that of India post-Partition; that is, it is not the India of the Mughal Empire which extended beyond the national borders of modern India. More specifically, this personified 'Hindustan' excludes the post-Partition nation of Pakistan which houses the city of Lahore. We've seen that the role of Lahore in the filmic (re)performance of the Anarkali *qissa* was already a concern in the film *Anarkali.* But while, in the film *Anarkali*¸ the exclusion of Lahore was presented as a slow forgetting of collective memory, in *Mughal-e-Azam* it is simply excised out. Chakravarty argues that "the composite voice-image invites collective spectator identification, for each individual viewer to recognize him/herself as a national subject or citizen in relation to the map."[284] While this may work on a micro-level, it fails to address the fact that the film is consciously drawing a border on to that identification. That is, it is reserving that collective identification for citizens of modern India. The opening scene of the film detaches the narrative from the Tomb of Anarkali and from the geo-political location of Lahore so that the narrative of Anarkali is no longer geographically attached; the Anarkali *qissa,* then, is universal and can be relocated, so to say, anywhere.

[284] Chakravarty 1993, 169.

The character of Anarkali is not introduced in the opening scenes of the film. The focus of the film, as is evident by the title, is Akbar; *Mughal-e-Azam* translates to 'The Great Mughal'. The plot of the film commences with Akbar's prayers for an heir and the subsequent birth of Salim. As a young boy Salim is decadent and entitled especially in comparison to Akbar's humility. We are told that Salim "began to transgress the limits of etiquette and protocol" (*vo adab aur farmabardari ki hadoon sey aghey bard ney laya*). Salim's impropriety reaches its height when he takes to drinking and abuses Akbar's sacred scales of justice for his amusement. When Akbar sees this, he is furious and sees the future of Hindustan darken. As a last resort in trying to discipline Salim, Akbar sends him into the army. We find in this episode the familiar opposition between Akbar and Salim that appears throughout the evolution and performance of the Anarkali *qissa*. But as the years pass, Salim proves himself on the battlefield and Akbar welcomes him back. On Salim's arrival it seems that Akbar's attempt at disciplining has been successful; Salim is courteous, well-mannered, and militarily accomplished. It is finally at this point that Anarkali is introduced into the film.

After his return to the palace, Salim chances upon a covered statue. He is told that the sculptor takes such pride in the beauty of his creation that he claims that any soldier who looks upon it would willingly lay down his sword. Salim is also told not to look upon the statue before the next daybreak as it will prove inauspicious for him. Intrigued, pulling back the covering, Salim looks at the statue regardless. He is instantly enamored and concedes that the sculptor's claim is true. Once Salim leaves, the sculptor rushes in and we learn that it is Anarkali that has been standing in place of the statue since the actual statue is still unfinished. What Salim saw and took for a statue, then, was Anarkali.

Chakravarty offers the interpretation that Anarkali's doubling as a statue "is an early hint at Anarkali's 'impudence' in falling in love with the great Akbar's son, thus exceeding her lowly status."[285] But at no point is Anarkali impudent. The sentiment of impudence assigns her a level of agency she clearly does not possess. Most of her actions are not self-motivated. They are the result of the agency of others (Salim and Akbar, in particular) acting upon her. Instead, I argue, that Salim's fascinated, enamored gaze driven by unchecked curiosity evokes the Orientalizing and erotizing 'gaze' of the European travelers whose accounts color the very first written appearance of Anarkali. Here we see the return of the same 'gaze' on something essentially inaccessible, the product of which is the creation of an artificial fantasy. In the film, Anarkali's conflation with a statue, an artificial mold, highlights two interrelated points: first, the 'gaze' under which Anarkali is introduced, and second, the constructed artificiality of Anarkali as a product of that 'gaze'. I support this point with the camera angles employed for this scene. We learn from the dialogue between Salim and Bahar that there is a statue underneath the covering that Salim comes upon. The moment Salim draws back the covering to look upon the statue, it is expected that we too would, for the first time, see the statue; that is, we would see this statue with Salim. But, instead, as soon as Salim is about the pull back the covering, the camera angle changes to the perspective of the statue so that what we see is not the statue, but Salim's gaze upon the statue (Figure 10).

[285] Chakravarty 1993, 172.



Figure 10: The statue Salim gazes upon. *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960).

The statue *is* the gaze of Salim. The next day, when the statue is revealed in front of both Salim and Akbar, it is only then do we see an image of the Anarkali as a statue (Figure 11).

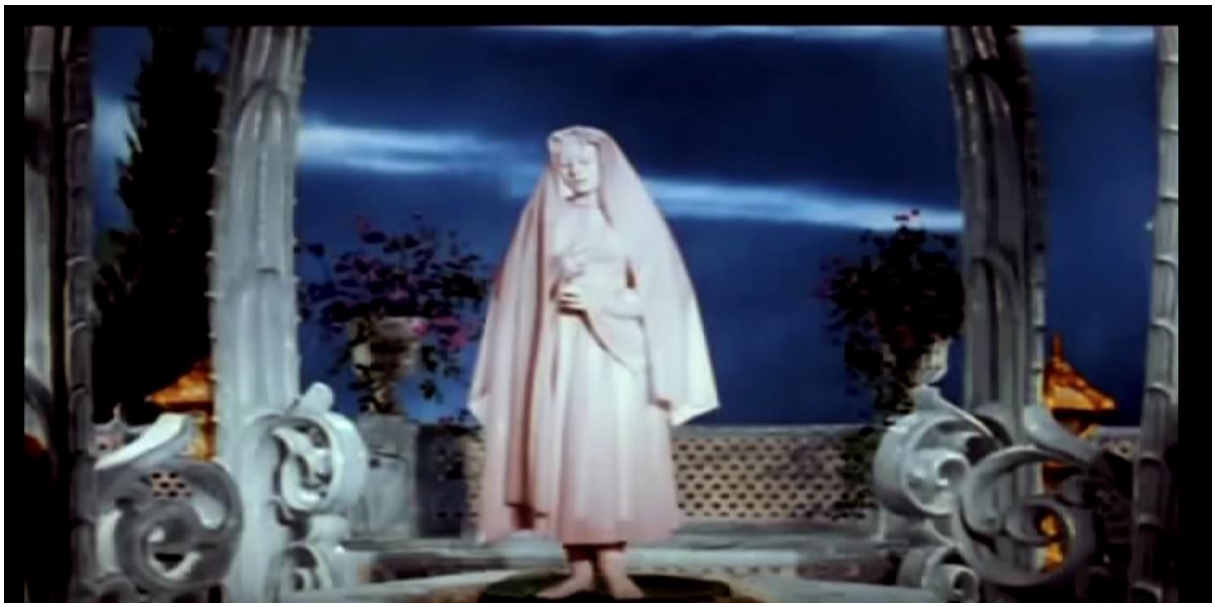


Figure 11: Anarkali as a statue. *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960)

I suggest that the draw of Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam* as construed under the gaze of Salim is similar to the draw of Anarkali in the early accounts of William Finch and Edward Terry: Anarkali is a setting that allows access to the imaginary of the Mughal world, especially the interpersonal world of Akbar and Salim.

But the 'gaze' under which Anarkali is introduce and of which she is a product is not one directional. There is also the reciprocity of the 'gaze'. What is it that Salim (the gazer) sees when he gazes upon the statue/Anarkali? What is looking back at him? Before delving into the reciprocity of the 'gaze' in *Mughal-e-Azam*, I first consider here the Greek mythological figure of the Gorgon as a paradigm to think with. The Gorgon features most prominently in the myth of the hero Perseus, who takes upon himself to bring the head of a gorgon to King Polydektes.[286] There are three gorgons, three sisters, two immortal and one mortal, Medusa. So, it is only Medusa's head that Perseus can attempt to bring back to King Polydektes. Not only are the gorgons monstrous to look at, but whoever looks upon them turns to stone. Aided by Athena and Hermes, Perseus cuts off Medusa's head without look upon her face or, in some versions, by only looking upon her reflection through a mirror. The theme of seeing and not seeing runs throughout the myth of Perseus and Medusa, but there is something particular about gazing on the Gorgon. To gaze upon the Gorgon, to meet the Gorgon's eyes, is to meet the reciprocal gaze of the Gorgon; that is, to look at the Gorgon also requires to see what is looking back at you. And it is what looks back that lies at the root of the transformation and petrification. In addressing the frontality of the Gorgon, Vernant explains that

> the monstrousness of which we speak is characterized by the fact that it can only be approached frontally, in direct confrontation with the Power that demands that, in order to see it, one enter into the field of its fascination and risk losing oneself in it. To see the Gorgon is to look her in the eyes and, in the exchange of gazes, to cease to be oneself, a

[286] The most coherent version of the myth can be found in Apollodorus' Library II. 34-49.

> living being, and to become, like her, a Power of death. To stare at Gorgo is to lose one's sight in her eyes and to be transformed into stone, an unseeing, opaque object… It is a simple reflection and yet also a reality from the world beyond, an image that captures you because instead of merely returning you the appearance of your own face and refracting your gaze, it represents in its grimace the terrifying horror of a radical otherness with which you yourself will be identified as you are turned to stone.[287]

I don't mean to transpose here the Gorgon on Anarkali as a statue or any concept of monstrosity. Nor do I suggest that what one sees reflected in the Gorgon's gaze, the "horror of a radical otherness," is applicable to Anarkali. What I would like to consider is that concept that gazing upon the Gorgon is not a simple or one-directional action. To gaze upon the Gorgon is to gaze upon what is looking back, something that is not a simple reflection, but altering, transformative. It is with this concept that I return to the scene in *Mughal-e-Azam* where Salim gazes upon Anarkali as a statue and consider what it is that he sees reflected. I quote here the film dialogue when Salim chances upon the covered statue:

> Salim: Who is this that having seem me has hidden themselves, Bahar?
> Bahar: Not hidden themselves, but has been hidden, Prince.
> Salim: Why?
> Bahar: The sculptor has claimed that once this statue is unveiled, then ….
> Salim: Speak without fear. Often such claims are interesting.
> Bahar: He claims that on seeing this statue a soldier will lay down his sword, an emperor his crown, a man his heart at its feet.
> Salim: The sculptor's claim is more than interesting. I would like to see the arrogance of his art.
> Durjan: His Majesty has ordered that the Prince shall not see the statue.
> Salim: Why not?
> Durjan: The royal astrologer has warned that it will be inauspicious if the Prince looks at any statue before the moon has disappeared. The statue will be unveiled tomorrow morning in the presence of His Majesty.
> Salim: The sculptor's claim, the astrologer's prophesy and this veiled statue, how can I wait until tomorrow, Durjan?
> (Salim parts the curtain and looks upon the statue)
> The sculptor's claim was indeed true. Certainly, only stone can contain such infinite beauty. I am tempted to accept the divinity of idols.
> Durjan: The Prince will then be accused of idol-worship.
> Salim: But praised for being devout.

[287] Vernant 1991, 137-138.

Salim: Humen dekh kar ye kaun chhup gaya hai, Bahaar?
Bahar: Chhupa nahin chhupaaya gaya hai, Saaheb-e-Aalam.
Salim: Kyun?
Bahar: Sangtaraash ka ye daawa hai ke jab ye mujassama be-naqaab hoga to...
Salim: Be-khauf ho kar kaho, kabhi kabhi daawe dilchasp bhi huwa karte hain.
Bahar: Uska ye daawa hai ke is mujassame ko dekh kar sipaahi apni talwaar, shahenshaah apna taaj aur insaan apna dil nikaal kar us ke qadmon mein rakh dega.
Salim: Sangtaraash ka daawa dilchaspi ki hadon se aage barh gaya hai, hum uske funn ka ghuroor dekhna chaahte hain.
Durjan: Mahaabali ka ye hukum hai ke Saaheb-e-Aalam is moorti ko na dekhen.
Salim: Kyun?
Durjan: Raaj jyotishi ka ye kehna hai ke aaj raat chandrama ke dhalne se pehle shahzaade ka kisi moorti ko dekhna bura shagun ho ga. Naqaab kushaa'i kal sub'h Mahaabali ke saamne ho gi.
Salim: Sangtarash ka daawa, raaj jyotishi ka shagun aur is mujassamme par pari naqaab—hum sub'h ka intezaar kaise karenge, Durjan? Sangtaraash ka daawa yageenan sahi tha. Beshak is bepanaah husn ki taab patthar hi laa sakta hai, buton ki khudaa'i tasleem karne ko ji chaahta hai. Durjan: Saaheb-e-Aalam par but-parasti ka ilzaam lag jaaye ga.
Salim: Magar wafaa-parasti ki daad bhi mil jaaye gi.

Bahar tells Salim that the statue is hidden because the sculptor has claimed that what one sees in it once they gaze upon the statute will be so powerful that it could make "a soldier lay down his sword, a king his crown, and a man his heart at its [the statue's] feet" (*Uska ye daawa hai ke is mujassame ko dekh kar sipaahi apni talwaar, shahenshaah apna taaj aur insaan apna dil nikaal kar us ke qadmon mein rakh dega).* What one sees in the statue will transform, alter the viewer. Not only is there something transformative about the statue, but it is also something dangerously transformative. It will cause a soldier to "put down his sword, a king his crown, and a man his heart." These are paradigmatically inverted scenarios, things that should not happen. If and when Salim looks upon it, there is a very real threat of experiencing a dangerous alteration. Furthermore, Salim has been forbidden to view it because it is extremely inauspicious: "The royal astrologer has warned that it will be inauspicious if the prince looks at any statue before the moon has disappeared" (*Raaj jyotishi ka ye kehna hai ke aaj raat chandrama ke dhalne se pehle*

shahzaade ka kisi moorti ko dekhna bura shagun ho ga). The potential danger to Salim if he views the statue in that moment of allure has already been predicted. Yet the fact that he should not view it, cannot view it, makes the allure of viewing it even stronger almost as though the statue demands to be seen. And just like the Gorgon's demanding frontal gaze, the statue demands that "one enter into the field of its fascination and risk losing oneself in it." I argue that Salim *is* altered and transformed once he gazes upon the statue. He concedes that sculptor's claim is true, but his own transformation will go even beyond "putting down his sword" it will be one in which he will take up the sword but against his own father, an ultimate perversion of the statue's potential for inversion.

Dance of Anarkali

The dance of Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam* is preceded by a confrontation between her and Salim. In this narrative plot, Akbar has already become privy to their relationship and Anarkali has already been imprisoned once. During her first imprisonment, Anarkali comes to an agreement with Akbar to leave after her last upcoming performance in the celebration in lieu of her freedom. Once Salim discovers this barter between Akbar and Anarkali, he confronts Anarkali for what Salim deems her betrayal. It is at this point that Anarkali enters the scene of her musical performance. What is noteworthy is that Anarkali is not intoxicated and has not been drugged. Whereas the Anarkali in the film *Anarkali* stumbles into her musical performance, the Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam* enters the space in complete control. I will argue that the fact that Anarkali is not intoxicated or drugged, nor besotted by any internal agent of destabilization, has to do with her presentation in this film as an artifice.

The song that Anarkali performs is quite famously named after its refrain: “If you have loved, what is there to fear” (*pyar kiya to darna kya*). But Anarkali does not face or lock eyes with Salim while she sings. Her gaze is consistently set on Akbar. At one point during the song, she takes a dagger from Salim and presents the handle to Akbar as a direct challenge (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Anarkali presents Akbar with a dagger facing towards her during her dance. *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960).

Here we see the figure of the ‘courtesan’ musician in action where the upending of social convention and status can very well be negotiated in the space of the musical performance, where Anarkali can take on an elevated position of control. But the problem here is the subtext of Anarkali’s challenge which is that it is *not* contained within the space of the musical performance. That is, Anarkali’s challenge to Akbar, while presented during the musical performance, its application and implication extends into the reality outside the musical performance; it is not a show and that is precisely where the real threat lies, the unsanctioned extension of control.

Mughal-e-Azam, too, makes use of the mirror scene during Anarkali's musical performance. But here the mirror is omnipresent; the royal hall is literally covered and lined with mirrors, evoking the historically later construction of the famous *Sheesh-Mahal* (hall of mirrors) by Shah Jahan. And, once again, the mirror(s) does not function to expose Salim and Anarkali's relationship, but to negotiate the boundaries of Anarkali's control. What we see reflected in all the mirrors is the dance of Anarkali (Figure 13).

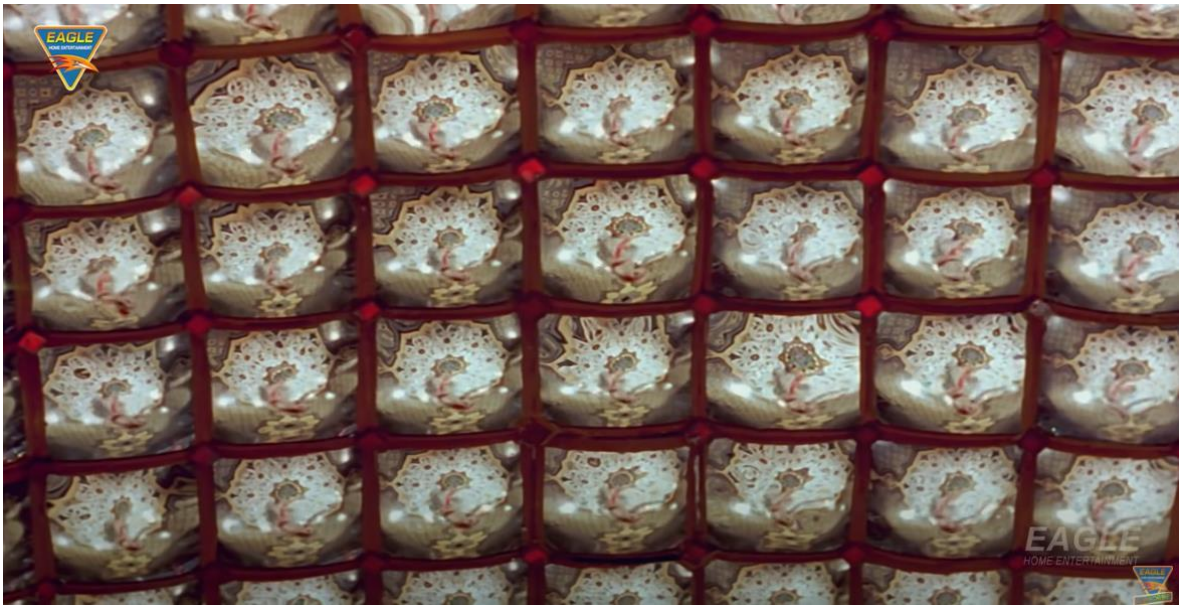


Figure 13: Reflection of Anarkali while dancing. *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960).

Anarkali's dance is pervasive, it is reflected every direction that Akbar turns to. It is as if the dance has permeated the literal structure of the royal hall and that, for that moment, Anarkali has pervasive control over this space. The permeation of her image in the palace also foreshadows the impending permeation of her immurement into the palace structure; the pervasive control over the palace that Anarkali wields during her dance will become absorbed into the palace during her immurement.

In both *Anarkali* and *Mughal-e-Azam,* Anarkali is imprisoned by Akbar at the end of her dance. The consequence of the 'dance of Anarkali' in each film is the same: Salim's full-scale rebellion against Akbar. I suggest we view Salim's rebellion as an added dimension to the dance of Anarkali because it negotiates the same space of control between Akbar and Salim that Anarkali's musical performance does. In *Anarkali,* Salim and Akbar meet on the battlefield, but unwilling to attack his son, Akbar offers himself to Salim; and Salim, unwilling to attack his unarmed father, submits to Akbar and is led off as prisoner. The suspense of confrontation never plays out in a space where, I argue, control is just as destabilized as in Anarkali's performance. On the other hand, in *Mughal-e-Azam,* the confrontation plays out in such a climax that Salim and Akbar come to blows on the battlefield. In looking at the confrontation between Salim and Akbar as a conflation of Anarkali's dance, I like to focus on the sword that Salim wields, and Akbar eventually knocks out of Salim's grip. Salim's sword makes a crucial appearance much earlier in the film when a young Salim is shown as a successful military leader before his return to Akbar's court. Here we see Salim, battle worn, inscribing lines of poetry on his sword: "This is not just a killer but a beloved as well. This is a rose-bough and a sword as well" (*yeh katil he nahain, dildar bhi hai, yeh shakh-e-gul bhi hai, tilwar bhi*). The sword is clearly conflated with the beloved and, by extension, with Anarkali. This conflation with an object not only feeds into the presentation of Anarkali as an artifice, but the conflation with an object of war, a weapon, presents her as an article of control; an artifice with which, upon which, through which, control is negotiated between Salim and Akbar. So that when Salim and Akbar come to blows on the battlefield and lock swords, it is a direct conflation of the control that the artifice of Anarkali embodies.

Death of Anarkali

After Salim's defeat, Anarkali once again barters with Akbar her future in exchange for sparing Salim. Akbar sentences Anarkali to death by commanding that she be walled-up alive (*zinda diwar main chunwa do*), but before she is taken away, he offers to fulfil any last request of hers, a favor he, as the emperor of Hindustan, grants to any individual condemned to death. Anarkali requests to become the empress of Hindustan if only for a moment. She explains that she does not want the future emperor of Hindustan (Salim) to think that he failed to protect the one he loved and so asks Akbar to pretend to have accepted their love and to send her to Salim. Once with Salim she will drug him and when he is unconscious and unable to fight for her protection she will willingly submit to her sentence. Akbar agrees and once Anarkali's plan is successful she submits herself to the palace guards. In the meantime, Anarkali's mother comes to Akbar and beseeches him to pardon her. We have seen Anarkali's mother before. At the beginning of the film, it was Anarkali's mother who had brought Akbar the news of Salim's birth and Akbar, as a reward, had promised her the fulfilment of any one request that she may make of him during her lifetime. Now Anarkali's mother reminds Akbar of his promise and beseeches his own code of justice to release Anarkali. What follows is a complicated sequence.

Anarkali is shown as being walled-up alive, but the location of her immurement is not outside the palace, but rather in the depths of it. What we see next are shots of an elaborate system of chains and pulleys which open a space through which Akbar leads Anarkali's mother to Anarkali. To all outside purposes Anarkali is walled-up alive, but as it turns out she is simply placed behind a wall that leads to a tunnel system. Anarkali's mother is allowed to lead Anarkali away on the condition that Anarkali's escape must be kept secret, especially from Salim. Before Anarkali is lead away, Akbar acknowledges the sacrifice Anarkali has made: "the history of the

Mughals will remember your favor, that you gave new life to the scions of Babar and Humayun" (*mughalon ki tarikh thumhara yeh ehsaan yad rakey gi, kay tumnay babar or Humayun ki nasaal ko ney zindagi di)*. But what is most noteworthy here is the visual of Anarkali during this entire scene. Throughout this scene, Anarkali is completely silent and only stares vaguely ahead (Figure 14) even though she is directly addressed several times.



Figure 14: Anarkali released by Akbar and led away by her mother. *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960).

Until the end of the final scene, she remains completely inert. Notice also that she is dressed completely in white. Her figure here directly evokes the doubling of the statue through which she was first introduced into the film (Figure 11). It is as if she has returned to being a statue. I argue that the ending of the film returns Anarkali to the artifice that she is in her first introduction of the film.

The ending of *Mughal-e-Azam* is commonly thought of as an 'alternative' ending since Anarkali doesn't die. Unique to this film, the 'alternative' is often thought to defy the entire narrative arch of the story. Garga, for example, claims that "in his anxiety to show Akbar as a

compassionate king, and to provide his film with a 'happy ending', Asif changed the popular legend by letting Anarkali escape through the false bottom of the wall which opens out into a tunnel," but that "this defies the internal logic of the tragic situation."[288] While it is true that the film is hyper-conscious of its depiction of Akbar and the role of justice, the alternative ending defies neither the "internal logic of the tragic situation" nor the scheme of the film. On a plot level, the fact that Anarkali does not die does not affect the tragic unfulfillment of Salim and Anarkali's love since, at the end, Salim believes that Anarkali has died. What the 'alternative' ending affords the film is a presentation of Anarkali that evokes her draw as an artifice that functions to negotiate the future of the empire.

Anarkali and Film, Anarkali in Film

To recap, in the overarching question 'what is Anarkali', the role of film is significant not because of adaptation, but because of its role as a medium in the reperformance of the Anarkali narrative. More specially, the significance lies not so much in how each film plot compares in content, but rather in how the filmic sign allows for a different kind of visibility of the narrative; an opportunity to literally see elements of the narrative that hitherto had only simmered below the surface. The study of these elements I approach through the three salient features I delineate as the draw of Anarkali, the dance of Anarkali and the death of Anarkali. Each of these features essentially center Anarkali in an arena that negotiates the boundaries of agency and control, not just hers, but also Akbar's and Salim's. Furthermore, each of these features brings to the visible surface of the film screen both the artifice and the liminality of Anarkali. The potency of Anarkali as an artifice of liminality has always been, from the very first accounts, part of what

[288] Garga 1996, 176.

makes the performance of her narrative so effective and persistent, but it is only brought to the visible forefront in the performance of the narrative on screen. As an artifice of liminality, we see how Anarkali literally stands in the volatile space between Akbar and Salim. In discussing the film genre of Muslim Historicals that feature Mughal emperors, Bhaskar and Allen suggest that these films are essentially an anti-colonial gesture and that "the 'great Mughal'-Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan-became a symbolic location of ethical and moral values, military and political power, and justice, as well as a high level of cultural, social and artistic development."[289] I suggest something quite similar in understanding Anarkali. She too is a "symbolic location," a setting for the interpersonal space between Akbar and Salim, one that is a fault line for the boundaries between emperor and heir, personal and public, order and disorder.

[289] Bhaskar and Allen 2009, 6.

Conclusion

Anarkali and Alice Revisited: Whose Dream?

At the end of Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass,* Alice returns from the world beyond the looking glass in a moment of wakefulness. Surrounded by her kittens, she questions whose dream it all was, hers or the Red King's or, if possible, both:

> "Now, Kitty, let's consider who it was that dreamed it all…You see, Kitty, it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course—but then I was part of his dream, too! *Was* it the Red King, Kitty?"[290]

No answer is, of course, given by Carroll who ends the tale with "What do *you* think it was?" As a means of a conclusion to this work, I consider here two more appearances by Anarkali. The first is an elaborate analogy in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), in which Anarkali is, so to say, the one "dreamed" of, highlighting her continued employment as a construct. The second is a 2014 graphic short story by Annie Zaidi and Mandy Ord called *Anarkali,* in which it is Anarkali that is the dreamer, a position she has never held before. We find here the spectrum of 'dreaming' Anarkali.

I consider first Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*. Rushdie's works abound with Bollywood references, but the film *Mughal-e-Azam* seems to play a particularly influential role so that whenever Rushdie invokes Anarkali, it is specifically with respect to this film. Mishra explains that "Rushdie notes this fact and recalls the impact the one-reel color sequence – the suggestively defiant dance of Anarkali in Emperor Akbar's court – in the film *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960) had on the audience."[291] Recall that due to financial restrictions, *Mughal-e-Azam* could not be released

[290] Carroll 2015, 288.

[291] Mishra 2007, 12.

fully in color and that only the dance of Anarkali (featuring the song *Pyar kya to darna kia* 'why fear to love') was given color while the rest of the film appeared in black and white. The dance of Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam*, the "one-reel color sequence," is for Rushdie a pivotal point and it is with the reperformance of this dance that he commences the analogy of Anarkali in *Shalimar the Clown*. In the novel, when the Kashmiri village of Pachigam learns of the upcoming visit by the American ambassador to India, Maximilian Ophuls, it prepares to show its cultural value through a series of performances "including, fatefully, the dance number from *Anarkali*, a new play devised by the group after the immense success of the film *Mughal-e-Azam,* which told the story of the love of Crown Prince Salim and the lowly but irresistible *nautch* girl Anarkali."[292] The girl that will perform the role of Anarkali is Boonyi. One of the central characters of the novel, Boonyi is a Hindu Kashmiri girl married to Muslim Kashmiri boy (Shalimar). But when she dances as Anarkali in front of the Max Ophuls, the American ambassador, it triggers a series of events that constitute the turn of the entire plot of the novel.

> Just as Anarkali dancing her sorceress's dance in the Sheesh Mahal, the hall of mirrors at the Mughal court, had captured Prince Salim's heart, just as Madhubala dancing in the hit movie had bewitched millions of gaping men, so Boonyi in the hunting lodge at Dachigam understood that her dance was changing her life, that what was being born in the eyes of the moonstruck American ambassador was nothing less than her own future.[293]

What is "born in the eyes of the moonstruck American ambassador" is a desire for not Boonyi alone, but for Boonyi as Anarkali. Once Boonyi performs the dance of Anarkali, she *becomes* Anarkali in an inseparable conflation that comes to define what it is that Max Ophuls sees and desires: "Then Boonyi Kaul Noman came out to dance and Max realized that his Indian destiny

[292] Rushdie 2005, 132.

[293] Rushdie 2005, 181.

would have little to do with politics, diplomacy or arms sales, and everything to do with the far more ancient imperatives of desire."[294] Boonyi, for her part, is not unaware of stepping into the role of Anarkali so that when she is called upon to visit the American ambassador in Delhi, she waits for him and his proposition "in character" as Anarkali:

> Still wearing the clothes of Anarkali, the tight high scarlet bodice that revealed the slenderness of her midriff and the muscled flatness of her belly, the wide, much-pleated dancer's skirt in emerald green silk edged in gold braid, the white tights below to preserve her modesty when the skirt fanned and flared outwards as she whirled, and the costume jewelry, the "ruby" pendant around her neck, the "golden" nose-ring, the braids of fake pearls in her hair, she sat perfectly still on the edge of her bed, staying "in character," acting the part of the great courtesan waiting for the heir to the Mughal throne.

In employing Anarkali as a "character" for Boonyi, Rushdie invokes the construct and the artifice Anarkali essentially is. But Anarkali is not only a "character" that Boonyi can assume in performance, she is a "character" that Boonyi can stay in beyond the performance, beyond the dance. Boonyi has extended her "character" as Anarkali beyond performance and into reality. And, Max Ophuls, for his part, by arranging for Boonyi to come to Delhi, by desiring her beyond the space of her performance has done the same. The collapse of the boundary between performance and reality recalls here the 'Courtesan Tale' when the *mirza's* desire for the courtesan during the musical performance is, inappropriately and dangerously, extended into reality. Moreover, Boonyi must stay "in character" as Anarkali because she cannot not; that is, it is only "in character" that Boonyi can negotiate a relationship with Max Ophuls. Boonyi, having betrayed Shalimar, takes her opportunity through Max Ophuls to experience the world beyond her Kashmiri village. In return, Boonyi understands that Max Ophuls wants her body. A mutual

[294] Rushdie 2005, 181.

agreement is reached, but when Max Ophuls begins to fall in love with Boonyi, he fails to see that her reciprocity is an artifice, an artifice of her "character:"

> …he failed to sense what she had silently been telling him from the beginning, what she assumed he knew to be a part of their hard-nosed agreement: *Don't ask for my heart, because I am tearing it out and breaking it into little bits and throwing it away so I will be heartless but you will not know it because I will be the perfect counterfeit of a loving woman and you will receive from me a perfect forgery of love.*[295]

In the "character" of Anarkali, she is the "*perfect counterfeit of a loving woman*" and as such she can offer a "*perfect forgery of love*." What is so effective about Rushdie's use of Anarkali as a "character" for Boonyi, is, as I have argued, that Anarkali has always been a "character," an artifice and that she has always been the "*perfect counterfeit of a loving woman*" and a "*perfect forgery of love*." On the most basic level Anarkali is a misuse and abuse of the female experience by the male gaze, most evident in the initial travel writings of Finch and Terry. For Finch and Terry, Anarkali is everything they can't see; that is, not only royal Mughal women, but the entirety of the royal domestic sphere. She symbolizes the limit of their access. Yet, the desire to produce *some* visibility of the royal domestic sphere leads Finch and Terry to fill their lack of visibility with imagination and heresy, the essential process of Orientalism. Anarkali, then, is both the limit of their access and the product of that very limitation, a product that works to Orientalize the domestic space shared by Akbar and Salim as one that is permeated by dysregulation. Even as this product, this Anarkali, takes on a performance in the local genres of *tarikh* (history), *qissa,* and eventually in Taj's 'drama', one essential characteristic remains unchanged: Anarkali functions as a medium to be filled in and written into. A medium that, for one, provides an access point into the heart of the Mughal world and a convenient setting for the personal space between Akbar and Salim. But, most importantly, Anarkali functions as a

[295] Rushdie 2005. 194

medium that can effectively convey the liminal fault lines between societal order and disorder, balance and imbalance. What becomes sufficiently clear is that the narrative of Anarkali was never about an independent organic entity, but rather about the mutable possibilities between the immutable realities of Akbar and Salim.

The most controversial consequence of claiming that Anarkali was never an independent organic entity brings us face to face with where we started: the tomb of Anarkali. The physical existence of the tomb has until now always served as 'evidence' for the reality of Anarkali. And even for certain contemporary ideological voices that are invested in re-claiming the tomb for Sahib-e-Jamal (one of the early wives of Salim) and purging the scandal of Anarkali that tarnishes the Mughal emperor, the tomb seems to beg the question: who is buried here? But when we allow ourselves to understand the tomb's relationship to Anarkali as one in which it is complicit in the performance of the narrative, we see that the tomb's significance in the topophilia of Lahore has little to with the historical identity of the person buried within. It is the tomb of Anarkali because that is what the city of Lahore needs it to be. Even as the performance of Anarkali spills out of the page and onto architecture, Anarkali is always what she is needed to be.

To return to Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown,* as the novel progresses, Boonyi becomes pregnant with Max Ophuls' child and Rushdie suggests that the Boonyi's "character" of Anarkali is finally broken:

> But Boonyi was no longer Anarkali, she had lost her beauty and could no longer dance, and the ambassador was nobody's son but the man of power himself. And Anarkali didn't get pregnant. Stories were stories and real life was real life, naked, ugly, and finally impossible to cosmeticize in the grease paint of a tale.[296]

[296] Rushdie 2005, 204.

Boonyi is not Anarkali because she "has lost her beauty" and can "no longer dance." And she is pregnant. To be Anarkali, then, is to be beautiful and to dance. And not to get pregnant. Here Anarkali is boiled down to her artifice, that of desired beauty and of performance. And Anarkali doesn't get pregnant because she exists in "stories." Stadtler has suggested that "while the story [of Anarkali] is a recurring motif, it is also frustrated insofar as the narrator stresses repeatedly where the analogy ends. Thus, the Anarkali story in which Boonyi envelops herself is a screen behind which she hides from reality."[297] The dichotomy here that Stadler and the narrator of the novel suggest is between the 'story' of Anarkali and the 'reality' of Boonyi. But there is conceit here, because Boonyi also doesn't not exist in real life. The layering of disrupted reality here recalls Alice's initial confusion, when she meets Tweedledum and Tweedledee, of whether she exists only in the Red King's dream. As I suggested in the introduction, even if Alice exists outside of the Red King's dream, she still exists within Carroll's imagination and production. Boonyi is just as much a story as Anarkali. And it is not so much that she steps into the character of Anarkali as that she *is* Anarkali. Boonyi is herself a character that is bound between the liminal space of Shalimar and Max Ophuls and what each represents; that is, the small Kashmiri village and the opportunity for a life beyond. She is a creation of what each of them desires her to be. Moreover, Boonyi's liminality extends beyond Shalimar and Max. She tethers the entire narrative to geo-political liminal space of Kashmir, the fraught politics of which serve as the backdrop of the novel. So that even when Rushdie tell us that Boonyi "was no longer Anarkali" she is still *an* Anarkali. And when she confronts Max Ophuls with her pregnancy, she tells him that what he sees in front of him is not her, but himself.

[297] Stadtler 2014, 167.

> Look at me, she was saying. I am your handiwork made flesh…I was honest, and you have turned me into your lie. This is not me. This is not me. This is you.[298]

Boonyi is the "handiwork" of Max Ophuls "made flesh" by his own "imperatives of desire" which is what now looks back at him: "This is you." Writing on Rushdie's reoccurring references to *Mughal-e-Azam*, Mishra concludes that "when Rushdie returns to this film [*Mughal-e-Azam*] in his novels, it is invariably to invoke the allure of Anarkali, to suggest that great moments of history are in fact moments of passion, of love, of desire unrequited and entombed."[299] I suggest a different interpretation, that Rushdie's invocation of Anarkali is less about an allure of passion and love and more about the constructs of desire. Rushdie's use of Anarkali exposes the idea that Anarkali has always been about *producing* Anarkali and the producer. She has always been the one "dreamed" of. So, I ask, what happens when Anarkali gets an opportunity to be the dreamer? What is it like to be part of Anarkali's dream? I turn here to the 2014 graphic short story by Annie Zaidi and Mandy Ord.

In 2014, editors Kristy Murray, Payal Dhar, and Anita Roy produced a compilation of collaborations between Indian and Australian writers and artists titled *Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean: Stories of Imagination and Daring*. In their introduction to the volume, the editors explain that the title suggests "impossibilities, dreams, ambitions, and a connection to something larger than humanity alone."[300] The real-world inspiration for this volume stemmed from the 2012 protests of violent crimes against young women in both India and Australia. The editors go on to say that "this collection of stories embraces the idea of not just eating pie but of taking big,

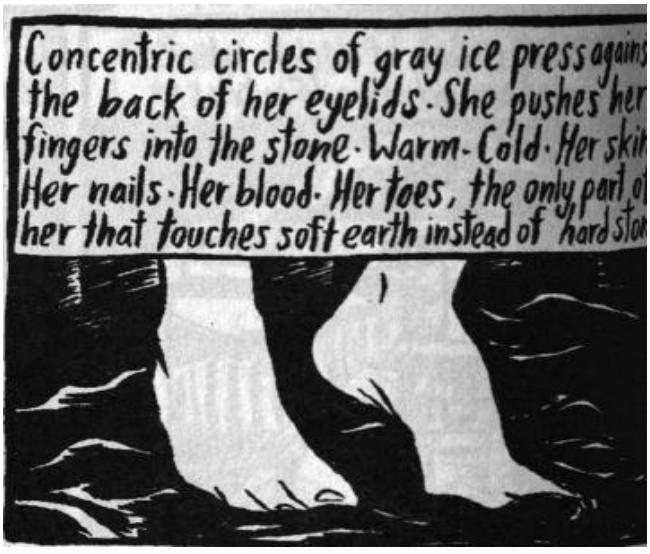
[298] Rushdie 2005, 205.

[299] Mishra 2007, 12.

[300] Murray, et al. 2014, vii.

hungry mouthfuls of life and embracing the world. It's about the desire to have and do impossible things, especially things that girls aren't meant to do" and that they asked their contributors "to reimage the world, to mess with the boundaries of the possible and the probable" especially when it comes to the fate of young women.[301] One of the contributions to this volume is a graphic short story by Annie Zaidi and Mandy Ord called *Anarkali*. Zaidi and Ord's story begins where the Anarkali *qissa* traditionally leaves off—the immurement of Anarkali—and follows her as she engineers her own escape. The significance of this production is enormous for one poignant reason: it is not a product of the male gaze, a separation that the narrative of Anarkali has never experienced. It is a reperformance, both textual and visual, that is completely independent of male contrivance, a reperformance in which the female experience, instead of being written into from the outside, is filled out from within.

At the outset of the short story, we see Anarkali from within her immurement: "She pushes her fingers into the stone. Warm. Cold. Her skin. Her nails. Her blood. Her toes, the only part of her that touches soft earth instead of hard stone."[302]



[301] Murray, et al. 2014, vii-viii.

[302] Zaidi and Ord 2014, 60.

Anarkali is no longer a medium, a vessel, to be inscribed onto, but possess organic substance: fingers, skin, nails, and blood. After Anarkali escapes (how she does so and its significance, I shall return to shortly), she finds Salim and urges him to flee with him:



The excerpt above beautifully lays out the friction of identity between Salim and Anarkali. [303] Salim is the Prince of Hindustan and future Emperor, a fact that is not susceptible to variation between the overlapping realms of history and narrative. That is, Salim cannot *not* be the Mughal prince that he was. The same applies to Akbar. It is only Anarkali that can ask the question "what am I" since only she occupies the mutable space between the immutable identities of Salim and Akbar. *What am I?* Anarkali asks not "who am I," but "what am I." This is a distinction that has been the driving impetus behind every chapter of this work, to unpack not who was Anarkali, but what is Anarkali. Anarkali's question, "what am I," is answered not by herself, but by Salim: "You are my beloved Anarkali, still alive!" Anarkali is *his* beloved.

[303] Zaidi and Ord 2014, 67.

But in this story, Salim's answer is no longer enough. For the first time, Anarkali demands more, more from Salim, but also more from herself. Anarkali looks hard at Salim and decides that now "she must take the lead" and that Salim "must follow."[304]



And what is it that allows this Anarkali to demand more from the question 'what am I'? Her means of escape. While immured, Anarkali hears a voice that resonates through the earth and stone that surrounds her. It pushes her to understand that boundaries are an artificial construct and that she is not entirely separate from the elements immuring her. The voice tells Anarkali that her power to escape lies in her will to understand this: "Everything that comes from me is me. Stone is me. Fire is me. Water is me. You are me. And if you will it, I can be you."[305]

The result is that Anarkali finds that she can walk right through the walls that surround her. The earthy voice reminds Anarkali that "once you tackle this wall, all walls will yield" so

[304] Zaidi and Ord 2014, 68.

[305] Zaidi and Ord 2014, 62.

that Anarkali is able to move through all walls of the palace and beyond.[306] But it is not just the walls of her immurement and the palace that Anarkali is moving beyond. In escaping her immurement, Anarkali essentially escapes the elements of the contrived narrative that has produced and contained her for so long. Annie Zaidi and Mandy Ord bestow a moment of transcendence on Anarkali within and without the narrative where her female experience is finally untethered from the male-gaze.

And where does Anarkali go once untethered? In the graphic short story, she leads Salim far away to where "she will find valleys, rivers, forests full of fruit ad meat" for them because "it will be a long time before Salim can walk through walls himself."[307] Salim might not be able to walk through walls, but Anarkali now is. And where she goes is not simply beyond the palace. She boldly chooses to step out of her long-designated space between Akbar and Salim.

[306] Zaidi and Ord 2014, 62.

[307] Zaidi and Ord 2014, 69.

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