MYSTICAL LANGUAGE OF LOVE IN HAMZAH FANSURI'S POETRY: SUFI POETICS IN THE 16TH-CENTURY MALAY WORLD

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Kris Ramlan

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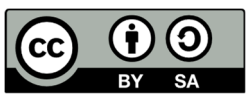

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the mystical poetics of love in the works of Hamzah Fansuri (fl. 16th century), widely regarded as the earliest Sufi poet of the Malay world and a foundational figure in Southeast Asian Islamic intellectual history. Through close textual analysis, lexical comparison, and intertextual study, it demonstrates that Hamzah's writings are not mere adaptations of universal Sufi themes but constitute a distinctively Malay articulation of Akbarian metaphysics. His plurilingual idiom, shaped primarily through Malay and Arabic with traces of Persian and Sanskrit, serves as a performative medium for mystical ontology. Within this idiom, poetic sound, metaphor, and structural recursion function both as aesthetic expression and as epistemic disclosure.

The study is divided into two parts. Part I reconstructs Hamzah's intellectual formation and literary milieu, reassessing his chronology and situating his work within transregional Sufi networks and manuscript traditions. Part II offers the first sustained reading of love in his corpus, developing a typology across three registers—ontological, transformative, and experiential—each underpinned by a lexical-symbolic stratum. It further reconstructs the semantic field of Hamzah's love lexicon within the wider Malay literary archive, demonstrates how poetic form itself operates as metaphysical pedagogy, and reframes the translation of Arabic Sufi terminology into Malay as a performative act of interlingual mystical articulation. The study also introduces the concept of symbolic transposition to explain how Hamzah reoriented select pre-Islamic motifs toward an Islamic metaphysics of Being and love.

The findings show that Hamzah's poetics enact rather than merely describe mystical realities. His verse creates a literary space in which divine love is experienced as the mode by which Being manifests, veils, and reveals itself. By transposing Sufi metaphysics into Malay, Hamzah expanded its expressive range as a vehicle for mystical thought and positioned Malay literature within a broader cosmopolitan tradition of Islamic poetics.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Ar	Arabic language
Cod. Or. 2016	*Codex Orientalis Leiden no. 2016*
EI2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed.*
EI3	*Encyclopaedia of Islam, 3rd ed.*
EnI	*Encyclopaedia Islamica*
H.	Hikayat
JMBRAS	*Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*
KBBI	*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*
KBMN	*Kamus Bahasa Melayu Nusantara*
KDE4	*Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat*
KDP	*Kamus Dewan Perdana*
K.	Kitāb
Lane	E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon, 8 vols.*
Lit	Literal translation
Mal.	Malay language
MCP	Malay Concordance Project
MS	Manuscript
OJED	P.J. Zoetmulder, and S.O. Robson, *Old Javanese-English Dictionary*.
Pl.	Plural
R.	Risālah
Sing.	Singular
Steingass	Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English*.
Transl.	Translated by
Wilkinson	R. J. Wilkinson. *A Malay-English Dictionary*, 1901; Online, 1926, 1932.

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND USAGE

The transliteration of Arabic in this dissertation follows the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)*:

- **Consonants:** ʾ, b, t, th, j, ḥ, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ẓ, ʿ, gh, f, q, k, l, m, n, w, y.
- **Tāʾ marbūṭa:** rendered as *-a* (or *-at* in the construct state).
- **Vowels:** long vowels ā, ī, ū; short vowels a, i, u.
- **Diphthongs:** *ay*, *aw*.
- **Definite article:** *al-* and *ʾl-*.
- **Proper names:** widely recognized personal names (e.g. Muhammad, Hamzah Fansuri) and common English renderings (e.g. Qur'an, Sufism) are cited without transliteration.

Dates are given according to the Gregorian calendar. To reduce clutter, Hijri equivalents are not provided in parallel, except where directly relevant—for instance, the funerary stele of Shaykh Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Fanṣūrī.

Qurʾanic citations are based primarily on the translation of A. J. Arberry, with reference also to *Saheeh International* where interpretive nuance is relevant.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Hamzah Fansuri's poetry are my own.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Earliest known Malay Sufi poetry

Hamzah Fansuri is widely recognized as the earliest known Sufi poet in the Malay world and as a foundational figure in Southeast Asian Islamic intellectual history.[1] He is believed to have lived between the mid-15th and early 16th centuries,[2] contributing significantly to the integration of Sufi metaphysical thought into Malay literary traditions. His works, transmitted across generations, shaped the development of Malay Sufi poetry and remain central to the study of Islamic mysticism in the region.[3]

Although polemical accusations of pantheism or 'heresy were directed at him, Hamzah's influence remains evident in the surviving manuscript transmission of his works, limited though it is, and in his frequent citation in later texts.[4] His poetry integrates universal Sufi

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[1] See Doorenbos, 1933, 1; al-Attas, 1970, 30; Ali Hasjmy, 1984 5–7; Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 4–5; Sweeney, 1988, 88; Teeuw, 1994, 54; Johns, 2009, 148; Ismail, 1997, 207; Braginsky, 1999, 136; Abdul Hadi, 2001, 3; El-Muhammady, 2004, 38; Riddell, 2004, xii; Lombard, 2005, 151; Mira, 2014, 289; Mardinal, 2016, 1; Riddell, 2017, 21–33; Miswari, 2023, 195–6.

These works, spanning disciplines such as philology, literary studies, Islamic studies, intellectual history, and Sufi metaphysics, underscore Hamzah Fansuri's significance as a foundational figure in the Malay literary and Islamic intellectual tradition.

[2] See Perret, *EI3* s.v. *Batak*. I discuss this in greater detail in Chapter 2.7, where I examine recent studies that propose an earlier dating for Hamzah Fansuri's lifetime, in contrast to the commonly accepted timeframe of the mid-16th to early 17th century.

[3] See Braginsky, 2004, 278 and *passim*; Johns, 2017, xii. M. Bukhari notes that while the volume of Hamzah's contributions may be small, their impact on subsequent generations of Malay Muslims is undeniably significant (1994, 279).

[4] See Baroroh, 1995, 106–8; Azyumardi, 2004, 52–3. Both cite R. O. Winstedt, "Some Malay Mystics, Heretical and Orthodox," *JMBRAS* 1 (1923): 312–18. See also van Nieuwenhuijze, *Samsu'l-Din van Pasai: Bijdrage tot de kennis der Sumatraansche Mystiek* (Leiden: Brill, 1945); and A. H. Johns, "Aspects of Sufi Thought in India and

themes with Malay literary forms, notably adapting the *syair* structure as a vehicle for mystical expression. Writing in Malay, which was the lingua franca of maritime Southeast Asia from the 15th to the 18th centuries, Hamzah rendered advanced metaphysical teachings intelligible to diverse audiences.[5] The widespread use of Malay, evidenced in early 16th-century diplomatic correspondence,[6] enabled his teachings to circulate across scholarly and non-scholarly networks.

Teeuw argues that Hamzah's innovation lies in his use of *syair*, traditionally employed for narrative and didactic purposes, to express mystical experience.[7] Hamzah's poetry serves both as spiritual instruction and as a reflection of personal mystical realization, urging readers and listeners toward inner transformation. This use of poetry to express inner truths reflects a long-standing Sufi practice, where verse serves as a privileged medium for articulating mystical experience and unveiling divine realities.[8] Riddell likewise emphasizes the symbolic and lyrical strategies through which Hamzah conveys metaphysical insight in terms accessible to

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Indonesia in the First Half of the 17th Century," *JMBRAS* 28, no. 1 (1955): 70–77. Similarly, M. I. Marcinkowski, in "Southeast Asia," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., 2020, reproduces labels such as 'heterodox' and 'pantheist.' However, these authors generally fail to critically engage with the loaded nature of these terms in Islamic intellectual history or to examine Hamzah's writings in depth.

[5] On Malay as a lingua franca, see Collins, 1998, 25–27; Adelaar et al., 1996, 2–3; On its early use in diplomatic letters, see A. T. Gallop, "A *Jawi* Sourcebook for the Study of Malay Palaeography and Orthography," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 43, no. 125 (2015): 19.

[6] For example, in its use in diplomatic letters sent by the Sultan of Ternate to the Portuguese king in 1521 and 1522. The Malay letters are now kept in Lisbon, Torre do Tombo, Reforma das Gavetas, liv. 30, f.132 and 133, in A.T. Gallop and E. U. Kratz, *The legacy of the Malay letter. London: British Library,* 1994, 123.

[7] See Teeuw, 1994, 51–64.

[8] Schimmel notes that Sufi poetry, 'became a medium in which the poets tried to circumscribe the essence of the mystical Beloved by applying to Him symbols from the world of the senses,' (Schimmel, 1982, 81). See also Lings, who describes the Sufi poet as one who expresses 'His own direct experience of the divine' through 'symbolic language' (Lings, 2004, xi).

Malay audience.[9] Al-Attas considers him the first to formulate Sufi metaphysics in Malay, establishing both mystical poetry and 'speculative' prose as foundations for rational inquiry in the literary tradition.[10] By 'speculative,' I mean a mode of writing that integrates discursive analysis with mystical experience, making thought a site for reflecting on its own limits and striving beyond them in continual renewal.[11] Together, these perspectives highlight Hamzah's dual role as literary innovator and metaphysical thinker.

A distinguishing feature of Hamzah's oeuvre is his plurilingual poetic mode, integrating Arabic Sufi terminology into Malay verse. By 'plurilingual,' I refer to the deliberate interplay of Arabic and Malay within a single literary framework, where each language contributes semantically, symbolically, and theologically. I use 'plurilingual' to denote not mere bilingual alternation but the dynamic co-presence of multiple linguistic resources within a single textual practice. Salvaggio observes that medieval Islamic multilingualism was often viewed as divinely ordained;[12] in this context, Hamzah's plurilingual strategy articulates a metaphysical vision where linguistic diversity reflects spiritual unity. He juxtaposes semantically resonant terms from Arabic and Malay, such as *wujūd* and *ada*, and *ʿadam* and *adamu*, to construct a layered poetics of metaphysical correspondence. These pairings function not simply as lexical borrowings but as devices that intensify meaning through phonetic resonance and existential

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[9] See Riddell, 2001, 106–8.

[10] See Al-Attas, 1970, x.

[11] See Vandamme, 2023, 2. In his study of Ibn ʿArabi's work, Vandamme characterizes 'speculative mysticism' as a mode that does not merely recount visionary experience or confess its ineffability but rather incorporates rigorous analysis and philosophical reflection as intrinsic to the mystical path. See also pp. 196–197 of this dissertation, where I discuss *naẓar* and the speculative gaze.

[12] See Salvaggio, 2021, 5–6.

layering. Meyer observes that Hamzah's use of punning and polysemy does not attempt to reproduce Arabic thought verbatim but instead embodies a dynamic act of translation, an adaptation that transmits metaphysical insight by transforming it into a new linguistic and literary form.[13]

Hamzah's writings mark a turning point in the articulation of Sufi metaphysics in the Malay language. In his treatise *The Drinks for Lovers*, he explicitly calls for accessible spiritual discourse:[14]

> Know that this poor and insignificant Hamzah Fansuri wishes to elucidate the way to God the glorious and most exalted, and the gnosis of God… in the Malay language… so that all the servant-devotees of God who do not know Arabic or Persian may discourse upon it.

This linguistic and epistemic intervention challenges the conventional framing of the Malay-speaking world as peripheral to the Muslim intellectual tradition.[15] While engaging deeply with the 'cosmopolitan system' of Islamic knowledge, Hamzah localized its teachings to resonate with Southeast Asian audiences.[16] Tee posits that Hamzah's use of Malay for Sufi metaphysics also drew upon epistemological categories already embedded in Malay from earlier Srivijayan

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[13] See Meyer, 2019, 354–56.

[14] The complete paragraph: '*Ketahui bahwa* faqīr ḍaʿīf *Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī hendak menyatakan jalan kepada* Allāh subḥānahu wa taʿālā *dan* maʿrifat Allāh *dengan bahasa Jāwī dalam kitab ini*, inshā Allāh*, supaya segala hamba* Allāh *yang tiada tahu akan bahasa* ʿArab *dan bahasa* Fārisī *supaya dapat memicarakan dia*.' In Hamzah Fansuri, *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn* (*The Drinks for Lovers*), in al-Attas, 1970, 297.

[15] See Azyumardi, 2004, 2.

[16] See Gade and Feener, 2004, 187.

and Hindu-Buddhist traditions, thereby deepening the resonance of his writings for local audiences.[17]

His works exemplify what Appiah terms 'rooted cosmopolitanism,'[18] an approach that sustains attachment to local cultural forms while participating in transregional traditions. Lawrence's notion of 'Islamicate cosmopolitanism,' which highlights how Islamic intellectual practices adapt across cultural contexts, provides a further lens through which to understand Hamzah's project.[19] By employing Malay for the articulation of Sufi metaphysics, Hamzah inaugurated a literary model that enabled later writers to advance Islamic philosophy and theology in the region.[20]

Hamzah's poetry and prose synthesize multiple discursive traditions, engaging with Qur'anic exegesis, Arabic grammar, Persian poetic tropes, and the metaphysical teachings of Ibn ʿArabi and his school,[21] commonly known as Akbarian tradition.[22] His works contributed decisively

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[17] See Tee, 2024, 155 and passim. Tee highlights Hamzah's use of categories such as *śabda* (sayings of God and the Prophet, authoritative and beyond debate) and *kata* (sayings of philosophers or Sufis, open to interpretation); *nama* (name) and *rupa* (form); and *berahi* (love, passion) contrasted with *buddi* (reason). These linguistic categories, inherited from Sanskritic epistemology, provided Hamzah with a framework for articulating Islamic metaphysics in a Malay idiom. The opposition between *berahi* and *buddi* is discussed Chapter 4.3.1 (p.145) of this dissertation.

[18] See Appiah, 1998, 91.

[19] See Lawrence, "Overview: A Manifesto in Three Words and Six Chapters," 2021, n.p.; see also Gade and Feener, 2004, 187.

[20] See Riddell, 2017, 29–33.

[21] See al-Attas, 1970, 14 and *passim*; Abdul Hadi, 2001, 32 and *passim*; Johns, 1990, 325; Riddell, 2001, 105, 115, 122.

[22] Ibn ʿArabi, revered by those following the Sufi path as 'The Greatest Master' (al-Shaykh al-Akbar), is one of Islam's most influential and controversial thinkers (Ibrahim, 2020, 4). Muhammad Bukhari (1994, xiv) notes that

to the formation of a Malay Sufi literary canon and expanded the region's engagement with speculative Islamic thought. The following chapters explore his life, corpus, and poetic strategies, situating his contribution within broader trajectories of Islamic intellectual history.

1.2 Themes of love and knowledge

At the core of Hamzah's poetry lies an exploration of love and knowledge as interdependent paths to divine recognition. Love, is not merely emotional but ontological: a primordial force that initiates creation and sustains existence.[23] This understanding draws from the non-canonical but well-known *ḥadīth qudsī*:[24]

> 'I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known, so I created creation in order to be known.'[25]

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nearly all major Sufi lineages after Ibn ʿArabi recognize him as the Supreme Master and follow his teachings This legacy gave rise to the 'Akbarian' school of Sufism.

[23] See Ayad, 2024; Ibrahim, 2022; Safi, 2018; Ahmed, 2016; Shaikh, 2012; Leonard Lewisohn, "Divine Love in Islam," in *Encyclopaedia of Love in World Religions*, ed. Yudit Kornberg Greenberg (2008); Peter Lamborn Wilson and Nasr Allah Purjavadi, *The Drunken Universe* (1987); Chittick, 1983.

For discussions on Malay literature and arts, see Abdul Hadi W.M., *Hermeneutika, Estetika, Dan Religiusitas: Esai-Esai Sastra Sufistik Dan Seni Rupa* (2016); Abdul Hadi W.M., *Islam: Cakrawala Estetik Dan Budaya* (2000); Braginsky, 1993.

[24] A *ḥadīth qudsī* (sacred narration) is a category of *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet Muhammad conveys words from God, distinct from the Qur'an. These sayings reveal divine messages but are expressed in the Prophet's words. Unlike the Qur'an, which is the direct word of God in its entirety, *ḥadīth qudsī* offers insight into God's attributes and relationship with creation, often focusing on themes of love, mercy, and spiritual guidance.

[25] See the poems by Hamzah Fansuri where he explicitly cted this *ḥadīth* in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 62, 80, 120, and 128. For discussion on Ibn ʿArabi citing the 'Hidden Treasure' *ḥadīth*, see Ibrahim, 2022; Kautsar, 2008, 81; Chittick 1989, 2013a, 2013b, 2014. See p.116 in this dissertation for further discussion.

Hamzah's lexicon for love is plurilingual, integrating Arabic and Malay terms to articulate the spectrum of mystical experience. Central is *ʿishq*, an intense and annihilating love that he renders in Malay as *berahi*. He identifies it as the highest degree of love attainable by the seeker. This resonates with Safi's interpretation of *ʿishq* as 'radical love,'[26] a consuming force that obliterates egocentricity,[27] drowns[28] the lover in the divine beloved, and draws the seeker ever closer. It also recalls Zargar's reading of ʿAttar, who situates *ʿishq* at the heart of the *madhhab-i ʿishq* ('School of Love'), a Persianate intellectual current[29] in which *ʿishq* is not 'a path of sentimentality,'[30] but a transformative discipline of the self and a cosmological principle. In this tradition, love is an epistemology and ethos that reorients devotion beyond juridical rigor, while also functioning as the very impulse of existence itself.[31] By drawing on the symbolic and semantic resonances of *ʿishq*, Hamzah situates his poetics within this transregional tradition that treats love simultaneously as method, unveiling, and ontological ground.

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[26] See Safi, 2018, xx–xxi. Zargar explains that the term *ʿishq* denotes an intense, all-consuming, and at times even libidinous form of love (Zargar 2024, 89).

[27] See Zargar, 2024, 4.

[28] The metaphor of being drown in water, in ocean, and in blood in Farid al-Din Attar's poems translated in Safi 2018, 45, 142, 205.

[29] See Zargar, 2024, 86.

[30] See Safi in the front matter of Zargar, 2024, n.p.

[31] Zargar, 2024, 40–1, 85–87. Zargar emphasizes that the *madhhab-i ʿishq*, or 'School of Love,' is best understood as an ethical and aesthetic orientation, rather than a formal doctrine, shared by Persian Sufi thinkers such as Ahmad al-Ghazali, Sanaʾi, and ʿAttar, in which *ʿishq* functions as a force of both self-transformation and spiritual insight.

His poetry also reflects the Sufi epistemology of self-knowledge, drawing on the Prophetic saying 'Whosoever knows himself, knows his Lord.'[32] Hamzah links gnosis (*maʿrifa*) to *berahi* or *ʿishq*, suggesting that only through radical love can one truly recognize the soul's dependence on divine being (*wujūd*).

In this dissertation, I translate *nafs* as 'soul,' and depending on context, I describe its egoic dimension as 'self' or 'ego,' to highlight the psychological aspect that must be effaced in *fanāʾ*. The Malay *diri*, often paired with *nafs* in Hamzah's poetry, is accordingly rendered as 'self,' reflecting its resonance with ego, selfhood, and constructed identity. By contrast, *rūḥ* is translated as 'spirit,' the divine principle breathed into the human being, which abides in orientation toward its source. divine breath that remains oriented toward its source. Finally, I use 'Self' only for God's Self, which Ibn ʿArabi identifies as God's own Self-knowledge, inseparable from His Essence (*dhāt*).[33]

He distinguishes between *tahu* (to know) and *kenal* (to recognize or re-cognize),[34] aligning the former with discursive knowledge (*ʿilm*) and the latter with experiential gnosis (*maʿrifa*).[35] Drawing on the everyday yet profound semantic range of *kenal*, Hamzah's usage resonates with

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[32] Hamzah Fansuri frequently references this *ḥadīth* in his poems, either fully in Arabic, partially translated into Malay, or citing only fragments in Malay. In this line, he cites it in full: *Man ʿarafa nafsaha, sabda baginda rasūl / Fa-qad ʿarafa rabbahu //,* Poem III, quatrain 12, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 50.

[33] See Chittick, 1989, 38 (citing Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* III 44.24) for the identification of God's Self with His knowledge. On *nafs* and *rūḥ* in Akbarian thought, see especially Chittick, 17, 62, 65–68, 84, 116, 159–63, 166–70, 218–22, 270–71, 305, 337, 359–60; Armstrong-Chishti, 167–70.

[34] Poem III, quatrain 15, line 4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82.

[35] See al-Attas (1970, 98) for an explanation of Hamzah's distinction between *kenal* and *tahu* within Sufi hierarchies of knowledge. In Hamzah's prose works, *kenal* reflects *maʿrifah*—a profound, direct realization of divine truth—while *tahu* corresponds to *ʿilm* (intellectual knowledge), often mediated through reason or learning.

Chittick's interpretation of *maʿrifa* as 'recognition' in the sense of 're-cognizing,' which is a return to what the soul already knows inwardly.[36] His verse, *Kenal dirimu hai anak ʿālim* (Recognize yourself, O member of the learned),[37] thus becomes a call for those trained in rational knowledge to seek deeper, inward realization.

This vision is conveyed through layered symbols: fire represents annihilating love; the ocean, its boundlessness; drunkenness, the ecstatic dissolution of self, ego and self-regard; bridal attire, the encounter with the divine beloved. Mythical imagery such as fish and birds evokes the seeker's spiritual ascension, while elemental and alchemical symbols—light, water, earth, gold, and wind—mark stages of the Sufi path, culminating in the recognition of God's Oneness (*tawḥīd*)[38] by the gnostic (*ʿārif*). The recurring motif of the oceanic voyage captures this process of unveiling (*kashf*), which deepens recognition and draws the seeker closer to gnosis.

Etymologically, the Arabic root *ʿ-r-f*, shared by the words *ʿārif* (gnostic), *maʿrifa* (gnosis), and *ʿarafa* (to know, to perceive),[39] indicates the intrinsic link between knowledge and recognition. Another term within this semantic field, *ʿarf* (fragrance), adds a sensory dimension, linking knowledge to the act of detection. In Sufi teachings, this association signifies the moment of

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[36] Chittick translates the Sufi technical term *maʿrifa* as 'recognition,' emphasizing its contrast with *ʿilm* (learned knowledge). He explains that its basic sense is to 're-cognize,' that is, to come once again to see what one already knows and associates this inward recognition with the realization of truth already present in the soul. See Chittick in Maybudi and Chittick, 2014, 4–5.

[37] Poem X, quatrain 11, line 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 72.

[38] I follow Ibrahim's translation of *tawḥīd* (Ibrahim, 2022, 86n.26).

[39]Lane, s.v. *ʿarf* (*ʿarafa*). Lane explains the root of *ʿarafa* as 'I found, or experienced, its *ʿarf,* i.e. odor,'

realization, where divine knowledge is not merely conceptual but directly perceived and embodied.[40]

Hamzah's writings stand within the Akbarian metaphysical tradition, particularly the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Oneness of Being), which views all existence as a reflection of divine self-disclosure (*tajallī*).[41] While he does not employ the term directly, its principles inform his portrayal of the lover, the beloved, and love itself as ultimately one.[42] In his seminal study on Hamzah's writings, al-Attas translates *waḥdat al-wujūd* as 'transcendent unity of existence,' emphasizing that while all things manifest the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*),[43] God remains ontologically distinct.[44] This formulation avoids conflating Hamzah's thought with pantheism or monism.

Although Hamzah's legacy is widely acknowledged, comprehensive analysis of his full poetic corpus remains limited. This dissertation addresses that gap by examining the lexical, symbolic, and metaphysical registers of love in his poetry, and by offering new insights into how Hamzah frames divine love as primordial, cosmic and an embodied mystical experience.[45]

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[40] For further discussion of the methodological approach to hermeneutics in the school of Ibn 'Arabi, see the Methodology subsection in this chapter.

[41] See Bashier (2004, 5) in his elucidation of Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of the Oneness of Being.

[42] Abdul Hadi cites an early study by Johns (1957, 21, 31), who posits that the term *waḥdat* is rarely used by Hamzah Fansuri. It appears more frequently in the works of his Shams al-Din al-Sumatra'i, (Abdul Hadi, 2001, 184). In Drewes and Brakel's edition of Hamzah's poems (Drewes and Brakel, 1986), as well as in Abdul Hadi's edition, the poems containing the term *waḥdat* are attributed to his later followers.

[43] *Al-Ḥaqq* is one of the names of God in the Qur'an and is one of the preferred terms Ibn 'Arabi and his school use to describe God as Absolute Reality.

[44] See al-Attas, 1986, 43–44.

[45] These themes are discussed in Braginsky, 1993, and Abdul Hadi, 2001.

1.3 Research objectives and questions

This study examines the layers of meaning in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry, with particular attention to his diverse expressions of divine love. Through close analysis of his metaphysical and symbolic language, it seeks to provide new insights into Hamzah's articulation of love and its role in unifying his mystical and metaphysical framework.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

i. How does Hamzah Fansuri present love as a central theme in his poetry?
ii. What are the defining characteristics of love in Hamzah's works, and how are they expressed in his poetic language?
iii. What metaphysical symbols and metaphors of love does Hamzah employ, and how do they extend or challenge existing scholarly discussions?
iv. How does Hamzah use divine love to integrate the metaphysical and mystical elements of his poetry, and what role does this integration play in his broader Sufi thought?

1.4 Literature review

Scholarly engagement with Hamzah Fansuri's works has often examined the role of love in his poetry and prose, particularly in relation to *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and the stages of *fanāʾ* (self-annihilation), constant connection (*wiṣāl*), and *baqāʾ* (subsistence with the Beloved). This section reviews key studies that have contributed to understanding love as a transformative and metaphysical force in Hamzah's thought.

The selected studies encompass diverse perspectives, addressing textual authenticity, metaphysical frameworks, poetic symbolism, and Hamzah's integration of Malay literary

aesthetics with Sufi philosophy. While these works underscore Hamzah's engagement with love as a mystical theme, they also reveal gaps, particularly in the literary, symbolic, and experiential dimensions of love. This dissertation builds upon these studies by exploring divine love as a unifying principle in Hamzah's metaphysics and poetic expression.

1. Johan Doorenbos, *De Geschriften Van Hamzah Pansoeri* (1933)

Doorenbos focuses on the textual authenticity of Hamzah's works, providing transcriptions of his poetry and two prose works, *Asrār al-ʿārifīn* (*The Secret of the Gnostics*) and *Sharāb al-ʿāshiqīn* (*The Drink of Lovers*). His edition was important in preserving these texts for future scholarship. Doorenbos emphasized philological and textual concerns, particularly the preservation of linguistic and stylistic details in Hamzah's Malay writings. He addressed issues such as orthography and textual variants, offering insights into the manuscripts' historical contexts and their compilation. However, his analysis does not engage deeply with Hamzah's mystical themes, including love, nor does it examine the literary structures of his poetry. He highlights Persian Sufi influences, but he does not explore Malay poetics and literary practices.

2. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī* ([1966] 1970)

Al-Attas provides a significant contribution to the study of Hamzah Fansuri's metaphysical thought. He provides an improved edition of three key prose works: *Asrār al-ʿārifīn* (*The Secret of the Gnostics*), *Sharāb al-ʿāshiqīn* (*The Drink of Lovers*), and *al-Muntahī* (*The Adept*). He highlights the role of love (Ar. *ʿishq*, Mal. *berahi*) as a transformative condition through which reason is transcended and gnosis attained. Situating Hamzah within the Akbarian school, al-Attas explores the relationship between divine love, *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and mystical knowledge.

His focus, however, remains on doctrinal and metaphysical aspects rather than poetic expressions of love.

3. Ali Hasjmy, *Rubaʿi Hamzah Fansuri: Karya Sastra Sufi Abad Ke XVII* ([1974] 1976)

A. Hasjmy transcribes and publishes 42 quatrains (*rubaʿī*) attributed to Hamzah, alongside commentary (*sharḥ*) by Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi (d. 1630),[46] preserved in a manuscript from Tiro, Aceh. Shams al-Din's commentary elaborates on Hamzah's metaphysical doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* and discusses his use of symbolic language, such as the metaphors of the ocean and waves. A. Hasjmy contextualizes Hamzah's *rubaʿī* within the broader Islamic intellectual tradition and the Malay literary heritage, highlighting the synthesis between universal Sufi ideas and local Malay cultural expressions. While he acknowledges love's (*ʿishq*) significance in Hamzah's thought, he does not explore its nuances or literary articulation.

4. G. W. J. Drewes and L. F. Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri* (1986)

Drewes and Brakel's critical edition remains a key reference in Malay literary studies, presenting 472 quatrains across 32 poems, accompanied by transliterations, annotations, and English translations. Their work highlights the influence of Arabic and Persian in Hamzah's poetry and emphasizes his engagement with Sufi themes.

[46] Also spelt as Shams al-Dīn al-Samatrānī or Syamsuddin of Pasai.

Despite its importance, the edition has faced criticism, particularly regarding its translation choices and editorial methodology. Johns[47] critiques their rendering of key theological terms, particularly *ithbāt* (affirmation) and *nafī* (negation), arguing that mistranslations weaken the theological depth of *tawḥīd*.[48] In Sufi thought, true *tawḥīd* requires both the negation of falsehood and the affirmation of divine reality, as reflected in the *shahāda* (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*: there is no god but God). Johns contends that the loss of this parallelism in translation diminishes theological coherence and poetic impact. He highlights this particularly in Poem XV, where Hamzah expresses *tawḥīd* through symmetrical negation and affirmation.[49] Johns further argues that Drewes and Brakel's translation disrupts the *pantun*-like parallelism of the original, misrepresenting the contrast between *ithbāt* and *nafī*. As a result, the translation fails to convey the poem's balance and theological subtlety. He suggests that a more structurally faithful rendering would better preserve the spiritual logic embedded in the verse.[50]

Sweeney similarly observes that the translation overlooks the linguistic and spiritual subtleties of Hamzah's poetry, simplifying its intricate wordplay and metaphysical depth.[51] Both commentators highlight how rigid application of European philological methods risks distorting the cultural and mystical dimensions of Malay Sufi traditions.

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[47] See Johns, 1990, 328.

[48] Poem XV, quatrain 8 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 88-89: *Hunuskan mata tunukan sarung / Ithbātkan Allāh napikan patung / Laut tawḥīd yogia kau harung / Itulah ilmu tempat bernaung* // Translation by Drewes and Brakel: 'Draw the blade and burn the sheath, / Affirm God and forswear the idols, / Take to the Ocean of Unity, / That is the knowledge which provides shelter.' //

[49] Ibid.

[50] For a detailed analysis of this quatrain's linguistic structure and theological implications, see Section 3.2.3

[51] See Sweeney, 1992, 95–6.

Another major critique concerns the editors' reordering of Hamzah's poems. Muhammad Bukhari and Abdul Hadi argue that this rearrangement disregards the traditional manuscript sequence, disrupting the progressive spiritual development embedded in Hamzah's poetry.[52] They contend that such restructuring neglects established transmission practices of Malay manuscripts and alters the poetic progression that mirrors stages of mystical realization.

Despite these critiques, the edition remains a valuable scholarly reference. It offers a comprehensive bibliography, detailed annotations, and appendices on Malay commentaries, Javanese interpretations, and Arabic influences. Drewes and Brakel's selection criteria for authenticity, based on stylistic analysis, and metaphysical and theological terminology, led them to exclude several poems, including the famous *Syair Perahu* ('Poem of the Boat'), previously published by Doorenbos. While some consider the poem authentic, Drewes and Brakel argue it is likely a pastiche. Teuw accepts their philological reasoning but leaves room for reassessment should new manuscript evidence emerge.[53]

Further critiques focus on transcription accuracy and editorial apparatus. Sweeney notes inconsistencies in transliteration and gaps in the *apparatus criticus*, particularly its failure to account for many variant readings. These limitations reduce its reliability for reconstructing Hamzah's corpus.[54]

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[52] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 199; M. Bukhari, 1994, 280.

[53] See Teeuw, 1994, 50.

[54] See Sweeney, 1992, 89, 93–5, 98.

In sum, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri* remains an indispensable reference. It resolves numerous textual ambiguities and provides essential bibliographic tools. Yet the challenges of translating Hamzah's richly layered poetry highlight the need for continued research into its metaphysical, theological, linguistic, and symbolic dimensions.

5. Muhamad Bukhari Lubis, *The Ocean of Unity: Waḥdat al-Wujūd in Persian, Turkish, and Malay Poetry* ([1989]1994)

Muhamad Bukhari examines *waḥdat al-wujūd* as a guiding framework in Hamzah's work, analyzing metaphors that illustrate the relationship between God and creation. He highlights comparisons such as gemstone and brilliance, or gold and coins, alongside the recurring metaphor of the ocean and waves. He notes Hamzah's use of these metaphors to articulate the 'intimate relationship such as, for example, servant and Lord, lover and Beloved.'[55] However, his study does not engage extensively with divine love as an independent theme, instead situating Hamzah within a broader *waḥdat al-wujūd* tradition.

6. Wan Mohd Shaghir Abdullah, *Tafsir Puisi Hamzah Fansuri dan Karya-Karya Shufi* (1996)

Wan Mohd Shaghir transcribes a commentary (*sharḥ*) by Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi on a poem by Hamzah, analyzing its textual transmission. His work contextualizes Hamzah's influence within the Malay-Islamic intellectual tradition, comparing manuscript variants and

[55] See M. Bukhari, 1994, 288.

emphasizing linguistic and poetic innovations.[56] In his preface, Wan Mohd Shaghir situates Hamzah's works and their commentaries within the broader Malay-Islamic intellectual framework, underscoring their connections to Arabic and Persian Sufi traditions. This synthesis of local and universal elements highlights Hamzah's significance as a figure who bridges regional and global Islamic intellectual traditions. While his study sheds light on Hamzah's metaphysical ideas, it does not directly address divine love as a primary theme.

7. Vladimir I. Braginsky, *Tasawuf dan Sastera Melayu* (1993); *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature* (2004).

Braginsky explores Hamzah's symbolic and mystical language, treating love as one of several themes tied to *waḥdat al-wujūd*. His analysis highlights Hamzah's synthesis of Malay aesthetics with Persian Sufi influences but does not treat love as an independent theme. While he acknowledges its significance, he prioritizes Hamzah's poetic symbols as vehicles for metaphysical unity rather than as expressions of divine love. For an extended critique and reappraisal of Braginsky's readings of Hamzah's poetics, see Part 2: Overview.

8. Abdul Hadi W. M., *Tasawuf yang Tertindas* (2001)

Abdul Hadi presents love as the foundation of Hamzah's Sufi worldview, framing it as the transformative force driving the seeker's journey from *fanāʾ* to *baqāʾ*. He emphasizes love as synonymous with *wujūd*, drawing on the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure. His study foregrounds Hamzah's use of paradoxical language, Qurʾanic references, and metaphor to articulate divine

[56] Wan Mohd Shaghir's compares Tuan Guru Haji Mahmud's version with a manuscript from the library of a religious centre in Tiro, Aceh, previously transcribed and published by Ali Hasjmy in 1976.

love's ineffable nature. For an extended critique and reappraisal Abdul Hadi's readings of Hamzah's poetics, see Part 2: Overview.

9. Hadijah Rahmat, *In Search of Modernity* (1996)

Hadijah examines Hamzah's literary innovations, situating his poetry within Malay literary traditions. While acknowledging Hamzah's contributions to authorship and selfhood, her study does not extensively explore love as a structuring principle in his thought.

10. Zailan Moris, "Mulla Sadra and Hamzah Fansuri" (2007)

Zailan explores philosophical parallels between Hamzah Fansuri and Mulla Sadra (d. 1136), particularly their engagement with ontology. She highlights the role of love in Hamzah's metaphysical vision but does not analyze its poetic articulation.

11. Mohd Kamal Bin Mahdi, and Mohd Syukri Yeoh Abdullah, *Syair Sidang Fakir Shaykh Hamzah Al-Fansuri* (2014)

This study focuses on *Syair Sidang Fakir* (*The Poem of the Assembly of the Poor*), analyzing Hamzah's poetic engagement with Sufi metaphysics. It highlights themes of longing and connection (*berhubung rapat*, 'to be closely connected'; *sampai kepada matlamat*, 'to arrive at the goal'; Ar. *wāṣil*) but does not systematically explore love's centrality in Hamzah's poetic framework.

12. Mardinal Tarigan. "Nilai-Nilai Sufistik Dalam Syāir-Syāir Hamzah Fansuri" (2016)

Mardinal examines Sufi values in Hamzah Fansuri's *Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn* (*The Secret of the Gnostics*), emphasizing *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *tajallī*. He situates love within Hamzah's metaphysical system but does not explore its literary and symbolic dimensions in depth.

1.5 Methodology

This study employs a multidisciplinary approach to examine the expressions of divine love in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry. It integrates manuscript triangulation, close textual analysis, hermeneutics, interdiscursivity, translation strategies, and analytical tools to uncover the layered meanings of love in his work. Each method plays a distinct role in ensuring textual reliability, exploring linguistic and metaphysical meanings, and situating Hamzah's poetry within broader intellectual traditions.

The process begins with manuscript triangulation, establishing textual accuracy through a comparative study of the two most complete sources. Once this foundation is secured, a close textual analysis examines Hamzah's poetic language, focusing on symbols, metaphors, and lexical structures that articulate mystical experience. This is complemented by a hermeneutic approach, which explores the form (*ẓāhir*) and meaning (*bāṭin*) dimensions of Hamzah's poetry within the framework of Sufi metaphysical thought.

To contextualize Hamzah's poetry, the study applies interdiscursivity, [57] situating his works within Malay literary traditions and transregional Islamic intellectual currents. Given the linguistic complexity of Hamzah's poetry, a translation approach is employed to balance literal

[57] Interdiscursivity in literary studies, this refers to the way texts draw upon and integrate multiple discourses or sets of ideas from different contexts, creating a complex web of meaning that transcends any single source.

fidelity with interpretative depth, preserving his plurilingual wordplay, polysemy, and symbolic expressions while making his poetry accessible to a broader academic audience. Finally, the study employs analytical strategies, drawing on lexical, thematic, and intertextual methods to examine how Hamzah's poetry conveys mystical experience, divine love, and metaphysical unity.

Together, these approaches reveal how Hamzah combined Malay and Sufi literary traditions, establishing his poetry as both spiritual discourse and literary innovation that shaped Malay Sufi intellectual history.

1.5.1 Manuscript triangulation

To ensure textual accuracy, this study compares Drewes and Brakel's edition (1986) with Codex Orientalis Leiden 2016, the oldest known manuscript of Hamzah's works (dated 1704). Additionally, Jakarta Malay 83 (c.1800)[58] was consulted to mitigate transcription inconsistencies. However, because of the manuscript's deteriorated physical condition, this study relies on Abdul Hadi's transcription as a supporting reference.[59]

1.5.2 Close textual analysis, lexical study, and symbolic interpretation

This study undertakes a close reading of Hamzah's 32 poems and three prose works, identifying symbols, metaphors, and allegories that articulate mystical experience. It examines Hamzah's innovative lexicon, drawing on Schimmel's insights into how metaphors bridge the material

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[58] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 346.

[59] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 351–409.

and spiritual realms, conveying ineffable truths through imagery rooted in the Qur'an, Prophetic tradition and Sufi texts.[60]

Following Ibrahim's framework, metaphors in Hamzah's poetry function as linguistic embodiments of metaphysical ideas. Recurring motifs such as light, mirror, and the ocean articulate the relationship between the divine and creation. These symbols carry multiple layers of meaning, depending on their textual and interpretive contexts.[61]

By categorizing Hamzah's vocabulary of love and cross-referencing it with key Sufi texts, the study illuminates the spiritual journey of the lover (*ʿāshiq*) toward the Beloved (*maʿshūq*). Symbolic expressions, including the ocean (transcendent divine unity), beverages (intoxication), and scent (longing and knowledge), are analyzed in relation to their exoteric and esoteric meanings, aligning with Sufi hermeneutical traditions.

1.5.3 Hermeneutic framework

The hermeneutical approach adopted in this study draws on interpretive models developed by Almond, Lala, Syafaʿatun, and Kris and Ludovico, all of whom emphasize relational and dialogical hermeneutics in reading Sufi texts, particularly within the Akbarian tradition.

Almond contrasts Ibn ʿArabi's hermeneutics with Derridean deconstruction, particularly on the question of infinite interpretability. While Derrida locates meaning in the autonomy of language, Ibn ʿArabi grounds meaning in divine disclosure, preserving coherence through an

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[60] See Schimmel, 1982.

[61] See Ibrahim, 2022.

ontological foundation. This provides the metaphysical basis for reading Sufi texts not just as linguistic constructions but as manifestations of divine reality.[62]

Lala emphasizes the interdependence of exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) dimensions, arguing that the latter emerges through the former. His multilayered model reflects the inexhaustible nature of divine speech and supports a hermeneutic practice that is both vertically revelatory and textually grounded.[63]

Syafaʿatun emphasizes the inexhaustible nature of meaning in Ibn ʿArabi's hermeneutics, where each engagement with scripture yields new insights through divine disclosure and dialogical reading.[64] Although her focus is on scripture, the underlying interpretive logic resonates with Hamzah's layered poetics, where semantic depth emerges through recursive references and intertextual echoes.

Kris and Ludovico, building on the Akbarian tradition, approach interpretation as an act of *tawajjuh*, an attentive turning of the heart toward meaning that is always in motion. Their reading of Ibn ʿArabi's poem and prayer on the Arabic letter *rāʾ* demonstrates how sound, repetition, and semantic layering become hermeneutic forces, uniting spiritual and linguistic dimensions. Meaning unfolds through oscillation, polysemy, and performative structures that

[62] Almond's exploration highlights parallels between Sufi and contemporary hermeneutic theories, emphasizing the universality of the quest for deeper textual meanings (Almond, 2004).

[63] See Lala, 2021, 483.

[64] See Syafa'atun, 2011, 54–5.

mirror seeker's journey. Here, language is not static but a responsive medium of divine trace, revealed according to the receptivity of the interpreter.[65]

Together, these perspectives support an open-ended, multilevel model of interpretation that situates Hamzah's poetry within a hermeneutical framework in which meaning is never fully exhausted but emerges in relation to the spiritual insight of the reader or listener.

1.5.4 Interdiscursivity and cultural context

Hamzah's poetry is deeply interdiscursive, engaging multiple literary, religious, and intellectual traditions. His works draw on Malay, Arabic, and Persian literary aesthetics, embedding Islamic metaphysical thought into Malay literary forms. This interdiscursivity reflects his participation in both regional and transregional Islamic intellectual traditions, positioning his poetry at the intersection of Southeast Asian Sufism and wider Islamic mystical heritage.

A key feature of Hamzah's poetic method is his strategic use plurilingual wordplay, Arabic polysemy, and Malay enantiosemy, creating a network of interconnected meanings. He employs phonetic resonances, semantic ambiguity, and linguistic duality to convey multiple layers of mystical insight. Examples included: *bunyi* (sound or intonation, and concealment) mirrors Sufi notions of manifestation and hiddenness (*ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*); *laut/lāhūt* (Mal. ocean, Ar. realm of divine nature) symbolizing the fluidity that links creation to the Real;[66] and *adamu,* which resonates with both *ʿadam* (Ar. nonexistence) and *ada-mu* (Mal. your existence),

[65] See Kris and Ludovico, 2023.

[66] See Brakel, 1979, 82–5.

embodying the paradox of presence and absence.[67] Equally significant is *dinding* (screen, partition, inner wall), whose root meaning is 'to screen off,'[68] resonating with the Arabic *ḥijāb*, the veil that separates appearance from reality.[69] In Malay ritual usage, a *kain dinding* (cloth screen) was employed during lustration ceremonies, such as after weddings, to veil and protect the purified space.[70] Yet in verbal form (*dindingkan*), the word reverses its meaning: 'to hold up to the light.'[71] In Hamzah's idiom, *dinding* thus functions as both polysemous and enantiosemous, signifying at once concealment and illumination, protection and disclosure.

By interweaving Sufi Arabic terminology with Malay poetic structures, Hamzah constructs a transcultural mystical discourse, adapting universal Sufi themes to the Malay literary landscape. Moreover, he extends these meanings beyond their linguistic etymologies, creating a layered network of interwoven significations. This study examines the resonances between Hamzah's poetics and broader Malay literary representations of love, particularly in relation to Muhammad Haji Salleh's analysis of love in Malay literature.[72]

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[67] Ibid.; See also Wieringa, 2005, 296–8.

[68] See Wilkinson, online, s.v. *dinding*

[69] See al-Attas, 1970, 531, 533.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2009; *idem* 2011.

1.5.5 Translational approach

Translating Hamzah's poetry presents linguistic and hermeneutical challenges, particularly in rendering symbolic and metaphysical meanings across languages. This study draws on McAuley's method for translating Ibn ʿArabi's poetry, which seeks to balance literal fidelity with interpretative depth.[73] McAuley emphasizes that Sufi poetry encodes meanings accessible primarily to spiritually attuned readers, requiring a translation strategy that conveys both linguistic precision and mystical resonance.[74] To address these challenges, the present study combines three complementary strategies. A literal translation preserves linguistic accuracy, especially in rendering wordplay and polysemy. I also follow Wilson's approach of dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes experiential meaning and poetic rhythm over strict literalism.[75] Finally, interlinear glossing is employed where necessary to retain the nuances of Malay and Arabic lexical interplay (for example, *rasa*, encompassing perception, sensation, and spiritual taste). By integrating these strategies, the study seeks to render Hamzah's poetic language, symbolic complexity, and metaphysical depth with fidelity and nuance. All cited translations of his poetry adhere to this approach and, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

1.5.6 Analytical strategies

The analytical framework of this study likewise integrates three interrelated strategies. Lexical analysis identifies recurring metaphors and linguistic structures associated with love. Thematic

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[73] See McAuley, 2012, 21–6.

[74] Ibid.

[75] See Wilson, 2024.

analysis examines the metaphysical coherence of Hamzah's depictions of love, self-knowledge, and Oneness (*tawḥīd*). Intertextual positioning situates Hamzah's work within broader Sufi literary traditions, particularly that of Ibn ʿArabi and the Akbarian school. Key terms such as *berahi* and *ʿishq* (radical love); and *rasa* and *dhawq* (experiential knowledge) are examined to preserve their sensory and metaphysical dimensions, ensuring that the spiritual resonance of Hamzah's poetry is conveyed.

1.6 Research significance

This study offers the first sustained hermeneutical analysis of Hamzah Fansuri's complete poetic corpus, situating his work at the intersection of Malay literary expression and Akbarian Sufi metaphysics. Building on earlier philological, doctrinal, and symbolic studies, it foregrounds the integration of metaphysical thought, poetic form, and plurilingual vocabulary in Hamzah's mystical poetics.

A central contribution lies in its systematic reconstruction of Hamzah's lexicon of love. Drawing on close textual reading and concordance data from the Malay Concordance Project,[76] the study identifies fifteen interrelated terms in Arabic and Malay that trace the seeker's journey from longing and perplexity to ego-dissolution and gnosis. These include *ʿishq*/*berahi*, *maḥabba*/*kasih*, *shawq*, *hawāʾ*, *sayang*, *jawāʾ*, *mamang, gila*, and *mabuk*. Rather than functioning as fixed lexical equivalents, these terms operate as registers of transformation that

[76] For a description of the Malay Concordance Project, see Chapter 1.6 (p. 28 n. 81) of this dissertation.

structure Hamzah's vision of love as a metaphysical force: initiates being, dissolves ego boundaries, and draws the seeker into divine proximity.

The study also reframes Malay as a language of speculative inquiry. In referring to Malay literature, I avoid the labels 'classical' and 'traditional,'[77] which are common in the field but carry conceptual limitations. 'Classical' risks importing Eurocentric hierarchies of aesthetic value, while 'traditional' often implies cultural stasis that does not reflect the dynamism of Malay literary production between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.[78] I therefore describe this body of writing in terms of its historical, linguistic, and discursive features. By tracing how Hamzah adapts Arabic Sufi terminology into a plurilingual poetic register, the study shows how Malay operates not as a derivative medium but as a generative site of metaphysical articulation.[79] Terms such as *wujūd*, *maʿrifa*, and *ʿadam* are semantically and symbolically reconfigured in Hamzah's Malay as *diri* or *ada*, *kenal*, and *adamu*, producing new resonances that reflect a layered engagement with being, knowledge, and annihilation. This plurilingual strategy enacts what Ricoeur calls 'linguistic hospitality,' which is not passive borrowing but an active transformation of the host language in dialogue with the metaphysical Other.[80]

Another intervention lies in the integration of formal poetics with ontological insight. Through analysis of Hamzah's use of *syair* and *pantun*, the study demonstrates how poetic structure,

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[77] For e.g. Kratz 1993; Collins 1998; Zalila and Jamilah 1993.

[78] As Kratz (1993, 192–93) observes, these terms are frequently applied without grounding in the literary and philological particularities of the texts, reflecting inherited colonial taxonomies rather than local frameworks of textual production and reception.

[79] See Meyer, 2019, 355–57.

[80] See Ricoeur, 2006, 10.

sound resonance, and rhythmic repetition enact mystical experience rather than merely describe it. These features function as epistemological devices designed to induce contemplative awareness. In this way, Hamzah's poetics emerge as both linguistic performance and metaphysical operation.

Finally, this research contributes to the intellectual history of Islam in Southeast Asia by repositioning Hamzah within a network of intertextual and transregional transmission. Comparative evidence drawn from the Malay Concordance Project (MCP) corpus[81] shows how Hamzah's vocabulary of love diverges from earlier *hikayat* literature and reorients Malay poetic language toward the articulation of mystical ontology. His work exemplifies a rooted form of Islamic cosmopolitanism that is grounded in local idioms yet deeply engaged with Arabic metaphysical discourse.

Taken together, this study demonstrates that Hamzah's poetry is not a localized adaptation of universal Sufi ideas but a dynamic site of metaphysical creativity. His plurilingual, symbolically dense, and structurally recursive poetics expand the expressive range of Malay as a language of mystical thought, offering a significant contribution to both comparative Sufi studies and Malay literary history.

1.7 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into two parts and consists of five chapters. It investigates the poetics of love in the works of Hamzah Fansuri through close textual analysis, comparative

[81] The MCP is an online corpus of 165 Malay texts spanning literary, historical, and theological genres from the 14th to the 20th century, comprising 5.8 million words and 140,000 lines of verse, https://mcp.anu.edu

intertextual study, and metaphysical interpretation informed by Sufi discourse in the school of Ibn ʿArabi (Akbarian tradition).

Chapter 1 introduces the research aims, methodology, and theoretical orientation. It situates the study within Islamic intellectual history, Sufi poetics, and the Malay literary tradition, while also outlining the significance of Hamzah's plurilingual poetics and identifying major gaps in earlier scholarship.

Part I (*Chapter 2*) reconstructs Hamzah's intellectual formation and literary context. Drawing on textual, epigraphic, and historical evidence, it reassesses the dating of Hamzah's activity and examines his integration of Akbarian metaphysics into Malay prose and poetry. The chapter also considers Hamzah's reception history and his position within the commentary and manuscript traditions of the region.

Part II (*Chapters 3 and 4*) offers a sustained close reading of Hamzah's mystical poetics:

- **Chapter 3** examines the formal and sonic structures of Hamzah's verse. It analyzes how he adapts *syair* and *pantun* forms to articulate metaphysical insight through rhythm, repetition, symbolic compression, and Qurʾanic references. The chapter develops the concept of plurilingual poetics to describe his creative interplay of Malay and Arabic as a mode of mystical articulation.
- **Chapter 4** explores love as the ontological and epistemological core of Hamzah's cosmology. It identifies three registers: ontological, transformative, and experiential, through which love appears as divine origin, path of annihilation and subsistence, and the seeker's mode of perception. Running through all three is a lexical-symbolic stratum, expressed in wordplay, semantic layering, and emblematic imagery. The

chapter also compares Hamzah's poetics with Malay romance literature, highlighting his turn from narrative resolution to inward surrender.

Chapter 5, the general conclusion, synthesizes the study's main findings. It reaffirms that Hamzah's poetics are neither ornamental nor merely symbolic but constitute a literary enactment of Sufi metaphysical insight. The chapter reflects on the broader implications of Hamzah's work for the study of Islamic intellectual history and comparative Sufi poetics.

PART I: CONTEXTUALISING HAMZAH FANSURI'S INTELLECTUAL AND LITERARY LEGACY

Overview

Part I reconstructs the intellectual, literary, and metaphysical world in which Hamzah Fansuri wrote, providing a framework for interpreting the poetics of divine love that form the focus of Part II. Central to this inquiry is the concept of *wujūd*, which, in Hamzah's writing, drawing from Akbarian metaphysics, signifies not only divine being but also the experiential unfolding of Being through love and gnosis. His use of *wujūd* is not an abstract speculation but a realised perception that articulates the reciprocal movement between divine self-disclosure and human recognition. In this metaphysical framework, love, knowledge, and being converge as dimensions of spiritual realization.

Hamzah's writings are approached here as embedded in a plurilingual and intertextual world shaped by historical circulation, Sufi transmission, and poetic innovation. His deployment of Malay, alongside Arabic and Persian terminology,[82] was not a reduction to a local idiom but a deliberate act of metaphysical articulation. As he himself explains, he wrote in Malay so that those unfamiliar with Arabic or Persian might nonetheless learn and engage with the path of

[82] While Hamzah's language draws from both Arabic and Persian sources, particularly in his prose works *The Adept*, *Drinks for Lovers*, and *Secrets of the Gnostics*, where he cites and translates lines from figures such as Fakhr al-Din ʿIraqi, Masʿud Saʿd-i Salman, ʿAbd al-Raḥman Jami, Abu Ḥamid al-Ghazala, ʿAla al-Din Muhammad al-Barizi, Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭar, Jalal al-Din Rumi, and Saʿdi, this study does not undertake a detailed examination of Persian linguistic or poetic influences. Its focus remains on Hamzah's use of Malay as a vehicle for metaphysical and poetic expression shaped by Sufi and Akbarian thought.

gnosis. Through poetic forms such as *syair* and *pantun*, Hamzah expanded Malay literary idioms to convey layered spiritual meaning and ontological reflection.

This part also examines how Hamzah's metaphysical vocabulary emerges through intertextual engagement across Malay and Arabic sources. The search in Malay Concordance Project of the chronicle *Sulalat al-Salāṭīn* (*Genealogy of Kings*, later titled *Sejarah Melayu* or *Malay Annals*) for the term *tombak jawā* ('Javanese lance') indicates a continuity of expression across Malay texts, situating Hamzah's language within an established semantic repertoire. At the same time, his use of *jawāʾ*, which is an Arabic term denoting emotional intensity in Sufi love discourse, demonstrates his integration of Arabic etymology and mystical terminology. This interplay exemplifies his plurilingual practice, whereby spiritual meaning is constructed through semantic convergence across languages. While this chapter presents a single example, further intertextual analysis of symbolic language is developed in Part II.

Finally, Hamzah's place within the manuscript and commentary tradition is explored through textual evidence and scribal practice. His paratextual remarks invite emendation and correction, reflecting a manuscript culture grounded in interpretive engagement rather than textual fixity. This openness resonates with what Bauer has described as Islam's historical 'culture of ambiguity,' in which textual plurality and divergent readings were cultivated as a cultural value rather than suppressed.[83] Building on the work of Kratz,[84] this study situates Hamzah's writings within an open textual tradition, where reception, transmission, and commentary form integral aspects of the life of a Sufi text. The commentarial responses by Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi,

[83] See Bauer, 2021, 1–3 and passim.

[84] See Kratz, 1981, 233–236.

Hasan Fansuri, and ʿAbd al-Jamal illustrate that Hamzah's legacy has never been static but continues to be reinterpreted within a collaborative literary and spiritual community. In addition to their commentaries, Hasan and ʿAbd al-Jamal also adopted Hamzah's poetic style, while in modern times the poet Abdul Hadi W.M. (d. 2024) extended this imitation, adapting *syair* and *pantun* to articulate Sufi experience in a contemporary register.[85]

Together, these inquiries position Hamzah not as an isolated author, but as a formative voice in a transregional, affectively charged, and philosophically sophisticated articulation of Malay Sufi thought.

[85] See Drewes and Brakel 1986, 18–23, 27, on the imitative verses of Hasan Fansuri and ʿAbd al-Jamal; and Sujarwoko, Kasnadi, and Suhartono 2024, 43–44, on Abdul Hadi W.M.'s use of *pantun* and *syair* to echo Hamzah's poetic voice.

CHAPTER 2: LIFE AND WORK OF HAMZAH FANSURI

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the life and works of Hamzah Fansuri (also written as Ḥamza Fanṣūrī),[86] a foundational figure in the intellectual and literary traditions of the Malay world. Despite limited historical records, his extant writings offer valuable insights into the intersections of Islamic and Malay intellectual and literary expression. His pioneering use of the Malay language in religious and literary contexts situates him as a key figure in Southeast Asian intellectual history.[87]

Philological studies confirm that three prose treatises and at least 32 poems constitute the authentic works of Hamzah Fansuri.[88] Yet this corpus likely represents only a fraction of a larger body of work, much of which has been lost due to historical and environmental factors. The burning of *wujūdiyya* texts in Aceh in 1637 under Sultan Iskandar Thani (r. 1636–1641), along with the fragility of manuscript materials in tropical climates, are notable causes.[89]

Hamzah's stature as a Sufi master, writer, and poet endures, despite the limited number of surviving works. Uncatalogued manuscripts may still exist in private collections and

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[86] See Voorhoeve, *EI2* s.v. *Ḥamza Fanṣūrī*; Braginsky, *EI*3, s.v *Fansuri, Hamzah*.

[87] See Chapter 1.1 (p. 1 n. 1) of this dissertation for references to key scholarship on Hamzah Fansuri's foundational role in Malay and Islamic intellectual history.

[88] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 146; al-Attas, 1970, xiii, 220–221; Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 11, 18–24.

[89] See Teuku Iskandar 1987, 417, 422; Abdul Hadi, 2001, 120.

underexplored archives. Mira, for example, suggests that additional texts could be preserved in libraries such as Tanoh Abee in Aceh, where followers may have hidden them to escape both the suppression under Sultan Iskandar Thani's reign and the polemical attacks by Nur al-Din al-Raniri (d. 1658).[90]

Hamzah's influence persisted into the 19th century, as shown in Van der Tuuk's documentation of his poetry among Malay communities along Sumatra's west coast.[91] His works, or texts attributed to him, continue to be printed and studied, with modern publications such as *Interpretation of Hamzah Fansuri's Poems and Sufi Works;*[92] *Sufi Series: The Book of Those in Authority*;[93] *The Book of Revealing the Inner Secrets of the Sufi Self*;'[94] and '*The Book of* Alif*'s Elucidation*'[95] reaffirming his legacy. Morris, whose research engages with Ibn ʿArabi and other central figures in Islamic sciences, situates Hamzah alongside major Islamic thinkers, such as Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492), Mulla Sadra (d. 1641), and Shah Waliullah (d. 1762), emphasizing his significance within the broader Sufi intellectual tradition.

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[90] See Mira, 2013, 298. For details of al-Raniri's polemics see al-Attas, 1970, 31–65; al-Attas, 1986; Teuku Iskandar 1987, 351, 404–6; Riddell, 2001, 121–22.

[91] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 119.

[92] Original title: *Tafsir Puisi Hamzah Fansuri dan Karya-Karya Shufi* (Wan Mohd, 1996).

[93] Original title: *Siri Tasawwuf Kitabu Ulil Amri* (Amdan, 2016).

[94] Original title: *Membongkar Rahasia Dalaman Diri Sufi oleh Syeikh Hamzah Fansuri* (Amdan, 2016).

[95] Original title: Kitab *Bayan Alif* (Mahmud and Amdan, 2016).

By reconstructing Hamzah's intellectual and literary legacy, this chapter contextualizes his contributions to Islamic thought, Malay Sufi poetry, and the transregional networks that shaped his spiritual and poetic vision.

2.2 Writing in Malay as a plurilingual practice

In *The Drink of Lovers*, Hamzah identifies himself with three place-names: Fansur, Barus, and Sharhnawi.[96] Modern commentators debate the precise locations of these places. Some argue that all three refer to sites in Aceh,[97] while others contend that Sharhnawi corresponds to Shahr-i Naw, the old name for Ayutthaya in Siam.[98] Regardless of their exact geography, Malay was not the mother tongue of most of the inhabitants of these regions. As noted in Chapter 1.1, Hamzah's deliberate use of *bahasa jawi* (the Malay language) reflects an intent to make Sufi teachings accessible to a wider audience beyond those literate in Arabic or Persian.[99]

This strategic use of Malay finds further expression in *The Adept*,[100] where Hamzah refers to '*kata orang Pasai*' (the language of Pasai, Sumatra), indicating Pasai's status as a regional linguistic and cultural authority.[101] His invocation of Pasai (an Islamic polity that flourished

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[96] Hamzah Fansuri, *Sharab al-'Āshiqīn* (*The Drink of Lovers*), in al-Attas, 1970, 297–328, 416–47.

[97] See Miswari, 2023, 197; Ali Hasjmy, *Bunga Rampai Revolusi dari Tanah Aceh*, Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1978, 58.

[98] See Al-Attas, 1970, 3.

[99] Ḥamzah Fansuri, *Sharāb al-'Āshiqīn* (*The Drink of Lovers*), in al-Atas, 1970, 297. For the full quotation in Malay and its translation, see Chapter 1.1 footnote 13.

[100] Ḥamzah Fansuri, *Al-Muntahī* (*The Adept*) in al-Atas, 1970, 329–53, 448–72.

[101] See al-Attas, 1970, 127, 333, 558

between the 13th and 15th centuries) points to an established tradition of Malay literary and religious expression pre-dating Aceh's political ascendancy. The *Sulalat al-Salāṭīn* (Genealogy of Kings, later titled *Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals*), composed circa 1356 and revised in 1612, reinforces Pasai's stature, portraying it as the dominant Islamic centre before the rise of Malacca in the 15th century, and second only to Majapahit, which reached its height in the 14th century, in regional influence.[102] The chronicle affirms Pasai's formative role in shaping the religious, cultural, and linguistic contours of the Malay world.

Winstedt and al-Attas both highlight Pasai's significance as a centre of Malay intellectual culture, particularly during Malacca's ascendancy.[103] Literary production from this period often treated Pasai Malay as the authoritative register for religious and philosophical exposition.[104] In Aceh, literary Malay, shaped only minimally by the local Acehnese vernacular, retained many features of Pasai Malay and contributed to the development of a shared written standard.[105] This linguistic prestige is evident in the work of Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi, who in his *Mirʾāt al-Muʾminīn*, written in 1601, explicitly states that he wrote in the Malay of Pasai.[106] It is also confirmed in the writings of ʿAbd al-Raʾuf al-Fansuri al-Singkili (d. 1693),

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[102] See R. O. Winstedt, "The Malay Annals or Sejarah Melayu," *JMBRAS* 16, no. 3 (132) (1938): 8.

[103] See Winstedt, 1938, 8; Al-Attas, 1970, 198; Ismail, 1997, 218; Amirul, 2004, 237. The *Sulalat al-salāṭīn* (*Genealogy of Kings*), later titled *Malay Annals/Sejarah Melayu* by Winstedt, highlights Pasai's stature, noting its initial dominance over Melaka and its ranking second only to Majapahit in power and influence.

[104] See Winstedt, 1938, 8; Al-Attas, 1970, 198.

[105] Teuku Iskandar (1996, 110–111) elucidates that in 16th century Aceh, Malay was the primary written language for intellectual works. As Malay was used for literary purposes and Acehnese for daily conversation, the literary form of Malay in Aceh was minimally influenced by spoken Achenese.

[106] See Teuku Iskandar, 1996, 389.

the earliest known translator of the Qurʾan into Malay, who likewise preferred the Pasai register.[107] Archaeological evidence further affirms Pasai's prominence, most notably the Minye Tujoh inscription dated to 1380, which van der Molen identified as containing the earliest known proto-Malay *syair*, demonstrating an already developed poetic form used in Islamic expression.[108]

Hamzah's engagement with this linguistic heritage reflects a vision of 'rooted cosmopolitanism,'[109] in which universal Islamic values are articulated through local literary forms. His poetry integrates Arabic Sufi grammar, Persian literary idioms, and Malay poetic structures, exemplifying what Salvaggio describes as a 'plurilingual practice,' a mode of expression grounded in a theology of multilingualism that frames linguistic diversity as divinely ordained and spiritually meaningful.[110] This approach reflects a broader premodern Islamic understanding, where local languages could serve as vehicles of divine knowledge and literary creativity, forming part of a shared Islamic language family shaped by Arabic and Persian. Hamzah's poetic vision resonates with the Qur'anic affirmation of linguistic plurality as a sign of God (Q. 30:22).[111]

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[107] See al-Attas, 1970, 198.

[108] See Chapter 3.3.2 (p. 99 n. 334) for recent transcription of the *syair* by van der Molen (2008).

[109] See Appiah, 1998, 91.

[110] See Salvaggio, 2024, 6–7.

[111] Ibid., 6–7, citing Qurʾan 49:13 and 30:22 on linguistic plurality as a divine sign.

As al-Attas contends, Hamzah was the first to systematically articulate Sufi metaphysical doctrines in Malay, producing speculative writing that reconfigured the language to express the ontological grammar of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, drawing on the teachings of Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240) and ʿAbd al-Karim al-Jili (d. 1408).[112] Riddell develops this view, noting that Hamzah's works mark the beginning of Islamic philosophical discourse in Malay and reflect a deliberate effort to render complex metaphysical thought in local idioms.[113] While some have suggested that Hamzah's work merely imitates Persian or Arabic sources, such claims often lack detailed textual support.[114] Hamzah's plurilingualism is thus not ornamental but integral to his spiritual teaching. By embedding Malay within the Islamic intellectual tradition, he both localized and extended the reach of Sufi metaphysics in Southeast Asia. In this way, the expressive and conceptual range of Malay Islamic discourse was notably expanded.[115]

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[112] See al-Attas, 1970, x, xv–xvi.

[113] See Riddell 2001, 104; 2017, 21–22.

[114] See ʿAli Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, review of *Saʿdi: The Poet of Life, Love and Compassion* by Homa Katouzian (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 3 (2014): 479, which suggests that Hamzah imitated and praised Saʿdi at the Acehnese court. See also Faudzinaim Badaruddin, "*Manhalu'l-Ṣafī by Shaykh Daud al-Faṭānī as a Specimen of Malay Kitab-Literature of 18–19cc*" (PhD diss., University of London, 1998), 97, who similarly argues that Hamzah's works are mere Malay renderings of Ibn ʿArabi's ideas, but without detailed textual evidence.

[115] See A. Bausani, "Is Classical Malay a 'Muslim Language'?" *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas* 11 (1975): 111–21; S. M. N. al-Attas, "Islamic Philosophy," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (2005): 11–43.

2.3 Hamzah's mystical language and legacy

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Aceh emerged as an intellectual centre of Malay Islam, fostering vibrant Sufi networks and literary production.[116] Although Hamzah's poetry was likely composed earlier (from the mid-15th century), it remained influential within this dynamic milieu, functioning both as aesthetic expression and didactic medium for Sufi teachings.[117] His work exemplifies the confluence of Islamic metaphysics with Malay literary creativity, reinforcing the role of Sufism in shaping the religious and intellectual culture of the Malay world.[118] As Abdul Hadi notes, the Malay language functioned as a regional lingua franca, facilitating the dissemination of Islamic teachings across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Hamzah's contributions mark a pivotal moment in the evolution of Sufism in Southeast Asia, not only through linguistic mediation but through a deliberate localization of metaphysical expression.[119]

A widely cited quatrain beginning with the line, *Sidang fakir empunya kata* (In the words of the assembly of the poor[120]) illustrates Hamzah's spiritual articulation of the self, an identity

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[116] See Werner Kraus, "The Shattariyya Sufi Brotherhood in Aceh," in *Aceh: History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Arndt Graf, Susanne Schröter, and Edwin P. Wieringa (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 201–2.

[117] See Riddell, 2017, 21–4; Laffan, 2009, 144–5.

[118] See Gade and Feener, 2004, 187.

[119] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 2; Riddell 2001, 104; Riddell, 2017, 21–22. Johns, 1995; Azyumardi, 2004; Lombard, 2005; Collins, 1998, 23; Adelaar, 1996, 674–75.

[120] The term *faqīr* literally means one who is 'poor' before God, one who, in recognising utter dependence, becomes a perfected devotee (*ʿabd*) of God. It ties directly to the Qurʾanic verse (Q. 35:15).

shaped not by ethnicity or geography but by ontological relation to God. His verses suggest less a paradoxical self-identification than a mystical deconstruction of identity, grounded in the Sufi stages of *fanāʾ* (annihilation), *baqāʾ* (subsistence), and *wāṣil-nya dāʾim* (perpetual connection):[121]

Hamzah miskin orang ʿuryānī, *Seperti Ismāʿīl jadi* qurbānī, *Bukannya* ʿAjam *lagi* Arabī, *Nentiasa* wāṣil *dengan yang* Bāqī.	Translation: Hamzah, destitute and bare, Like Ismaʿil made a sacrifice, Neither non-Arab[122] nor Arab, Always connected to the Everlasting One.

This quatrain is complemented by others in which Hamzah names himself as Hamzah Shahrnawi, describing his outward identity as Malay, while grounding his inward essence in divine luminosity:[123]

Hamzah Shahrnawi ẓāhir*nya* Jāwī, *Bāṭinnya cahaya Aḥmad yang* ṣāfī.	Translation: Hamzah of Shahr-i Naw is outwardly Malay, Inwardly, he is the pure Light of Ahmad,[124]

Together, these verses articulate a cosmological vision in which ethnic, linguistic, and temporal identities are not negated per se but rendered contingent in light of the self's subsistence in the

[121] Poem XXII, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 110.

[122] *ʿAjam* literally means non-Arab, though in some contexts it specifically denotes Persians (see Drewes and Brakel 1986, 110–111).

[123] Poem XV, quatrain 13, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 88.

[124] *Aḥmad* is one of Prophet Muhammad's exalted celestial names, meaning 'the most praised.' It denotes his pre-existent spiritual station as *al-insān al-kāmil* (the Perfect Human). Grammatically, *Aḥmad* is a superlative (*afʿal*), meaning 'most praiseworthy,' and conveys his active role as the supreme praiser of God, complementing the name *Muḥammad*, 'the one constantly praised.' See Armstrong-Chishti, 2001, 10.

divine (*baqāʾ*). Hamzah's self-positioning exemplifies what has been described as 'rooted cosmopolitanism,' yet his metaphysical orientation ultimately transcends the immanent horizon of plural identity. His use of *Jāwī* gestures not only to cultural geography, but also to the spiritual identity of Southeast Asian Muslims in the Hijaz and the wider Islamic world.

Hamzah's plurilingual wordplay draws on this dual valence. In one quatrain, he links the lexeme *jawā,*[125] to the embodied trials of love:[126]

Kekasih itu hendakkan nyawa, *Itulah haluan yogia kau bawa,* *Jangan engkau takut akan tombak* jawā*,* *Supaya orang jangan tertawa.*	Translation: The Beloved desires your life, That is the path you must take, Do not fear the lance of Javanese/*jawā*, Lest others laugh at you.

In Ibn ʿArabi's usage, *al-jawāʾ* denotes to the intense emotional state accompanying the expansion of the lover's experience across stations of love.[127] In this sense, *tombak jawā* ('lance of *jawā*') may be read as the 'lance of love,' symbolizing the piercing force of divine longing. Etymologically derived from the Arabic *jaww* (air, atmosphere), *jawāʾ* conveys openness, movement, and inner exposure, which are qualities that mark the seeker's receptivity and vulnerability along the path of love.[128]

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[125] Ibn ʿArabi, *Dhakhāʾir al-Aʿlāq*, 55, cited in Ibrahim, 2022, 157.

[126] Poem XX, quatrain 8 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 104.

[127] See Ibrahim, 2022, 157.

[128] Ibid.; Lane's s.v. *jaww*.

Notably, *jawāʾ* shares a root with *Jāwī*, the Arabic term historically applied to Muslims from the maritime Southeast Asia. As Laffan observes, *Jāwī* functioned as a transregional marker of Islamic identity, particularly among Southeast Asian Muslims residing in the Hijaz.[129] Hamzah, himself describes his identity as 'outwardly a *Jāwī*,' situating himself within this broader Sufi ecumene. This semantic layering produces a dual resonance: the lance of *jawā* evokes both mystical yearning and regional self-identification.

A search on the Malay Concordance Project (MCP) shows that *tombak jawā* appears only in Hamzah's poetry and in the *Sulalat al-Salāṭīn*[130] In the latter it appears in a martial register, as in the famous battle between Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat, when Hang Tuah proclaims his prowess: 'It is I who will cut down the Javanese lances that come in successive waves!'[131] This recurrence, attested only in the *Sulalat al-Salāṭīn* and Hamzah's poetry, suggests a specific temporal and stylistic register. Its absence in later Malay texts (per MCP) implies that Hamzah's usage drew on a lexicon contemporaneous with the *Sulalat al-Salāṭīn*, supporting a 15th to early 16th century dating for his flourishing (see Chapter 2.7). Moreover, as West notes, Javanese metallurgy and weaponry were highly prized; Francis Drake's acquisition of Javanese steel arms in 1580 testifies to their transregional value.[132] Within this context, the *tombak Jawa/jawā*

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[129] See Laffan, 2009, 139.

[130] Malay Concordance Project (MCP): https://mcp.anu.edu

[131] MCP, s.v. *tombak Jawa*, in A. Samad Ahmad (ed.), *Sulalatus Salatin (Sejarah Melayu)* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979); See also R. O. Winstedt, "The Malay Annals or *Sejarah Melayu*," *JMBRAS* 16, no. 3 (1938): 105.

[132] See A. J. West, "*Bujangga Manik: Or, Java in the Fifteenth Century*" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2021), 423.

denotes martial excellence, which Hamzah refigures as the spiritual piercing of the lover's heart.

This intertextual layering, which bridges courtly narrative, Sufi poetics, and regional history, illustrates Hamzah's linguistic density and metaphysical cosmopolitanism. His verse enacts a vision of Oneness grounded in local idioms and historical memory and realised through the path of divine love.

Hamzah's legacy extends beyond philological and historical scholarship into modern literature. In *Takdir Takdir Fansuri* (*The Destinies of Fansuri*), contemporary writers revisit Hamzah as a symbol of poetic freedom, spiritual plurality, and cultural resistance.[133] Through essays, poems, and meditations, the volume explores how Hamzah's historical marginalisation, particularly the suppression of *wujūdiyya* under Sultan Iskandar Thani and al-Raniri, echoes in present-day efforts to constrain artistic expression and intellectual diversity in Aceh. Rather than treating Hamzah as a fixed historical figure, the contributors engage him as a dynamic presence whose legacy invites interpretive openness. The collection affirms the value of multiple readings and challenges the reduction of literary and spiritual tradition into singular, state-sanctioned narratives.[134]

Malaysian novelist A. Samad Said revitalizes Hamzah's symbolic legacy in *Cinta Fansuri* (*Fansuri's Love*), intertwining themes of longing, identity, loss, and spiritual reawakening. The protagonist, Damri, grapples with both inner turmoil and external crises that range from

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[133] See Mukhlis and A. A. Manggeng, ed., 2002.

[134] Ibid.

existential disillusionment and political authoritarianism to global conflict, including the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq during the Gulf War. The novel employs Sufi motifs of ego-dissolution, metaphysical yearning, and the search for truth, drawing on Hamzah's legacy as both metaphor and model. Through Damri's fragmented reflections and poetic voice, the novel expresses a deep struggle for meaning, healing, and ethical renewal in a fractured modern world.[135]

This influence extends to the works of 20th and 21st century authors in Malaysia and Indonesia. Abdul Hadi notes that Indonesian writers and poets such as Danarto, Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, and Kuntowijoyo drew on Hamzah's synthesis of Malay poetics and Sufi mysticism.[136] Teeuw likewise identifies Hamzah as a precursor to modern Indonesian poetics, particularly in his elevation of *syair* as a medium for mystical and intellectual expression.[137]

Abdul Hadi's own poetry further exemplifies this legacy. Through classical forms like *pantun* and *syair*, he adapts Hamzah's metaphysical idiom for contemporary audience. Rather than replicate Hamzah's style, Abdul Hadi stages a creative dialogue with it, exploring themes of *fanāʾ*, longing, and divine proximity. His work affirms the continuity of Sufi interiority in the face of modern ethical and ecological crises, framing Hamzah not only as a literary ancestor, but as a living presence in Malay-Islamic intellectual life.[138]

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[135] See A. Samad Said, 2011.

[136] See Abdul Hadi, 2011, 4, 320.

[137] See Teeuw, 1994.

[138] See Sujarwoko, Kasnadi, and Suhartono, 2024.

This legacy is further reaffirmed in *Syair Sidang Fakir Shaykh Hamzah Fansuri* an annotated edition by Mohd Kamal Mahdi and Mohd Syukri Yeoh.[139] Their commentary presents Hamzah's *syair* as both symbolic and didactic, encoding esoteric meanings in accessible literary forms. They position Hamzah as a transmitter of Sufi epistemology whose works remain spiritually and intellectually resonant.

To fully appreciate Hamzah's contributions, his prose and poetry must be read as a unified framework of Sufi thought. His prose articulates the intellectual dimensions of mysticism; his poetry conveys its symbolic, affective, and psychological registers.[140] Works such as *The Drink of Lovers* and *The Secrets of the Gnostics* exemplify this interplay, combining metaphysical discourse with lyrical verse.[141] His poetry, infused with Qurʾanic language and literary artistry, offers rare insight into the literary and intellectual world of early Malay-Islamic ecumene.[142]

Hamzah thus remains a vital figure in the study of the Sufi networks that propagated *waḥdat al-wujūd* in the Malay world.[143] He localized Islamic metaphysics through the Malay language and poetics forms, articulating a uniquely Southeast Asian vision of Sufi cosmology.[144] He is widely recognized as the first to systematically and aesthetically express Sufi metaphysics in

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[139] See also Chapter 1.4 (p. 18) of this dissertation.

[140] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 146–7, 153–4.

[141] Abdul Hadi identifies *Asrār al-ʻĀrifīn* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*) as an example of Hamzah's innovative blending of prose and poetry, where the prose provides a structured hermeneutic framework for interpreting the poetic visions, ibid.

[142] See Abdul Hadi 2001, 219–228. Mohd Kamal, and Mohd Syukri, 2011.

[143] See al-Attas, 1970, 186; Azyumardi, 2004.

[144] See Gade and Feener, 2004, 187.

Malay. His influence is affirmed by scholars across disciplines: al-Attas calls him a spiritual reformer,[145] Abdul Hadi a spiritual renewer (*pembaru spiritual*),[146] and Johns praises his technical skill and poetic genius.[147]

2.4 Metaphysical lineage and Sufi expression in Malay

Hamzah's intellectual and spiritual lineage is deeply embedded in the Sufi traditions of the Islamic world, particularly those associated with Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240)[148] and ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 1166). Hamzah explicitly traces his spiritual genealogy to al-Jilani, whom he reveres as his *ustādh* and *sayyid* (master), referring to him respectfully as: '*Ustadhnya Sayyid ʿAbd al-Qadir*' (his master is the Master ʿAbd al-Qadir).[149] Although separated from al-Jilani by several centuries, this connection reflects a common Sufi understanding of spiritual transmission that transcends physical encounter.

In many Sufi traditions, such links are described as *Uwaysī*, after Uways al-Qarani, the Yemeni contemporary of the Prophet Muḥammad who, despite never meeting him in person, is considered to have been spiritually initiated.[150] As Zargar notes, this mode allows for a

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[145] See al-Attas, 1970, 25.

[146] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 135.

[147] See Johns, 1990, 327.

[148] See Kraemer, 1921; Doorenbos, 1933; Voorhoeve *EI2* online; Al-Attas, 1970; A. Hasjmy, 1976; Abdul Hadi, 1984; Drewes and Brakel, 1986; Braginsky, 1999; Muhammad Bukhari, 1994.

[149] Poem XVII, quatrain 15, line 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 96; see Abdul Hadi, 2001; Feener and Laffan, 2005; Braginsky, *EI3* online.

[150][150] Zargar, 2024, 31.

relationship in which the spiritual light of a long-deceased master may disclose itself to the seeker, guiding them inwardly on the path.[151] Hamzah's invocation of al-Jilani thus signifies more than historical affiliation; it expresses a living bond rooted in spiritual alignment and metaphysical proximity. As the eponymous founder of the Qadiriyya order, al-Jilani remained an influential figure in the Malay world, shaping local articulations of Sufi identity and authority.[152]

Hamzah presents this transmission explicitly in the following quatrain, where he frames his attainment of *ʿilm ʿālī* (exalted knowledge) as mediated through al-Jilani:[153]

Hamzah nin asalnya Fansūrī,	Translation:
Mendapat wujūd *di tanah Shahrnāwī,*	Hamzah, who hails from Fansuri,
Beroleh khilāfat *ilmu yang* ʿālī,	Attained *wujūd* in the land of Shahr-i Naw,
Daripada ʿAbd al-Qādir Jīlanī.	Received succession in exalted knowledge,
	From ʿAbd al-Qadir Jilani.

This Sufi orientation is also evident in Hamzah's engagement with Ibn ʿArabi's metaphysical lexicon, especially the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Hamzah does not merely cite Ibn ʿArabi's technical vocabulary, such as *ʿayn thābita* ('immutable entities' within divine knowledge before creation) or *maqām lā maqām* ('station of no station'), but weaves these concepts into the rhythm and imagery of Malay poetic forms. His integration reflects a sophisticated internalisation of Akbarian cosmology, refracted through the aesthetic and cultural logic of the

[151] Ibid.

[152] See Al-Attas, 1970, 10–11; Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 5; Muhammad Bukhari, 1994; Abdul Hadi, 2001, pp. 147, 274, 422; Fenner and Laffan, 2005, 203–5.

[153] Poem I, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 44.

Malay world. Through this integration, Hamzah develops a regionalised expression of speculative Sufism in which inherited concepts are not simply translated made but made newly resonant in a local idiom.

His reverence for Ibn ʿArabi is evident in both prose and poetry, where he engages with ontological and hermeneutical themes central to Akbarian thought. Hamzah's poetics reflect a metaphysical and hermeneutical orientation, often centred on divine names, especially those of Mercy and Compassion.[154] In his treatises *Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*) and *al-Muntahi* (*The Adept*), Hamzah cites Ibn ʿArabi's writings. The influence of Ibn ʿArabi extended beyond Hamzah's corpus, shaping Southeast Asian narrative traditions that interwove genealogy, cosmology, and spiritual authority. Chambert-Loir notes, for example, that court chronicles such as *Ceritera Asal Bangsa Jin dan Segala Dewa-Dewa* (*The Story of the Origin of Jinn and Celestial Beings*)[155] incorporate references to Ibn ʿArabi, attesting to his reception in the region.[156]

The transmission of Ibn ʿArabi's thought to the Malay world came not only through direct citations of his work but also through key intermediaries: Ṣadr al-Din al-Qunawi (d. 1274), ʿAbd al-Karim al-Jili (d. 1408), and Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 1492), Their writings helped

[154] See Muhammad Bukhari, 1994, 369.

[155] Two manuscripts copied between 1851–1882 from Bima, MS Leiden Cod. Or. 6727 and MS from Sumbawa no catalogued number that were transcribed and edited in Chamber-Loir, 2004, 25, 27, 42, 57.

[156] The authors of the narratives refer to Ibn ʿArabi by his honoric title *muḥyiddīn* (lit. reviver of religion) calling him 'our spiritual teacher' (*'guru kita Muhyiddin* namanya', in Chamber-Loir, 2004, 25, 27, 42, 57.

shape the contours of Akbarian metaphysics, which Hamzah absorbed[157] alongside a broader network of classical and post-classical Sufi thinkers, including:

- the ecstatic ('drunk') Sufis such as Mansur Al-Hallaj (d. c. 922) and Bayazid Bastami (d. c. 874);
- the mystic of love Rabiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. c. 801);
- the 'sober' master Junayd al-Baghdadi (d. 910);
- later figures such as Ruzbihan Baqli (d. 1209), Fakhr al-Din ʿIraqi (d. 1213), Farid al-Din ʿAttar (d. 1221), Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273), Naṣimi (d. 1418), and Jami (d. 1492);
- and the philosopher-mystic ʿAyn al-Qudat Hamadani (d. 1131).

This spiritual and intellectual genealogy situates Hamzah firmly within the Akbarian or *wujūdiyya* tradition, which would later become a defining current in Southeast Asian Sufism. His writings in Malay form a crucial link in the transmission of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* across the region.[158]

In Hamzah's poetic lexicon, *wujūd* occupies a central and generative position. Derived from the root *w-j-d*, the term carries layered meanings:[159] as 'Being,' it signifies the metaphysical realization of divine reality (*al-Ḥaqq*); as 'finding' or 'experiencing,' it refers to the mystical perception of divine proximity; and as 'existing,' it marks the ontological distinction between

[157] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 147. Braginsky, *EI3* online.

[158] See Renard, 2009, xxxviii.

[159] See Chittick 2005, 36–46.

Absolute Being and contingent existence (*mawjūd*). As Vandamme observes, Ibn ʿArabi draws on the polysemy of the root *w-j-d* to express *wujūd* as, at once, the unique Being, shared existence, and that which is discovered through human experience.[160]

Unlike its use in Islamic Peripatetic philosophy, where *wujūd* denotes existence in abstract universal terms, in Akbarian metaphysics, as reflected in the writings of Ibn ʿArabi and Hamzah, *wujūd* refers simultaneously to the Reality of God and to the the seeker's realization of that Reality through love. For Ibn ʿArabi, *wujūd* is inseparable from *raḥma* (Creative Mercy) and *ḥubb* (love as both origin and goal of creation): it is through love that being is granted to creation, and through *wujūd* that love is known, realized, and returned.

In this dissertation, *wujūd* is translated as 'Being' when referring to the metaphysical ground of reality and the unfolding of divine presence; and as 'existent' when referring to contingent entities (*mawjūdāt*) in the created world. This distinction reflects the Akbarian understanding of *wujūd* not merely as static ontological presence but as the intimate and reciprocal movement of divine love and human realization of the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*).[161]

This metaphysical vision is conveyed not only in Hamzah's conceptual vocabulary but also through his literary forms. He played a pivotal role in popularizing the *syair*, a structured poetic form composed of rhyming quatrains (AAAA), widely used in pre-20th century Malay literature (see Chapter 3.3.1). Hamzah employed this form to embed intricate Sufi doctrines and metaphysical insights, transforming *syair* into a vehicle for esoteric instruction. His decision

[160] See Vandamme, 2023, 48.

[161] See Andi, 2020, 50–54, 63.

to write in Malay aligns with a broader development among Sufi poets who rendered mystical teachings in vernacular idioms, comparable to Rumi's use of Persian, Yunus Emre's (d. 1321) use of Anatolian Turkish, and Sultan Bahu's (d. 1691) use of Panjabi.[162]

In addition to *syair*, Hamzah also drew on the *pantun*, a quatrain form characterized by ABAB rhyme and deeply rooted in oral Malay tradition (see Chapter 3.3). The *pantun*'s associative structure, where the opening lines often set up metaphors or imagery that resonates with the closing moral or message, enabled Hamzah to convey layered mystical meanings through culturally embedded forms. This literary strategy parallels the approach of the *Wali Songo* ('Nine Saints of Java') and other Sufi poets across the Islamic world who adapted regional forms to articulate universal truths.[163] In Hamzah's hands, both *syair* and *pantun* become not merely literary tools, but instruments of metaphysical transmission, carrying the truths of *waḥdat al-wujūd* through the rhythms and idioms of the Malay world.

2.5 Refutation of pantheism and heterodoxy

The doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* has been subject to varied interpretations. In the 17th century, Hamzah's works became a focal point of polemical debate, particularly following the consolidation of the Acehnese court's religious authority. The *wujūdiyya* school, with which Hamzah was retrospectively associated, drew criticism from figures such as Nur al-Din al-

[162] See Schimmel, 1982, 8, 135–69.

[163] See Abdul Hadi, 2002, 240–1.

Raniri.[164] Al-Attas and Abdul Hadi contend that these critiques stem less from substantive theological divergence than from differing interpretative frameworks and epistemological orientations.[165]

Hamzah articulates a distinctly Sufi understanding of *tawḥīd* (God's Oneness), grounded in the metaphysical discourse of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.[166] In this framework, the Absolute Reality of God (*al-Ḥaqq*) remains utterly transcendent and unknowable in essence, while creation serves as a locus for divine self-disclosure through the Names and Attributes. At no point, however, does creation merge with God's essence.[167]

Hamzah explicitly rejects the notions of *ittiḥād* (ontological union) and *ḥulūl* (indwelling or reincarnation), as illustrated in this didactic quatrain:[168]

Aho! segala kita ummat rasūl*,* *Tuntuti ilmu* ḥaqīqat al-wuṣūl*,* *Karena ilmu itu pada Allah* qabūl*,* Iʿtiqād*mu jangan* ittiḥād *dan* ḥulūl.	Translation: O! All of us, the people of the Prophet, Seek the knowledge of true connection, For such knowledge is accepted by God, But do not believe in union or indwelling.

[164] See Baroroh, 1995; Azyumardi, 2004; V. Braginksy, "Fansuri, Hamzah", in *EI3*, edited by Kate Fleet et al., 2016; R.O Winstedt. "A History of Classical Malay Literature." *JMBRAS* 31, 3 (183) (1958): 3–259.

[165] See al-Attas, 1970; Abdul Hadi, 2001; Mira, 2013; Ismail, 2017; Ramli, 2019; Miswari, Abdul Aziz, and Abdul Hadi, 2022.

[166] See al-Attas, 1970; Abdul Hadi, 2001; Lala, 2023.

[167] See al-Attas, 1970; Lala, 2023; Naveau, 2024.

[168] Poem VII, quatrain 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 60.

Despite this clear theological positioning, some modern commentators have mischaracterized Hamzah as a pantheist. Marcinkowski, for example, describes him as a disseminator of Ibn 'Arabi's 'pantheistic teachings' in the Malay world.[169] Johns initially grouped Hamzah and his follower, Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi, under the label of 'heterodox pantheism,' but later revised his assessment,[170] critiquing the rigidity of binary classifications applied to pre- and early modern Islamic discourse.[171] Reflecting on this, he writes: "I resile from my facile use in the introduction of the words orthodox and heterodox…*Peccavi nimis* [I have greatly sinned]!'[172]

Hamzah's Malay writings are marked by precision in his use of Sufi metaphysical language. His rendering of the Arabic *waṣl* and *wīṣal* (connection, arrival, union) as *bertemu* (meeting, encounter) reflects a careful semantic framing.[173] Rather than implying ontological merging, this phrasing emphasizes love as a path and movement toward gnosis, one that is figuratively (*ibāra*) described as 'union' but theologically retaining God's transcendence.[174]

Critiques of *waḥdat al-wujūd* frequently conflate it with pantheism, overlooking the theological nuance of Akbarian metaphysics. Al-Attas stresses that Hamzah differentiates between God's

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[169] See M. I. Marcinkowski, *From Isfahan to Ayutthaya,* Singapore: Pustaka Nasional (2005), 10, 14.

[170] See Johns, 1957, 9.

[171] See Johns, 1995, 163n42; *idem*, 1990.

[172] Ibid.

[173] See al-Attas, 1970, 97, 143.

[174] See al-Attas. 1970, 34–35, 97. For a detailed analysis of the differences between *pantheism* and *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Kautsar (1995), which includes a dedicated chapter on the subject.

essence and the metaphorical nature of creation's existence.[175] The doctrine maintains that since creation reflects divine names and attributes, it possesses no independent essence, and therefore nothing separate exists that could merge with the divine essence.[176] Al-Attas and Kautsar have pointed out that applying the term 'pantheism,' a Western philosophical construct, misrepresents the ontological vision of Akbarian thought.[177] Unlike pantheism, *waḥdat al-wujūd* affirms both divine transcendence (*tanzīh*) and immanence (*tashbīh*) without collapsing the distinction between Creator and creation.[178]

Ibrahim clarifies that *waḥdat al-wujūd* cannot be equated with pantheism, panentheism, or monism. In Ibn ʿArabi's ontology, all existents manifest through divine *tajallī* (theophanic disclosure), but none encompass the divine essence. Pantheism collapses the Creator-creation distinction; panentheism posits that God is both within and beyond the cosmos. Akbarian metaphysics, by contrast, refuses this dualism altogether: God is absolutely transcendent and immanent, while creation remains entirely contingent, never possessing autonomous reality. All existence is a continuous *tajallī*, but God is not 'contained' in any part of it.[179]

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[175] See al-Attas, 1970, 34–35. For a detailed analysis of the differences between *pantheism* and *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Kautsar (1995), which includes a dedicated chapter on the subject.

[176] See Abdul Hadi's discussion of Hamzah Fansuri's poems that emphasize the balance between divine unity and multiplicity in creation, illustrated through the doctrine of *tajallī* (theophany) of divine names and attributes, where creation becomes the locus for God's self-disclosure (2001).

[177] Al-Attas, 1970, 34–35. For a detailed analysis of the differences between *pantheism* and *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Kautsar (1995), which includes a dedicated chapter on the subject.

[178] See al-Attas, 1970, 34, 66–9.

[179] See Ibrahim, 2022, 91–4.

The doctrine of *tajallī* briefly mentioned here but explored further in Chapters 3.2.2 and 4.2 is central to Hamzah's metaphysical poetics. Hamzah consistently points outs that divine self-disclosure occurs continuously through signs in the cosmos and within the contemplative self. His use of poetic imagery such as light, radiance, and the *padang* ('luminous plain') frames creation as a theophanic landscape. However, this symbolism does not imply identity between Creator and creation. Rather, it articulates the dynamic of presence and concealment that characterises divine immanence. These themes are treated in depth in the following chapters, particularly in relation to Hamzah's Qurʾanic allusions and cosmology of love.

Thus, applying Western philosophical categories like pantheism, panentheism, or monism to Hamzah's metaphysical expression distorts the theological coherence of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.[180] As al-Attas and Abdul Hadi emphasize, Hamzah upholds this theological balance, affirming both *tanzīh* and *tashbīh* without erasing the ontological distinction between Creator and creation.[181]

As mentioned in earlier, Hamzah never uses the phrase *waḥdat al-wujūd* explicitly in his works, nor the term *wujūdiyya* to describe followers of the doctrine.[182] Instead, his writings foreground *wujūd* itself, making it central to his metaphysical vocabulary.[183] This focus suggests that his

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[180] See al-Attas, 1970, 35, 66; Ibrahim, 2022, 92–4.

[181] See al Attas. 1970, 66–97; Abdul Hadi, 2001, 150–58.

[182] See al-Attas, "Rānīrī and the *Wujūdiyyah* of 17th Century Aceh" (Singapore: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1966); Riddell, 2017, 18–33.

[183] See Cibro 2019, 29.

views are best understood through close reading of his theological and poetic discourse, not through retrospective classifications.

For Hamzah, creation is wholly dependent on God, characterized by relational interdependence rather than ontological merging. His use of Malay to articulate the metaphysics of *waḥdat al-wujūd* not only localized a complex Islamic discourse but also broadened access to Sufi philosophical thought. This intellectual contribution underlines Hamzah's enduring significance in the development of Islamic metaphysical expression in the Malay world.[184]

2.6 Hamzah Fansuri's writings

The extant body of Hamzah's work is relatively sparse, comprising three prose treatises and at least 32 authentic poems composed in Malay. His prose works: *Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*), *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn* (*The Drink of Lovers*), and *Al-Muntahī* (*The Adept*), demonstrate his engagement with Qur'anic exegesis, Akbarian metaphysics, and Sufi teachings.[185] They also reveal deep familiarity with Arabic linguistics structures and Persian literary influences, situating him within a transregional intellectual network.[186]

While Drewes and Brakel identified a corpus of authentic poems, none survives in authorial manuscripts. The earliest extant manuscripts of Hamzah's works, such as Leiden Cod. Or. 2016

[184] See Muhammad Bukhari, 1994; Abdul Hadi, 2001; Wan Mohd Shaghir, 2002; El-Muhammady, 2004; Naveau, 2023.

[185] See al-Attas, 1970; Drewes and Brakel, 1986; Abdul Hadi, 2001; Mohd Kamal and Mohd Syukri, 2014; Riddell, 2017.

[186] See al-Attas, 1970; Abdul Hadi, 2001; Gade and Feener, 2004.

(dated 1704), are later copies that raise questions of textual transmission and editorial intervention. For instance, a quatrain cited by Drewes and Brakel, *Kata ini tamthīl dan pantun / Bukannya nyanyi sindirkan bandun*,[187] does not appear in MS Jakarta Mal. 83 (their base text),[188] but in Cod. Or. 2016 (fol. 23v). Such discrepancies underscore the interpretive challenges posed by the absence of holograph manuscripts and the composite nature of the tradition.

Abdul Hadi notes that similar verses appear in poems attributed to Hasan Fansuri, a follower of Hamzah.[189] These distinctions are crucial for understanding the transmission of Hamzah's teachings and the evolution of his poetic legacy. Hasan referred to Hamzah's verse as *rubāʿ al-muḥaqqiqīn* ('the quatrains of the verifiers'), emphasizing its metaphysical and mystical content. In his commentary, Hasan contrasts Hamzah's poetry with popular forms such as *pantun* and *nyanyi*, asserting that Sufi verse must be grounded in authentic mystical experience. He describes Hamzah's knowledge as *ʿilm al-ḍamīr*, or inner conscious awareness, and expresses this in verse:[190]

Damīr al-ʿilm *dari* ustādh *kami,* *Bukannya patut sindirkan nyanyi.*	Translation The inner knowledge from our teacher, Is not proper to be mocked by mere singing.

[187] Poem XX, quatrain 14, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 104. This verse is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.2.1 (p. 81) of this dissertation.

[188] See Sweeney, 1992.

[189] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 219.

[190] This verse is cited in Abdul Hadi, 2001, 219.

The term *ḍamīr* (from the root *ḍ-m-r*) conveys concealment and inwardness. In Sufi usage, it signifies the conscious inner perception of divine truth.[191] Ibn ʿArabi mentions this in *Kitāb al-Isfār*, where the third-person pronoun (*ḍamīr al-ghayb*) denotes the one who is absent or unseen (*ghayb*).[192] He extends this grammatical category into the mystical notion of the 'unseen of the unseen' (*ghayb al-ghayb*), the ineffable divine unknowability symbolised in the pronoun *huwa*[193]('He,' referring to the unknowable Essence, the Hidden Treasure). Jaffray notes that Ibn ʿArabi interprets categories such as *muḍmar* (concealed pronoun) as mystical indices of the Real, where linguistic absence becomes a cipher of divine presence.[194] The themes of absence, presence, and the limits of knowing are developed further in Chapter 4, in relation to Sufi love and symbolic language.

Another follower, ʿAbd al-Jamal, likewise rejected the framing of Hamzah's poetry as literary amusement. He contrasts Hamzah's verses with the kind of singing (*nyanyi*) that stirs only worldly passions, expressing this critique in verse:[195]

	Translation
Kata ini bukannya nyanyi, *Sekadar menggelegakkan sungga hati*.	These words are not mere singing, merely to stir up the agitated heart.

[191] See Oddbjørn Leirvik, "Conscience in Arabic and the Semantic History of Ḍamīr," *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 9 (2009): 21–23.

[192] See Jaffray, 2015, 203.

[193] See Jaffray, 2015, 68 n.182, 203; Chodkiewicz Chittick, and Morris, 2002, 247 n.80.

[194] Jaffray, 2015, 66 n.168.

[195] Cited in Abdul Hadi, 2001, 219. He reproduced Doorenbos's tentative reading of the word as *sengga* (marked with a question mark in Doorenbos's edition). However, no entry for *sengga* exists in the dictionaries I consulted (OJED, Wilkinson, KDP, KDEP4, KBBI). By contrast, *sungga* is attested in pre-modern *hikayat* with the meaning 'to spur or goad a lover,' which fits the context more appropriately (Wilkinson, online, s.v. *sungga*).

Manuscripts also transmit poems by Hasan Fansuri and ʿAbd al-Jamal that closely imitate Hamzah's style, sometimes preserved alongside his verses without clear distinction. As Drewes and Brakel observe, this mingling of voices complicates modern attempts at strict attribution, yet it reflects a manuscript culture in which disciples carried forward Hamzah's expressions as part of a living Sufi tradition. Abdul Hadi similarly identifies both poets as transmitters of Hamzah's mystical poetics, extending his legacy into the following century.

Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi expressed admiration for Hamzah, citing 12 of his quatrains in a prose treatise,[196] and composing commentaries on at least three of his poems.[197] These engagements attest to the reception and transmission of Hamzah's verse and raise important questions about its circulation, preservation, and interpretive framing in the century following his activity.[198]

The absence of holograph manuscripts complicates efforts to reconstruct Hamzah's corpus with historical precision. Nonetheless, the consistent spiritual and intellectual framework present in Hamzah's writings and in those of his followers reflects a shared Sufi orientation in which poetry serves as a vehicle for instruction and self-realisation rather than aesthetic display.

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[196] Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi, *Ḥaqq al.Yaqīn fī Aqīdat al-Muḥaqiqqīn* (*The Absolute Certainty in the Belief of the Verifiers*), in Mohammad Nasrin, 2019, 152–160.

[197] See A. Hasjmy, 1979, 31–83; Wan Mohd Saghir, 1996, 43–67; Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 190–225.

[198] Muhammad Nasrin, 2019, 159.

2.6.1 Manuscript preservation and accessibility

Hamzah's works have been transmitted through centuries of manuscript copying, with extant holdings preserved in the Leiden University Libraries,[199] SOAS University of London,[200] the National Library of Indonesia (Jakarta), the Centre for Documentation and Information of Aceh (Banda Aceh), and Perpustakaan Za'aba at the University of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur). The earliest known manuscript, Cod. Or. 2016 (dated 1704), once belonged to the library of Sultan Abul Mahasin Muhamad Zainal Abidin of Banten, Java (fl. 1690–1733).

Modern efforts to transcribe, edit, and translate Hamzah's works have been crucial to ensuring their accessibility. Al-Attas re-edited and translated the three prose treatises (*Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn*, *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn*, and *al-Muntahī*), thereby making them available to a wider scholarly audience.[201] Drewes and Brakel later edited and translated 32 poems (472 quatrains) based on seven manuscripts,[202] while Abdul Hadi transcribed and edited 30 poems (418 quatrains) from MS Jakarta Malay 83.[203] More recently, Zekrgoo and Tajer expanded access through a Persian translation of Hamzah's prose, based on Al-Attas's edition.[204]

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[199] Cod. Or. Leiden 2016, http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:1953221

[200] MS 168218, https://digital.soas.ac.uk/LOAG000017/00001

[201] See Al-Attas, 1970.

[202] See Drewes and Brakel, 1986.

[203] See Abdul Hadi, 2001.

[204] Amir H. Zekrgoo and Leyla H. Tajer, *Three Treatises: Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn, Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn, Al-Muntahī, By Hamzah Fansuri (16th Century Malay Mystic)* (Tehran: Miras-e Maktoob, 2018).

Significant contributions have been made by A. Hasjmy[205] and Wan Mohd Saghir.[206] A. Hasjmy transcribed and published 42 quatrains attributed to Hamzah, incorporating a commentary by Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi based on a manuscript preserved in Tiro, Aceh. Similarly, Wan Mohd Saghir transcribed another commentary by Shams al-Din from a manuscript copied in 1840 in Kemaman, Terengganu. See Chapter 1.4 for further discussion.

Beyond transcription, the commentary tradition on Hamzah's poetry has continued into the modern period. Mohd Kamal and Mohd Syukri produced a commentary on a poem popularly known as the *Syair Sidang Fakir* (*The Poem of the Assembly of the Poor*),[207] offering insights into how Hamzah's legacy has been reinterpreted and integrated into contemporary scholarship.

The availability of digitized manuscripts from collections in Leiden and SOAS has further facilitated research, enabling comparative textual analysis and the identification of variant readings across different manuscript traditions.

2.6.2 Research categories

Scholarship on Hamzah Fansuri may be broadly categorized into four interrelated areas:

i. Identification and historical context

Early studies focused on authenticating Hamzah's works and situating him within the

[205] See Ali Hasjmy, 1976.

[206] See Wan Mohd Saghir, 1996.

[207] See Mohd Kamal and Mohd Syukri, 2014.

historical landscape. Pioneering contributions include those by Kraemer (1912, 1921), Doorenbos (1933), Nieuwenhuyze (1945), Voorhoeve (1952), Teeuw (1966), Winstedt (1969), al-Attas (1962, 1970), and A. Hasjmy (1976). More recent discussions by Guillot and Kalus (2000), Feener and Laffan (2005), Kersten (2017), Miswari (2023), and Perret[208] have further refined assessments of Hamzah's chronology and intellectual milieu.

ii. Transcription and translation

The transcription of Hamzah's Jawi manuscripts into Latin script, alongside translation efforts, has been essential to making his works accessible. Notable contributions include Doorenbos (1933), al-Attas (1970), A. Hasjmy (1976), Drewes and Brakel (1986), Wan Mohd Saghir (1996), Abdul Hadi (2001), and Zekrgoo and Tajer (2018).

iii. Exploration of Sufi doctrines

Studies focusing on Hamzah's articulation of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and divine love include those by Johns (1957), al-Attas (1970), A. Hasjmy (1976), Muhammad Bukhari (1994), Steenbrink (1995), Wan Mohd Saghir (1996), Abdul Hadi (2001), Riddell (2001, 2017), and more recently Miswari, Abdul Aziz, and Abdul Hadi (2022), and Naveau (2023). These works examine Hamzah's metaphysical framework, its placement within the Akbarian tradition, and its reception in the Malay world.

iv. Poetic language and symbolism

[208] See Perret, *EI3* online.

Hamzah's use of metaphors, symbolism, and poetic structures has been widely studied. Foundational contributions include Brakel (1979), Drewes and Brakel (1986), Braginsky (1992), Teeuw (1994), Abdul Hadi (1999, 2001, 2016), Sangidu (2004, 2012), and Wieringa (2005). More recent studies by Mohd Kamal and Mohd Syukri (2014), Mardinal (2016), Ida (2016), A. Bagus (2016), Meyer (2019), Yusri, Mohd Syukri, and Rohaimi (2016), Zuliskandar (2020), Mazlina and Nurazmallail (2021), and Zekrgoo (2024) have further explored the innovative features of Hamzah's poetics.

2.6.3 Malay manuscript traditions

In the introduction to *The Secret of the Gnostics*, Hamzah advises scribes and readers:[209]

> There are no more shortcomings. If shortcomings are found, complete them; if errors are found, correct them; if breaks or omissions are found in the language or in the letters, whether great or small, repair them. Do not fault the text, for human beings are often forgetful and negligent.

This statement illustrates a core aspect of Malay manuscript culture, that is, textual transmission was not a passive act of copying but an engaged and interpretative process. Variations across manuscripts often reflect what Kratz terms an 'open tradition,' shaped by cross-regional circulation, scribal creativity, and dynamic textual layering, rather than a fixed textual archetype.[210] Malay scribes did not merely reproduce texts but often acted as editors and transmitters, modifying, supplementing, or recontextualizing content for devotional,

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[209] Malay text: *Tiada lagi berapa kurangnya. Adapun jikalau bertemu dengan kurangnya, digenapi; jika bertemu dengan salahnya, diperbenari; jika bertemu dengan penggal pada bahasa atau pada hurufnya lebih-kurang, diperbaiki; jangan di'aybkan; kerana manusia terbanyak lupa dan lalai*, in al-Attas, 1970, 234.

[210] See Kratz, 1981, 233–36.

pedagogical, or literary purposes. In many cases, what survives are 'contaminated' copies[211] produced through horizontal transmission and composite compilation, where the search for a singular *Urtext* is both methodologically and historically inappropriate.[212]

Hamzah's own paratextual instructions affirm this manuscript ethos. Rather than asserting textual fixity, he encourages scribes and readers to correct and improve the text, acknowledging the inevitability of human error and the acceptability of textual emendation. As Kratz observes, this openness reflects a distinctive conception of authorship and authority in the Malay literary context, one that is collaborative, adaptive, and embedded within communal transmission networks.[213] He further cautions that the application of editorial principles derived from European classical philology, particularly the privileging of a single critical edition over textual plurality, risks erasing important historical and interpretive information contained in the variants.[214]

Since no original holographs of Hamzah's writings have survived, later copies inevitably underwent modification over time. Within this manuscript tradition, Hamzah's texts circulated alongside commentaries by Shams al-Din al-Sumatra'i[215] and poetic responses by Hasan

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[211] A contaminated manuscript is one that incorporates readings from more than one exemplar. Rather than preserving a single line of transmission, such manuscripts blend variants from different sources, complicating the reconstruction of a stemma codicum but also reflecting the fluidity of textual practices in manuscript cultures.

[212] Ibid.

[213] See Kratz, 1981, 233–37; see also Hadijah, 2001, 73–79 and passim, who notes that in traditional Malay literature, authorship was often understood in communal terms, with scribes, compilers, and commentators all contributing to the life of a text. This open and adaptive model of textual transmission resonates with Hamzah's instructions.

[214] Ibid.

[215] See A. Hasjmy, 1976; Drewes and Brakel, 1986; Wan Mohd Saghir, 1996.

Fansuri and ʿAbd al-Jamal. His works also crossed linguistic boundaries, as seen in Javanese translations of *The Drinks for Lovers* and *The Adept*[216] produced in the 17th and 18th centuries. Together, these layers of commentary, imitation, and translation illustrate the collaborative and evolving character of Sufi literary production in the Malay world.

2.7 Constructed chronology

Hamzah Fansuri remains an enigmatic yet foundational figure in the intellectual history of Malay Sufism. Due to the scarcity of contemporary historical records, scholarly reconstructions of his life depend on textual, epigraphic, and circumstantial evidence. This section reviews competing chronologies, giving priority to evidence that supports an earlier dating while also addressing alternative views.

2.7.1 Evidence supporting an earlier timeline

A funerary stele discovered in the Bāb Maʾlā cemetery in Mecca, dated 9 Rajab 933 AH (11 April 1527 AD), provides a key piece of epigraphic evidence for revising Hamzah's chronology.[217] Reported by Guillot and Kalus, the inscription bears the name Shaykh Ḥamzah bin ʿAbd Allāh al-Fanṣūrī, suggesting that Hamzah's activity and influence predate the rise of Aceh's political dominance, likely placing him in the second half of the 15th to early 16th centuries.[218] This timeline aligns with the Aden-Jawi Sufi networks identified by Feener and

[216] See Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 226–77.

[217] See Guillot and Kalus, 2000, 4.

[218] Ibid.

Laffan, which linked Southeast Asia to Mecca and Yemen during the 15th century.[219] Their analysis of the *nisba al-Jāwī* further shows that this adjectival patronymic was in use from at least the 13th century.[220]

Internal textual evidence from Hamzah's own writings also supports this earlier dating. In *The Adept*, he refers to *kata orang Pasai* ('the language of Pasai'),[221] implying that he was active when Pasai still flourished as a centre of Islamic scholarship,[222] prior to its annexation by Aceh in 1524. Brakel's linguistic analysis reinforces this interpretation, arguing that Hamzah's orientation toward Pasai, rather than Aceh, suggests his literary and spiritual career predated Aceh's political consolidation.[223]

Laffan challenges Braginsky's identification of Hamzah as Acehnese, arguing instead that Hamzah self-identifies with Fansur (Barus) rather than with the emerging Acehnese polity. He posits that later Acehnese chroniclers retrospectively absorbed earlier figures such as Hamzah into Aceh's historical narrative, much as they appropriated the royal graves of Samudra-Pasai following its annexation. If Hamzah resided in Mecca during the early 16th century, at a time

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[219] See Feener and Laffan, 2005, 205.

[220] Ibid., 185–208.

[221] Hamzah Fansuri, *Al-Muntahī,* (*The Adept*) in al-Attas 1970, 350.

[222] The Pasai region of north Sumatra was already Muslim by 1282. See al-Attas, 1970, 198; B. A. Andaya, "Malacca," in *EI3*, https://doi-org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0641

[223] See Brakel, 1979, 88.

when Aceh was still consolidating its influence, it would be consistent for him to maintain his identification with Fansur rather than Aceh.[224]

Kersten adds further support by noting that Hamzah cites the Persian Sufi poet Jami (d. 1492) as the most recent authoritative Sufi in his corpus.[225] This reference suggests that Hamzah's active period falls no later than the early 16th century. Riddell similarly emphasizes Hamzah's association with Fansur (Barus), a major cultural and commercial centre documented in both Asian and European sources.[226] Miswari further notes that by the 17th century Barus had declined substantially, reinforcing the likelihood of Hamzah's earlier activity.[227]

An additional argument for an earlier chronology is the absence of references to Aceh's political ascendance in Hamzah's writings. As Kersten observes, had Hamzah lived during Sultan Iskandar Muda's reign (r. 1607–1636), a period of intense Islamic scholarship and court patronage, it would be striking for him not to mention Aceh's political and cultural centrality.[228] Hamzah's focus on Pasai instead suggests a pre-Acehnese intellectual milieu. Moreover, a cursory search in the Malay Concordance Project indicates that terms such as *tombak Jawa*, *gajah mina*, and *ular cintamani* occur in early Malay texts, and their usage in Hamzah's poetry aligns more closely with the registers of the *Sulalat al-Salāṭīn* and early *hikayat* than later

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[224] See Laffan, 2009, 145.

[225] See Kersten, 2017, 20–1.

[226] See Riddel, 2017, 21. See J. Drakard, "Barus." In *EI3 Online*, https://doi-org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23476.

[227] See Miswari, 2023.

[228] See Kersten, 2017.

literary works. While this evidence is preliminary, it highlights the value of further concordance-based studies of Hamzah's lexicon as a means of refining the chronology of his writings.

2.7.2 Later timelines

Prior to the discovery of the Meccan stele, the dominant scholarly view placed Hamzah in the mid-16th to early 17th centuries. Hurgronje speculated that Hamzah was born in the mid-16th century, basing this on geographic references to Barus in his poetry. A. Hasjmy proposed 1636 as Hamzah's active period, a view supported by Abdul Hadi,[229] who situated Hamzah's work within the 'golden age' of the Acehnese court under Sultan Iskandar Muda.[230]

Winstedt and Braginsky likewise linked Hamzah to Iskandar Muda's reign, suggesting that he died around 1630.[231] This later dating reflects the enduring influence of Hamzah's works and their prestige during Aceh's intellectual flourishing.

Earlier scholars such as Hurgronje and Kraemer argued that Hamzah's works became prominent during the reign of Sultan ʿAlaʾ al-Din Riʾayat Shah al-Mukammil (r. 1589–1604), when debates over *waḥdat al-wujūd* intensified.[232] Amirul notes that both Sultan 'Ala al-Din Riʾayat Shah and Sultan Iskandar Muda supported the *wujūdiyya* teachings[233] associated with

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[229] Abdul Hadi agrees with Kraemer and Doorenbos' conclusion based their philological studies (2001, 126–135).

[230] See Lombard 1967, 159–164.

[231] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 126–135.

[232] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 126–135; Amirul, 2004.

[233] See Amirul, 2004, 64.

Hamzah Fansuri and Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi. The latter, who served as Shaykh al-Islam at the Acehnese court under both rulers, played a major role in disseminating Sufi teachings.[234]

While Shams al-Din's writings affirm his reverence for Hamzah, there is no direct evidence that they were contemporaries.[235] Although later scholars often linked Hamzah to the Acehnese court, this association is challenged by the absence of explicit references to Aceh in Hamzah's prose and poetry.

2.7.3 Birth and burial sites

Hamzah's final resting place remains disputed. Guillot and Kalus propose Mecca, citing the 1527 stele found at the Bāb Maʾlā cemetery. By contrast, Acehnese traditions point to several possible burial sites, including Oboh Village in the Rundeng District (South Aceh)[236] and Ujung Pancu Village in Pekan Bada District (Aceh Besar).[237] Abdul Hadi, however, notes that these claims lack corroborating historical evidence.[238]

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[234] See Muhammad Nasrin, 2019, 36–9.

[235] See "Kitab Syarah Ruba'i Syeikh Hamzah," by Shams al-Din in A. Hasjmy, 1979, 31–83; see "Tafsir Perkataan Syeikh Hamzah al-Fansuri," by Shams al-Din in Wan Mohd Saghir, 1996, 43–67; see Shams al-Din's commentary to Hamzah Fansiri's poem in his book *Ḥaqq al.Yaqīn fī Aqīdat al-Muḥaqiqqīn* (*The Absolute Certainty in the Belief of the Verifiers*), in Mohammad Nasrin, 2019, 152–160.

[236] See A. Hasjmy, 1984, 11; Mardinal, 2016, 19.

[237] See Jodhi Yudono. "Hamzah Fansuri, Jasadnya Satu, Makamnya Di Mana-Mana." *Kompas.com*, December 2, 2013. Online. https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2013/11/02/0712065/Hamzah.Fansuri.Jasadnya.Satu.Makamnya.di.Mana-mana.

[238] See Abdul Hadi, 2001.

Taken together, the available evidence supports a reconstructed chronology in which Hamzah flourished in the second half of the 15th century to the early 16th century. This dating is consistent with Guillot and Kalus's epigraphic findings, Kersten's citation analysis of Jami, and Miswari's reconstruction of Barus's historical trajectory. Alternative chronologies linking Hamzah to Aceh's 'golden age' remain useful interpretive frameworks, but they are ultimately undermined by Hamzah's silence on Aceh's political dominance.

Despite persuasive arguments for an earlier dating, the lack of definitive biographical records and the reliance on later manuscript copies continue to pose challenges. These uncertainties invite further inquiry and ensure that Hamzah remains a dynamic and enduring figure in the intellectual history of Malay Sufism.

Table 2.1: Chronology of Hamzah Fansuri's life and influence

Time Period	Key Events and Activities
Pre-1527	Probable flourishing period based on funerary stele found in Mecca (Guillot and Kalus 2000).
9 Rajab 933 H / 11 April 1527 AD	A funerary stele in the Bāb Maʾlā cemetery in Mecca bears the name Shaykh Ḥamzah bin ʿAbd Allāh al-Fanṣūrī, suggesting an early 16th-century death (Guillot and Kalus 2000).
Mid-16^{h} Century	Speculated birth in Barus (Hurgronje 1906), or Ayuthia (Lombard, 1990);
Late 16^{h} Century	Recognized as an influential Sufi, active independently of the Acehnese court (Hurgronje 1906; Kraemer 1921; Lombard 1990).
Mid-16th – early 17th Centuries	Kramer (1921), Doorenbos (1933), Al-Attas (1986), and Braginsky (1999) place Hamzah's active years between these broad dating.
Circa 1590	Estimated death date (Drewes and Brakel 1986; Riddell 2004; Johns 2009).

1589 – 1604	Possible influence during the reign of Sultan ʿAla al-Din Riʾayat Syah al-Mukammil, amid heightened debates over *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Djajadiningrat 1979; Lombard 1986; Mardinal 2016).
Early 17^{h} Century	Continued dissemination of Hamzah's poetry and teachings (al-Attas 1970; Drewes 1986).
1607	Sultan Iskandar Muda ascends the throne; Hamzah's influence persists (Djajadiningrat 1979; Lombard 1986).
1620	Beaulieu records the presence of a spiritual figure at the Acehnese court, thought by some to be Hamzah (Braginsky 1992).
1630	Death of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatraʾi; Hamzah retrospectively viewed as belonging to an earlier generation (Hurgronje 1906).
Circa 1636	Proposed death date for Hamzah Fansuri (Winstedt 1969; Hadiwijono 1967; Hasjmy 1984, 1986).
1637	Alleged presence in Minangkabau during persecution of *wujūdiyya* adherents (Iskandar 1987).
Post-1637	Continued posthumous influence; poetry interpreted as veiled critique of Iskandar Muda's materialism (Braginsky 1992; Djajadiningrat 1979; Lombard 1986).

Concluding remarks

This chapter has examined the life, works, and metaphysical framework of Hamzah Fansuri, situating him within the broader context of Malay Sufi literary history and Islamic intellectual traditions. His articulation of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in Malay, shaped by Akbarian metaphysics and expressed through refined poetic forms, represents a foundational moment in the development of Southeast Asian Sufism. Through a close reading of his prose and poetry, this chapter has highlighted Hamzah's commitment to metaphysical clarity, rooted cosmopolitanism, and literary innovation.

Despite the challenges posed by the absence of holograph manuscripts and the uncertainties surrounding his chronology, Hamzah's enduring legacy is evident in the preservation and reinterpretation of his works through later commentaries, the transmission of his writings across regions, and his continued relevance in modern scholarly and literary discourse.

The arguments presented here favour an earlier chronology for Hamzah's flourishing (15th–early 16th century), supported by epigraphic evidence, his orientation toward Pasai, and the absence of Acehnese political references in his corpus. Lexical evidence from the Malay Concordance Project, such as the early usage of *tombak Jawa*, *gajah mina*, and *ular cintamani*, further strengthens the case for situating Hamzah within an earlier literary register, though this requires more sustained study.

Taken together, Hamzah's writings not only localized Sufi thought but also expanded the expressive range of Malay as a medium of Islamic metaphysical inquiry. His legacy, refracted through manuscript transmission, commentary, and literary imitation, affirms his status as a formative and enduring voice in the intellectual history of Islam in Southeast Asia.

PART II: THE POETICS OF LOVE IN HAMZAH FANSURI'S MYSTICAL VISION

Overview

Part II explores how Hamzah Fansuri constructs a poetics of love grounded in Sufi metaphysics and expressed through Malay literary forms. It examines how Hamzah uses poetic language to present love not merely as an emotion or motif, but as the structuring force of Being that originates creation, guides annihilation, and shapes mystical knowledge.

Previous scholarship highlighted key aspects of Hamzah's poetry yet leaves important dimensions unaddressed. Braginsky identifies Persian literary influences and recurring motifs such as the sea (*laut*, *baḥr*), the beloved (*kekasih*, *maʿshūq, maḥbūb*), and wine (*shurbat*, *arak*, *tapai*), treating them primarily as inherited symbols.[239] Abdul Hadi, through a hermeneutic reading (*taʾwil*) grounded in Qurʾanic intertextuality, emphasizes Hamzah's disruption of syntactic order (*destruksi bahasa*) as a means for mystical insight.[240] Brakel was the first to note Hamzah's punning as a stylistic feature,[241] while Wieringa and Meyer draw attention to the semantic density of his language,[242] particularly in translation.[243] These studies identify

[239] See Braginsky, 1993, *passim*; *idem*, 2004, *passim*.

[240] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 205–6, 238–240.

[241] See Brakel, 1979, 82–5.

[242] See Wieringa, 2005, 396–8; Meyer, 2019, 354.

[243] See Meyer, 2019, 354.

important elements of Hamzah's poetics but do not show how his poetry integrates plurilingual expression, symbolic layering, and metaphysical vision into a unified literary practice.

Chapter 3 focuses on poetic form. It examines how Hamzah adapts *syair* and *pantun* by combining Qurʾanic allusion, symbolic condensation, and rhythmic patterning to articulate metaphysical meaning. His plurilingual diction, blending Malay with Arabic and occasionally Persian, enables the fusion of Sufi vocabulary with local literary forms. Through devices such as repetition, enantiosemy, and phonological resonance, his verse stages mystical knowledge as affective experience and contemplative encounter.

Chapter 4 turns to the metaphysics of love. It analyzes how Hamzah reconfigures Arabic Sufi terms, such as *ʿishq*, *ḥubb*, *shawq*, *sukr*, and *hawāʾ*, through Malay expressions such as *berahi*, *kasih*, *sayang*, *mabuk*, and *gila*. The chapter develops three interwoven registers: ontological love as the cause of Being; transformative love as the realization of *tawḥīd*, articulated in terms such as *lenyap* or *fanāʾ* (annihilation) and *bertemu* or *wiṣāl* (encountering, arrival, 'union'); and experiential love as perception shaped by longing, perplexity, and ecstatic return to the Beloved. Through these registers, Hamzah articulates love as both the structure of divine self-disclosure and the seeker's mode of knowing.

Plurilingual punning and polysemous resonance are central to Hamzah's mystical language. Terms such as *laut/lāhūt* (Mal. sea / Ar. divine nature), *adamu/ʿadam* (Mal. your existence / Ar. non-existence), and *karam* (Mal. drown; Ar. generosity, nobility) serve not as ornament but as metaphysical operations. These overlaps dissolve binary distinctions, rendering the paradoxes of divine immanence and transcendence. His language draws the reader into a l mode of reflection where sound and meaning disclose the Oneness of Being.

Hamzah's poetics are performative. His poems both describe mystical states and enact them. Through sonic patterning, symbolic layering, and structural recursion, his verse induces contemplative attention. This aligns with broader Sufi traditions in which poetry functions as invocation and unveiling.[244]

Rather than presenting Hamzah as an isolated literary innovator,[245] this part situates Hamzah within a shared idiom of Sufi poetics circulating across the Malay, Arabic, and Persianate worlds. His originality lies not in departure from tradition but in reworking it through Malay literary idioms. Comparative readings with early and contemporaneous Malay texts, supported by concordance-based evidence from the Malay Concordance Project, highlight the specificity of his metaphysical vocabulary and its resonances within a wider textual ecology.[246] His poetry demonstrates how local forms became vessels for transregional metaphysics, expanding the expressive range of Malay as a language of mystical thought.

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[244] On the performative and invocatory dimensions of Sufi poetics, see Kris and Ludovico (2023, who show how Akbarian prayer texts function not only as descriptions of divine intimacy but as sonic and semantic acts that generate contemplative presence. Cf. Zargar, 2024, who emphasizes how Sufi poetry functions as a performative 'religion of love,' effecting self-transformation through affective language rather than propositional statement.

[245] 19th and 20th century philological scholarship, most notably by Kraemer (1921), Doorenbos (1933), Teeuw (1966), Voorhoeve (1968), and Brakel (1979), sought to locate the origin of the *syair* in a singular literary figure. These studies portrayed Hamzah Fansuri as the inventor or formalizer of the *syair* form, drawing on structural and philological evidence. Brakel, for instance, describes him as 'an imitator when seen from a general Muslim perspective, but an innovative genius in the field of Indonesian literature' (Brakel, 1979, 85). Al-Attas (1968), while critical of Dutch Orientalist methods, nonetheless maintained Hamzah's literary primacy, arguing that he was the first to establish the *syair* as a four-line mystical form in Malay literature. Sweeney (1971), in contrast, cautioned against overstating Hamzah's authorial originality, noting that similar quatrain patterns and oral poetic structures predated his work, and that his achievement lies more in adaptation and spiritual deepening than in invention per se.

[246] See Chapter 1.7 (p. 28) of this dissertation for a description of the Malay Concordance Project.

By tracing the interplay of form, diction, and metaphysical vision, Part II shows how Hamzah's verse sustains a poetics of love that is both linguistic and ontological, where to write, recite, or read is already to journey into the structure of divine desire.

CHAPTER 3. THE POETICS OF HAMZAH FANSURI

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how Hamzah Fansuri integrates Sufi metaphysics with Malay poetic forms, particularly *syair* and *pantun*, using them as vehicles for spiritual instruction. His poetry reflects the literary register of Malay developed from the 15th century onward, enriched by plurilingual incorporating Arabic and, to a lesser extent, Persian. These poetic structures enabled him to articulate mystical experience through accessible yet layered linguistic expressions, employing terms such as *wujūd* (Being, existence, finding), *maʿrifa* (gnosis, direct recognition), and *wiṣāl* (union, encounter, connection).

Malay poetic tradition evolved within a literary landscape shaped by oral and written transmission.[247] Hamzah mastered these forms, adapting them for Sufi discourse while preserving their formal and rhythmic characteristics.[248] Writing in *Jawi*, the Arabic script adapted for Malay, he fluently integrates Arabic lexicon into Malay syntax, employing poetic devices that balance metaphysical precision with aesthetic resonance.

The chapter contextualizes Hamzah's poetic innovation within the evolving Malay literary tradition in the 15th and 16th centuries, emphasizing the inseparability of poetic form and mystical meaning. It explores how his structural choices transmit Sufi teachings while aligning with broader currents in Islamic mystical poetry. His use of metaphor and symbolic imagery

[247] See Harun, 1989; Sweeney, 1990; Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2008.

[248] See Braginsky, 2004, 119.

mediates material and spiritual realities, positioning his verse as both aesthetic and didactic. Moreover, the rhythmic and contemplative qualities of his poems resonate with the meditative functions of Sufi verse.[249]

3.2 Poetry as mystical expression

Hamzah employs his poems as a medium of spiritual instruction. He regards poetry as a devotional act that transcends aesthetic pleasure and serves to disclose divine truths. For him, verse is not entertainment but a didactic art guiding readers and listeners toward spiritual realization. The *syair,* derived from the Arabic *shiʿr* (poetry), shares a root with *shuʿūr* (perception), meaning to know or perceive in an immediate and holistic manner.[250] This etymological link underlines the intrinsic connection between poetry and mystical insight, both of which reveal truths beyond ordinary understanding.[251] In Sufi thought, poetry is more than an artistic expression; it is a manifestation of divine inspiration.

Hamzah's approach to poetry parallels that of ʿAttar, Ibn ʿArabi and Rumi, all of whom he references in his writings.[252] ʿAttar, as Feuillebois has shown, privileges poetry over prose for its metrical capacity to disclose creation's secrets, He classifies verse into three ascending

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[249] See Schimmel's analysis of the link between poetic form and spiritual function in Sufi poetry. She explains how rhythmic structure supports *dhawq*, facilitates contemplation, and mirrors the rhythm of *dhikr*, guiding emotional and spiritual absorption (Schimmel 1982, 7–9).

[250] In Arabic, most words derive from triliteral roots that convey core meanings and generate related terms through morphological patterns. The Arabic root *sh-ʿ-r* connects *shiʿr* (poetry) and *shuʿūr* (perception, awareness), indicating an intuitive, holistic mode of knowing often associated with spiritual perception in Islamic thought. See Addas, 1996, 18.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Al-Attas notes the marked influence of Ibn ʿArabi on Hamzah, along with the thoughts of figures like ʿAttar, Rumi, al-Hallaj, and Jami (1970, 14).

levels of material, intellectual, and spiritual, with the highest form resembling divine revelation.[253] Rumi likens himself to a reed flute through which divine breath flows, presenting poetry as a vessel of divine love.[254] Ibn ʿArabi, as Addas shows, regarded poetry as divinely instituted, its rhythms and structures reflecting the order of creation itself. He saw verse as the privileged medium for concealing and transmitting gnostic truths, its allusive language serving both to veil and to unveil divine knowledge.[255] Zargar further emphasizes that for ʿAṭṭar, poetry functions as transformative speech within a 'religion of love,' reshaping the self through affective language rather than propositional statement.

Hamzah and his followers repeatedly differentiate between verse aimed at idle entertainment and verse oriented toward spiritual realization. This ethical distinction resonates with Ibn ʿArabī's view that the value of poetry lies not in form alone but in intention (*niyya*), whereby verse composed in remembrance of God participates in the cosmic order, while other compositions remain profane.[256] This distinction, rooted in intention rather than in content alone, is fundamental to Hamzah's poetic philosophy.

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[253] See Feuillebois, n.d., 21–22.

[254] Ibid., 22.

[255] Addas, 1996, 9–11 and passim.

[256] See McAuley, 2012, 32–58, 52–54.

3.2.1 Intention and devotion

Hamzah's ethical commitment to truth is consistent with Qur'anic perspective on poetry in *Sūrat al-Shuʿarāʾ* ('*The Poets'*),[257] which contrasts those poets who mislead others with those who believe, act righteously, and align their speech with divine guidance. Hamzah's poetry employs symbolism, allegory, and Qurʾanic language to articulate *tawḥīd* and the reality of existence.[258]

Consider the following excerpt:[259]

Kata ini tamthīl *dan pantun,* *Bukannya nyanyi sindirkan bandun,*[260] *Jika belum* maḥbūb *berkata santun,* *Manakan dapat pagar kau bantun.*	Translation: These are allegories and rhymed verse, Not teasing songs in playful performance.[261]

[257] Quran 26:224–227: 'And the poets — the perverse follow them; hast thou not seen how they wander in every valley and how they say that which they do not? Save those that believe, and do righteous deeds, and remember God oft, and help themselves after being wronged, and those who do wrong shall surely know by what overturning they will be overturned.'

[258] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 219–227

[259] Poem XX, quatrain 14, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 104.

[260] Drewes and Brakel (1986, 104, 147) were uncertain how to interpret the transliteration <*bd-a-n*> in Cod. Or. 2016. They transcribed it as *bandun*, 'on account of the rhyme,' marked it with a question mark, and translated it hypothetically as 'alluding to earthly love (?)' (ibid., 105). They also suggested it might be *badan*, following Doorenbos (1933, 49). Braginsky (1993, 69) uses *bandun*, and Abdul Hadi working with MS Jak. Mal. 83, also transcribes it as *bandun* (Abdul Hadi, 2001, 410). Neither Braginsky nor Abdul Hadi provides an explanation of its meaning. I suggest that *bandun* is a variant of the Javanese *bondan*/*bandan*, and possibly Old Javanese *baṇḍuṅ*. Abdul Hadi notes the presence of Javanese words in Hamzah Fansuri's poems (Abdul Hadi, 2001, 273). In his glossary of terms from the 32 poems, he identifies six Javanese words (ibid., 437–38).

[261] I translate *bandun as* 'playful performance,' referring to its variant *bondan*, an obsolete term for a type of dance, as noted in Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings, online, s.v. *bondan*; *bandan*. The term may also relate to Old Javanese *baṇḍuṅ,* meaning 'together' or 'at the same time,' associated with accompanying song or mantra. See OJED online, s.v. *baṇḍuṅ, abaṇḍuṅ, pabaṇḍuṅ, amaṇḍuṅi, binaṇḍuṅan.*

> If the Beloved has not spoken with grace,
> How could your fence ever be torn up?

Hamzah distinguishes his verse from compositions intended for light entertainment. In early Malay usage, *sindir* denoted imaginative or fictional writing rather than satire alone, and *nyanyi sindir* referred to teasing or playful song.[262] By juxtaposing *tamthīl* (allegory) and *pantun* (symbolic verse) with *nyanyi* and *sindir*, Hamzah critiques not the forms themselves but the intention behind them. He does not dismiss genres such as *pantun* or *nyanyi*, which could also carry moral weight and didactic functions. For instance, the Javanese *tari bandan* dramatizes maternal care.[263] Hamzah adapts these forms (*nyanyi*, *sindir,* and *bandun/bandan*[264]) to Sufi pedagogy, redirecting them toward spiritual meaning.

The final couplet grounds poetic efficacy in divine initiative: unless the *maḥbūb* (Beloved) speaks with grace, the *pagar* (fence of the ego-self) cannot be torn up. The verb *bantun*, 'to uproot, pull up the foundations; figuratively, heartbreak,' intensifies the image.[265] Poetic form (*pantun*) becomes meaningful only when the fence of self (*pagar*) is broken open by the Beloved's word, a paradox reinforced by the rhyme *pantun/bantun*.

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[262] *Sindir* carried the meaning *karangan rekaan* or *karangan khayalan*; see Chambert-Loir (2004, 266, 377). Wilkinson, online, s.v. *sindir*, glosses it as 'teasing' or 'chaff by innuendo,' and *sindir nyanyi* as 'teasing in song.' For further discussion, see Fairuzzaman Shaharuddin, "A Case Study of Malay Professional Satirists," PhD Diss., Goethe University of Frankfurt, 2023, 12, who notes that modern Malay typically translates *sindir* as 'satire' or 'humour.'

[263] *Bondan* is a variant of *bandan*, an obsolete term for a kind of dance, as noted in Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings, online, s.v. *bondan*; *bandan*.

[264] *Bandan* is a dance performed by children to a *pantun* accompaniment, see Wilkinson, online, s.v. *bandan*; *main bandan*.

[265] Wilkinson, online, s.v. *bantun*.

Hamzah's verse also demonstrates sophisticated use of sound patterns. Repetition of /a/ and /i/ vowels in *tamthīl*, *nyanyi*, and *sindir*, and of /a/ and /u/ in *pantun*, *bandun*, *santun*, and *bantun*, creates sonic cohesion. Alliteration is evident in the recurring /b/ and /s/ consonants. The rhyme is carried by the recurrent endings in *-tun* (*pantun, santun, bantun*), with *bandun* forming a close phonetic echo through the related dental consonants /d/ and /t/. Plosive consonants such as /t/ and /d/ sharpen the rhythm. Together these features reinforce the quatrain's structural symmetry and thematic coherence.

Hamzah also warns against the misuse of mystical language by those who have not reached mature spiritual knowledge. In his treatise *The Drink of Lovers*, he writes:[266]

> Regarding those who are overwhelmed with love and cannot keep their secret, such as Mawlana Rumi, who exclaims, '*Man khudā am! Man khudā am! Man khudā am!*' (I am God! I am God! I am God!), he speaks in a state of mystical intoxication, not from personal desire. Similarly, Shaykh Mansur [al-Ḥallaj] declares, '*Ana al-ḥaqq*!' (I am the True!). We must not imitate their utterances, for we are not overcome by such a state.

The guidance is clear: such utterances belong to ecstatic states not accessible to all seekers. Instead, Hamzah emphasizes truthfulness and restraint in both poetic and mystical discourse.

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[266] Original text: '*Adapun akan orang berahi yang tiada dapat menaruh rahasia[nya] seperti kata Mawlana Rūmī, "Man khudā am! Man khudā am! Man khudā am!" (Aku Allah! Aku Allah! Aku Allah!) Katanya itu kata mabuk, bukan hawa nafsunya. Dan [seperti kata] Shaykh Mansur [al-Ḥallaj] mengatakan "Ana al-ḥaqq!" Itu pun [demikian] jangan kita menurut katanya kerana kita tiada maghlūb al-ḥāl*' Hamzah Fansuri, *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn* (*The Drink of Lovers*) in al-Attas, 1970, 327.

Though poetic forms like *pantun* and *nyanyi* may elicit emotional intensity, Hamzah affirms that true seekers are drawn to poetry for its capacity to facilitate the spiritual journey.[267] He equates the realization of love with a state of unity, presenting love as both lived experience and literary expression. This insistence on sincerity in poetic expression aligns with Ibn ʿArabi's emphasis on *niyya* (intention), whereby the spiritual value of poetry depends on the union of form, content, and purpose.

Although Hamzah does not explicitly label his verse as *shaʾir* (Mal. *syair*) in extant writings, later authors offer varying classifications.[268] Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi compared his poems to the *rubāʿī*.[269] while Hasan Fansuri described them as *rubāʿ al-muḥaqqiqīn*,[270] four-line verses expressing the Sufi path and gnosis. Some manuscripts such as Cod. Or. 2016, label his poems as *shaʿir*, a likely scribal attribution.[271]

Even without explicit genre naming, Hamzah's own description of his verse as *empat secawang pada sebuah bayt*[272] (four branches in a house) describes a four-line structure typical of the

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[267] See Hamzah Fansuri, *Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*) in al-Attas, 1970, 234.

[268] See Teeuw, 1966, 435.

[269] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 117.

[270] See Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi, *Sharh Rubāʿī Hamzah Fansuri*, in Abdul Hadi, 2001, 183.

[271] For instance, the heading for Poem I in *Cod. Or. 2016, folio 28v.*, is written as: '*shaʾir jāwī faṣl fī bayān al-tawḥīd*' (Malay poetry explaining the *tawḥīd*), in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 92, [untitled] Poem XVII. See also Abdul Hadi, 2001, 326.

[272] Hamzah Fansuri, *Asrār al-ʿĀrifīn* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*) in al-Attas, 1970, 234.

syair. This layered use of *syair* enabled him to address both learned and lay audiences, maintaining ties to oral tradition through repetition, rhythm, and intertextual reference.[273]

3.2.2 Qur'anic allusion and theophanic speech

Hamzah frequently embeds Qurʾanic verses, *aḥadīth*, and sayings attributed to the Prophet's companions into the structure of Malay *syair*.[274] His poetic discourse incorporates these scriptural references as integral elements of Sufi teaching. According to Abdul Hadi, Hamzah's use of Qur'anic phrases is deliberate and frequent, with some poems containing two or three distinct citations in a single quatrain.[275] Across 32 poems, at least 82 Qur'anic verses have been identified, underscoring the foundational role of the Qur'an in his poetic metaphysics.[276]

By embedding these references into Malay syntax, Hamzah achieves a seamless intertextual weave that mirrors the Sufi tradition of drawing on revelation to articulate esoteric truths. The result is a poetry that guides reflection while grounding itself in the Sacred Word.[277]

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[273] See Sweeney (1990) and Muhammad Haji Salleh (2008) who emphasize that Malay poetry, even in written form, remains performative, using repetition, rhythm, and intertextual references to engage audiences.

[274] See Steenbrink, 1995; P. G. Riddell, "Three Pioneering Malay Works of Quranic Exegesis: A Comparative Study," in *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter*, ed. by D. Pratt et al., 309–25. Brill, 2015. See also Riddell (2017) for a preliminary examination of Hamzah Fansuri's rendition of Quranic verses in Malay

[275] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 220.

[276] Ibid., 222. In addition to the 82 verses cited by Hamzah, Abdul Hadi lists a total of 83 Quranic phrases (ibid., 413–415), including *al-arḍ wa al-samāwāt*, though he does not count this. While *al-samāwāt wa al-arḍ* occurs frequently in the Qur'an, it never appears in the inverted order *al-arḍ wa al-samāwāt*, as found in MS Leiden Cod. Or. 2016 (Poem XI, fol. 37v) and MS Jakarta Mal. 83, (ibid., 370).

[277] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 219–220.

A recurring Qur'anic verse in his poems is *wa-huwa maʿakum ayna-mā kuntum* (He is with you wherever you are, Q. 57:4).[278] Hamzah uses this to illustrate divine immanence as unveiled through *tajallī*, theophanic disclosure. Consider the following quatrain:[279]

Wa-huwa maʿa-kum *dengarkan pulang,* *Pada* ayna-mā kuntum firmānnya *datang,* Ẓāhir*nya kata di tengah padang,* Tafakkur *kita di sini jangan alang-alang.*	Translation: 'He is with you'—listen and return, 'Wherever you are,' He declares, His word is revealed upon the luminous plain, Let not our reflection be half-hearted.

This quatrain dramatizes the moments of divine disclosure (*tajallī*), where speech becomes manifest in the open expanse of *padang*.[280] In Hamzah's lexicon, *padang* signifies more than terrain, it denotes an expansive field of brightness, a site of theophany akin to Ibn ʿArabi's description of the 'brilliant radiance of Being.'[281] The line *ẓāhirnya kata* (His manifest word) articulates divine presence not as abstraction but as a reality discerned through reflection (*tafakkur*).

Hamzah's imperative *Tafakkur kita di sini jangan alang-alang* (Let not our reflection be half-hearted) stresses sustained spiritual contemplation, a central Sufi discipline. In Arabic, *tafakkur* denotes deep, purposeful reflection, and this is mirrored in the Malay *fikirkan*. The suffix *-kan* in *fikirkan* signals an action directed toward an intended effect or outcome, reinforcing the

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[278] Qur'an 57:4.

[279] Poem XIII, quatrain 8 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82.

[280] On *padang* as a symbolic field of theophany, see Chapters 3.4 and 4.2 of this dissertation; see also Chapter 3.4 (pp. 105–6 n. 360) for a detailed discussion of *padang* as a site of *tajallī*.

[281] See Winkel, 2020a, 650.

imperative force of the verb. The parallel highlights the emphasis on steady, outcome-oriented attention as a path to divine realization.

A second quatrain reiterates the same Qurʾanic verse:[282]

Wa-huwa maʿa-kum *inilah* maʿna*nya dalam,* *Jangan kau pandang pada bunyi dan ragam,* *Fikirkan hendak siang dan malam,* *Supaya dapat dirimu karam.*	Translation: 'He is with you'—its meaning profound, Do not fix your gaze on sound/concealment and form, Reflect on this through night and day, That your self be drowned/enobled.

Here, Hamzah cautions against fixation on sensory phenomena of *bunyi* (sound, concealment)[283] and *ragam* (form, variation), urging for continuous reflection (*fikir*) that leads to *karam*,[284] mystical submersion in divine proximity.

These two quatrains expound in Qurʾan 57:4, portraying theophanic presence as a lived, continuous unveiling. As explored further in Chapter 3.4, *padang* in Hamzah's usage is not merely metaphorical but a symbolic landscape where divine radiance becomes perceptible. The natural world is recast as a reflective surface through which the divine Self reveals Itself to those who contemplate with sincerity.

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[282] Poem V, quatrain 6 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 56.

[283] On the semantic range of *bunyi* (sound/concealment) and its resonance with *ẓāhir*/*bāṭin*, see 3.4 and 4.6.1 of this dissertation.

[284] On *karam* as meaning both 'drowning' and 'generosity/nobility,' see Chapters 3.4 and 4.4 of this dissertation.

3.2.3 Language, ambiguity, and ontology

Hamzah's poetry demonstrates a deliberate use of linguistic ambiguity and polysemy to convey the paradoxical relationship between the Creator and creation.[285] As mentioned earlier, although he does not use the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*, his writings articulate a metaphysics aligned with the Akbarian doctrine of the Oneness of Being. All existence derives from the *wājib al-wujūd* (Necessary Being), and the cosmos simultaneously veils and discloses divine presence.[286]

In *The Secrets of the Gnostics*, Hamzah writes:[287]

> God, glorified and exalted is He, is not separate from the cosmos, but [He] is not in the cosmos, and [He] is not outside of the cosmos, and [He] is not above the cosmos, and [He] is not below the cosmos, and [He] is not [on] the right of the cosmos, and [He] is not on the left of the cosmos, and [He] is not in front of the cosmos, and [He] is not behind the cosmos. And [He] is not separate from the cosmos, and [He]

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[285] For example, see Hamzah's commentary of one his poems in "Chapter on the Gnosis of God, His Attributes, and His Names," in his treatise, *Asrār al-ʿArifīn* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*), in al-Attas, 1970, 235–96, 235–415. This is our only known commentary of his poem. The poem is Poem IV in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 50–54.

[286] Hamzah Fansuri, chapter on 'Our Lord is the Possessor of the Essence,' *Asrār al-ʿArifīn* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*), in al-Attas, 1970, 242, 361–62; ibid. p. 67; Also, "Chapter Five: On an Exposition of the Manifestations of the Pure Essence of God Most Exalted," *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn* (*The Drink of Lovers*), in al-Attas, 1970, 317, 436.

[287] '*Allāh subḥānahu wa taʿālā tiada bercerai dengan ʿ*ālam *tetapi tiada [Dia] [di] dalam ʿālam dan tiada [Dia] di luar ʿālam, dan tiada [Dia] di atas ʿālam dan tiada [Dia] di bawah ʿālam, dan tiada [Dia] [di] kanan ʿālam dan tiada [Dia] di kiri ʿālam, dan tiada [Dia] di hadapan ʿālam dan tiada [Dia] di belakang ʿālam, dan tiada [Dia] bercerai dengan ʿālam dan tiada [Dia] bertemu dengan ʿālam, dan tiada [Dia] hampir kepada ʿālam [dan tiada Dia] jauh daripada ʿālam*,' in Hamzah Fansuri, *Asrār al-ʿArifīn* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*) in al-Attas, 1970, 271.

> is not joined to the cosmos, and [He] is not near to the cosmos [and He is not] far from the cosmos.

This passage expresses the Akbarian affirmation of the simultaneity of God's immanence and transcendence. By negating spatial containment (that God is 'in' the cosmos) as well as spatial separation (that God is 'outside' the cosmos), Hamzah echoes Ibn ʿArabi's assertion that God transcends all dualities. God is neither confined within creation nor detached from it, but both manifest and veiled, present yet beyond conceptual grasp. This formulation resists any rigid conceptualization of God and guides the seeker toward experiential knowledge, in which disclosure (*tajallī*) and concealment coexist within a singular ontological reality.[288]

To express this ontological paradox, Hamzah often employs wordplay, particularly homophones across Malay and Arabic. For example, *laut* (Mal. sea, ocean) resonates with *lāhūt* (Ar. the realm of divine nature, divinity), making the ocean as both a metaphor for divine knowledge and symbol of transcendence. Similarly, *adamu* (Mal. *ada-mu*: your existence) lays against *ʿadam* (Ar. non-existence), signifying the contingency of creation in relation to the Necessary Being. These homophonic pairings heighten the layered ambiguity in Hamzah's verse. His plurilingual play functions as a metaphysical structure linking the physical and spiritual realms. It invites the reader or listener to reflect on the tension between existence and non-existence, presence and absence, Being and becoming.

[288] See Chittick, 1989; Kautsar, 1995.

Another example of this ambiguity appears in the following quatrain:[289]

Jika kau dapat haqīqat liqā',	Translation:
Di ubun-ubun jangan menyembah ḍiyā',[290]	If you grasp the truth of the meeting,
Karena Tuhan kita itu tiada riḍā',	Do not worship the radiance at your brow,
Akan ilmu cahaya dan ilmu riyā'.	For it's not pleasing to our Lord,
	The occult of light and the ostentation of learning.

Here, *ḍiyā'* (Ar. radiance, visible light) plays against *dia* (Mal. he/He or she/She), suggesting that worship directed at light risks conflating sign and source. Meyer reads *ḍiyā'* as a pun on *dia* (he/He), pointing to divine nearness veiled in created form,[291] and supports this with the line *Hampirnya sangat kepada yang mengenal Dia*[292] (He is exceedingly near to those who recognize Him), which she glosses simultaneously as 'Him' and 'Light.'[293] This interpretation represents one reading among several.

Following Akbarian hermeneutics, such expressions are intentionally polyvalent. As discussed in Chapter 1.5.3, Ibn ʿArabi's model allows for layered meanings, provided interpretations remain grounded in linguistic and theologically coherent. In this light, Hamzah's *ḍiyā'* cautions

[289] Poem III, quatrain 5 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 48.

[290] *Ḍiyā'* (light) here is used in contrast to *nūr* in Akbarian terminology. Whereas *nūr* denotes divine, uncreated light, *ḍiyā'* refers to visible, created radiance. Hamzah's use of *ḍiyā'* signals a warning against mistaking superficial illumination or spiritual vanity (*riyā'*) for divine proximity.

[291] See Meyer, 2019, 366–68.

[292] Poem V, quatrain 14, line 4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 56.

[293] See Meyer, 2019, 365.

against a kind of epistemic idolatry, that is, mistaking created brilliance or intellectual display for the Absolute Light (*nūr*), and confusing outward illumination with *maʿrifa*.

Hamzah's lexical choice of *ḍiyā'* over *nūr* reinforces this distinction. In his commentary on Ibn ʿArabi's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, Bosnevī (d. 1644) refined the usage: *nūr* is the light by which things are known though it cannot itself be grasped, whereas *ḍiyā'* is a determinate, visible mode of light that both illumines and can itself be apprehended; while *ḍiyā'* is indeed light, it is not the absolute *nūr*.[294] Armstrong-Chishti describes *nūr* as created radiance proceeding from the Uncreated Light of God, which becomes effective when it corresponds with the purified light of the heart.[295] Abdul Hadi translated *ḍiyā'* as *cahaya lahir*[296] (external light), resonating with al-Attas' metaphor of the noonday brightness of human intellect — radiant, yet incapable of penetrating the interior truths of divine reality.[297] Hamzah's admonition, 'do not worship the radiance at your brow,' warns against attaching devotion to a determinate outward luminosity or to ostentation (*riyā'*), rather than to the Divine source.

Hamzah's use of *ishārāt* (symbolic gestures or allusions) reflects a hermeneutics in which linguistic form is as important as semantic content. Ibn ʿArabi, as both Chittick[298] and

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[294] Translated by Rauf et al., 1985, 167. See Hamzah Fansuri, *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn* (*The Drink of Lovers*) in al-Attas, 1970, 316, 436.

[295] See Armstrong-Chisti, 2001, 178.

[296] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 308–9. The spelling *lahir* in Bahasa Indonesia is equivalent to *zahir* in Bahasa Malaysia, a loanword from the Arabic *ẓāhir*.

[297] See al-Attas, 1970, 70.

[298] Chittick (1989, xvi) observes the primacy of linguistic form in Ibn ʿArabi's hermeneutics: 'Ibn ʿArabi displays tremendous reverence for the literal text. The linguistic form of the text takes precedence over all else.'

Salvaggio emphasize, treats each word as a site of divine disclosure, whose phonetic and structural properties permit endless interpretive possibilities,[299] thereby preserving the multiplicity of the Real within language itself. In this sense, language is revelatory. Ambiguity in Hamzah's verse is not a flaw to be resolved but a mode of engagement: an invitation to contemplate the divine through form, rhythm, and resonance.

In this spirit, Hamzah composes verse as an open field of meaning. As Sweeney observes, 'Hamzah's poetry is a whirl of metaphors. They are no simple poetic illustrations of a point; they are the medium of cognition.'[300] Early commentaries on Hamzah's poems by Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi, Hasan Fansuri and ʿAbd al-Jamal demonstrate this hermeneutic openness, often offering multiple readings rather than definitive interpretations.[301] His verse becomes a vessel for theological, spiritual, and poetic contemplation.

A 19th century remark by the Acehnese scholar Lam Seunong reflects the dual reception of Hamzah's legacy:

> Hamzah Fansuri is very famous; his words are mixed, divided in two. Although they are mixed, you ought to know them; what is pure gold in them is very radiant.[302]

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[299] Salvaggio's (2021) exploration of polysemy in Ibn Arabi's works underscores this notion.

[300] See Sweeney, 1992, 95.

[301] See transcriptions containing commentaries of Hamzah Fansuri's poems in Johns, 1957, 39. Riddell's analysis of Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi's commentary further demonstrates this polyvalence. See Riddell, 2001, 112–15.

[302] See Voorhoeve, Teuku Iskandar and Durie, 1994, 195.

This statement recognises both the complexity of Hamzah's symbolic idiom and the enduring brilliance of his spiritual vision.

As Bauer has argued, Islamic intellectual traditions have historically upheld a culture of ambiguity: a readiness to accommodate multiple interpretations within a shared discursive space.[303] Hamzah's poetic ambiguities reflect this metaphysical pluralism, where truth unfolds through layered expression rather than fixed propositions. As Mayeur-Jaouen notes in her review of Bauer's work, while his study foregrounds ambiguity in Islamic traditions, it largely overlooks the central role of Sufi thinkers such as Ibn ʿArabi, whose mystical discourse most fully exemplifies ambiguity as a hermeneutical principle.[304] Hamzah's writings, shaped by Akbarian metaphysics, carry forward this legacy of interpretive openness as a form of divine pedagogy.

3.3 Malay poetic forms

Hamzah's poetry integrates Malay literary conventions with Sufi metaphysics, demonstrating interplay among poetic structure, linguistic fluidity, and spiritual meaning. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Malay expanded as a lingua franca across maritime Southeast Asia. 'Classical Malay,'[305] used in the royal courts and Islamic scholarship, incorporated Arabic and Persian

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[303] See Bauer, 2021, 10.

[304] See Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, "[Review] Die Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islams, written by Thomas Bauer," *Arabica* 64, no. 1 (2017): 124–25. See also Vandamme, 2023, 3, who highlights Mayeur-Jaouen's critique.

[305] Collins distinguishes between the literary-religious register of Malay used in courts and theology, and the lingua franca Malay of trade and diplomacy. He refers to the former as 'Classical Malay' but does not define the term (Collins 1998, 39). On my usage, see p. 27 of this dissertation.

elements for theological and mystical expression, while 'Lingua Franca Malay' facilitated intercultural communication in trade and commerce.[306] Hamzah bridges these registers, integrating Qurʾanic verses, *aḥadīth*, and Arabic lexicon into a literary voice capable of addressing both learned and broader audiences.

He extends the *syair* form, previously associated with storytelling and historical narrative, into a medium for mystical reflection.[307] His verses were recited and sung by students, functioning not only as literary texts but also as oral tools of Sufi instruction grounded in Scripture.

Unlike the Arabic *qaṣīda* or Persian *ghazal*, Malay *pantun* and *syair* evolved within a distinct linguistic and cultural framework shaped by oral performance, narrative flexibility, and word-based structure. These features enabled Hamzah to innovate within the *syair* and *pantun* traditions, adapting them as pedagogical tools for expressing Sufi teaching. His poetry stands at the intersection of Malay poetics and Sufi discourse, merging symbolism, rhyming and parallelism to convey spiritual insights.

3.3.1 Structural flexibility

Malay poetry developed within a flexible framework where form and function were not rigidly fixed. Unlike Arabic and Persian poetics, which follow strict quantitative metres, Malay verse evolved organically through oral performance and manuscript culture.[308] Harun notes that while

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[306] See Collins, 1998, 25; Adelaar, 2000, 229–30; Nor Azizah, 2023.

[307] See al-Attas, 1968; Teeuw 1994, 57–64; Harun, 1989; Abdul Hadi, 2001; Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2008.

[308] In traditional Malay poetry, the regularity of syllable counts, typically between eight to twelve syllables per line, is influenced by the agglutinative nature of the Malay language, where affixes are added to primarily disyllabic root words without disrupting the rhythmic structure (Harun 1989, 16, 21).

pantun and *syair* often follow recognizable structures, such as quatrains with fixed rhyme schemes, these conventions were applied flexibly, allowing regional variation.[309] The *pantun* follows an ABAB rhyme scheme and communicates meaning through symbolic language and parallelism. The *syair*, by contrast, consists of monorhymic quatrains (AAAA, BBBB, CCCC, etc.), suited to narrative development. Other forms, such as *gurindam* and *seloka*, are defined by function than by structure.[310]

Malay poets typically structured lines around four core words, a pattern observable in both *pantun* and *syair*.[311] This word-based organization supports layered semantic play, well suited to expressing metaphysical content. The agglutinative nature of Malay, where words retain their base meanings while accepting affixes, further supports poetic innovation.[312] Hamzah uses this morphological pliancy through Arabic loanwords. For example, he uses the Arabic words *ṭāʾir* (to fly, move swiftly), and *dāʾir* (to move in circles), which, when prefixed with Malay *ter-* and duplicated (*terṭāʾir- ṭāʾir*, *terdāʾir- dāʾir*), evoke imagery of birds fluttering in flight and fish circling in water.[313] These become metaphors for constant spiritual movement and divine attraction, illustrating how Arabic Sufi terms integrate rhythmically and semantically into Malay poetic syntax.

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[309] See Harun, 1989, 91.

[310] Ibid.

[311] Ibid.

[312] The agglutinative nature of Malay played a crucial role in shaping poetic structures, as Malay syllabic patterns favour disyllabic words and allow for economy of expression that alludes to layered expressions of meaning. (Harun, 1989, 16).

[313] See Chapter 4.6.1 (pp. 208–9) of this dissertation for a fuller discussion of this linguistic motif.

Although *syair* shares etymological roots with Arabic *shiʿr* (poetry), its structural evolution in Malay was independent of Arabic metrical systems.[314] Similarly, *nazam*, while derived from Persian, developed within the Malay context without replicating the Persian model.[315] This openness allowed for thematic and structural adaptation, supporting the syncretic function of Hamzah's verse.

3.3.2 Poetic devices and mystical pedagogy

Hamzah adapts *syair* and *pantun* to articulate Sufi insights.[316] Formerly used for storytelling, the *syair* becomes in his hands a container for metaphysical ideas, enriched with Qurʾanic references, *aḥadīth*, and Sufi aphorisms. His use of *tamthīl* (allegory), *ishārāt* (symbolic gestures), and *umpama* (simile, proverbial analogy) operates aesthetically and spiritually, conveying ontological truths with poetic economy.

Before poetic categories became rigid, Malay verse often overlapped in function and structure.[317] *Pantun*, for example, encompassed similes, figurative speech,[318] and songs

[314] Harun (1989, 16), building on discussions by Teeuw (1966, 429–46) and al-Attas (1968), acknowledges the Arabic origin of *syair* from *shiʿr* but emphasizes that Malay poets developed *syair* into a distinct poetic form. Braginsky (1993, 66) and Abdul Hadi (2001) similarly conclude that while *syair* retains its etymological link to *shiʿr*, its structure evolved independently within Malay literary conventions.

[315]See Harun, 1989, 15, 552.

[316] Harun (1989) notes that Malay poetry did not merely imitate but instead evolved through selective adaptation and innovation.

[317] Ibid., 55–53.

[318] Ibid., 106, citing Za'ba, *Ilmu Mengarang Melayu* (1962: 219).

(*nyanyi*[319]). Hamzah himself described his verse as *empat secawang pada sebuah bayt*, a metaphor for interconnected quatrains unfolding mystical meaning. His verse condenses complex insight into rhythmic symmetry. Through metaphor, Qurʾanic phrasing, and symbolic layering, Hamzah creates a unified imaginative space where sensorial and spiritual realms converge. This aligns with Daillie's observation that *pantun* challenges the uninitiated but rewards those who engage with its embedded metaphors and allusions.[320]

Johns observes that Hamzah's rhyme schemes and formal choices directly contribute to his metaphysical message.[321] He argues that Hamzah adapts the ABAB structure of *pantun* within *syair*, using mirroring to express ontological dualities. Johns cites this quatrain: [322]

Hunuskan mata tunukan sarung	Translation by Drewes and Brakel:[323]
Ithbāt*kan Allah* nafī*kan patung*	Draw the blade and burn the sheath,
Laut tawḥīd *yogya kau harung*	Affirm God and forswear idols,
Itulah ʿilmu tempat bernaung.	Take to the ocean of Unity,
	That is the knowledge which provides shelter.

Johns critiques their rendering of '*nafīkan patung*' as 'forswear idols,' arguing that it disrupts the parallelism between affirmation *(ithbāt*) and negation (*nafī*).[324] This mirrored structure

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[319] Teeuw notes in the oldest version of *Sulalāt al-Salāṭīn*, *pantun* referred not only to what we now recognize as a specific poetic form but also to similes, proverbs, or *nyanyi* (1994, 53).

[320] See Daillie, 2002, 47.

[321] See also Chapter 1.4 (p. 14) of this dissertation for a fuller discussion of Johns's critique of Drewes and Brakel's translation of *ithbāt* and *nafī*.

[322] Poem XV, quatrain 8 in Drewes and. Brakel, 1986, 88.

[323] Ibid., 89.

[324] See Johns, 1990, 328.

reflects the doctrine of *tawḥīd* through the simultaneous negation of all that is false and affirmation of Oneness.[325]According to Johns, Hamzah's structural choices embody doctrinal content.

Hamzah's use of *ishārāt* deepens this instructional method. His recurring metaphors, such as the ocean, light and veils, gesture toward divine realities. The symmetry and repetition in his verse generate a contemplative rhythm that mirrors Sufi recitation practices (*dhikr*). Abdul Hadi notes that Hamzah's poems serve both as aesthetically refined literary forms and as methods of spiritual instruction.[326] He transformed the narrative form into a mystical pedagogy by employing flowing quatrains and rhythmic patterns to evoke contemplation. Elsewhere, Schimmel notes that in Sufi verse, rhythm is not superficial but a sonic path to altered awareness.[327]

The *pantun*, a dominant form in Malay poetry, holds particular significance in Hamzah's mystical discourse. Its bipartite structure consists of the *pembayang* (foreshadowing or prelude) and the *maksud* or *pesan* (intended message). This form gestures toward hidden meaning[328] and resembles *ishāra*,[329] in which surface imagery veils spiritual reality.

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[325] Ibid.

[326] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 106.

[327] See Schimmel 1982, 7–8, 29–30.

[328] The *pantun*'s allure lies in its oblique method, where the allusion (*pembayang*) employs seemingly unrelated imagery to subtly prefigure the theme or message in the *maksud*. This two-part structure—the first two lines as an allusion and the final two lines delivering the main message—creates an engaging dynamic that invites the reader to decode the connection between them.

[329] See Chittick discussing Ibn 'Arabi explanation of the use of *ishāra*', 'literally to point to or to give a sign, as for example, to nod the head in agreement,' in hermeneutics (Chittick, 1989, 246).

Hamzah's adaptation of *syair* as a medium for mystical discourse represents a major development in Malay literary history. Unlike the Arabic *qaṣīda* or Persian *rubāʿī*, *syair* builds meaning through monorhymic quatrains, developing ideas over extended sequences. This structure common to Malay oral storytelling also supports contemplative engagement.[330] Each line typically contains four core words and eight to ten syllables, creating rhythmic regularity[331] suited to both oral and meditative recitation.[332]

While earlier scholars debated the origins of *syair*,[333] a recent philological study of the *Syair of Minye Tujuh* (dated 1380)[334] suggests that a proto-*syair* form predates Hamzah by at least two centuries. Hamzah's innovation lies in infusing the form with Sufi metaphysics.[335] Sweeney highlights that Malay poets tailored poetic form to cultural expectations; Hamzah's strategic choice of *syair* with its affinity to *pantun* allowed him to embed esoteric teaching in a familiar

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[330] See Braginsky 2004, 301–5.

[331] In traditional Malay poetry, the regularity of syllable counts, (8–12 syllables per line), is influenced by the affixes added to primarily disyllabic root words without disrupting the rhythmic structure (Harun 1989, 16, 21).

[332] See Harun, 1989.

[333] See the views raised by Teeuw, 1966, 1994; and al-Attas, 1968, 1970.

[334] See Willem van der Molen, "The Syair of Minye Tujuh," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 163, no. 2–3 (2008): 356–75. The Minye Tujuh inscription, discovered on a tombstone in Aceh and dated to 1380 AD, is structured in four rhyming lines, resembling the form of *syair*. While it lacks some characteristics commonly found in later *syair*, such as the exact metrical pattern, it follows the distinctive rhyme scheme and stanzaic structure of *syair*. This led van der Molen to conclude that the *syair* form may have emerged at least two centuries before Hamzah's time. Van der Molen's transliteration and translation are as follows: *guṇāñā sampurṇṇa di hrat samūhā* / *tāruk. gāsiḥta da<tang> ka samūhā* / *ilāhi yā rabbī tuhan samuhā* / *tāruḥ dalam. śwargga tuhan tatuhā.* // Her virtues were perfect in the whole world / Expiry of the allotted time (?) befalls all / O God, o Lord and Master of all / Place our exalted mistress in heaven. //

[335] See Meyer (2019) for a discussion of Hamzah's poetic integration of Sufi metaphysical thought.

structure.[336] Many of his poems extend to 13 or 21 quatrains, developing complex spiritual arguments across linked units.[337]

Harun and Braginsky emphasize that internal rhyme and euphony are integral to Malay poetic traditions, especially in *pantun*, which directly influenced Hamzah's *syair*.[338] Muhammad Haji Salleh similarly highlights Malay poetics privileging of compact meaning, symmetry, and phonetic balance.[339] He stresses that euphony and phonetic harmony are central in transmitting meaning and emotion.[340] Abdul Hadi affirms that Hamzah's use of *syair* as a mystical medium integrates Malay narrative form with transcultural Sufi ideas.[341]

3.4 Metaphors and symbols

Hamzah's poetry is distinguished by its intricate use of metaphors and symbols, shaped by Sufi traditions and Malay literary conventions. These images are not ornamental, rather they function as instruments of cognition and vehicles of spiritual encounter. As Sweeney observes, Hamzah's imagery is a 'whirl of metaphors' that conveys knowledge by enacting it, rather than merely illustrating abstract ideas.[342] The density and ambiguity of his verse naturally invited

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[336] See Sweeney, 1990, 29.

[337] Ibid.

[338] See Harun, 1989, 222.

[339] Ibid, 16.

[340] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2009, 52.

[341] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 211–2.

[342] See also Chapter 3.2.3 (p. 92) of this dissertation for Sweeney's full remark.

interpretation. As noted in Chapter 2, early commentators such as Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi, Hasan Fansuri, and ʿAbd al-Jamal produced commentaries that attest to the openness of his idiom and the exegetical engagement it inspired.[343]

Al-Attas emphasizes that Hamzah's metaphors (*ʿibārat*, *diʿibāratkan*) are deliberate articulations of metaphysical truths that elude direct expression.[344] In *The Secrets of the Gnostics,* Hamzah explains that the term 'union' (*waṣl*) with God is metaphorical, employed to help seekers conceptualize their relationship with God:[345]

> According to an expression of the people of the path, union (*wāṣil*) does not truly exist, even though it is mentioned, but only as an expression [metaphor]. In reality, no state can be termed 'union' if it pertains to an entity (*shayʾ*) and its predispositions (*shuʾūn*).[346] Such a state is not union. Union is expressed metaphorically so that all seekers may understand; without expressions, it would be impossible to speak of it, to know it, and to recognize it.

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[343] See al-Attas, 1970; A. Hasjmy, 1979; Muhammad Bukhari, 1994; Wan Mohd Saghir, 1996; Abdul Hadi, 2001; Mohd Kamal, and Mohd Syukri, 2014.

[344] Al-Attas discusses in detail Hamzah uses of the term *hendak* and *kehendak* (will) metaphorically to illustrate the illusory nature of human attributes compared to God. Al-Attas notes that *kehendak*, when applied to human will, carries only a metaphorical meaning, as human will is ultimately determined by God., 1970, 140.

[345] 'Adapun kepada suatu *ʿibārat ahl al-sulūk wāṣil* tiada sungguhpun *waṣl* dikata[kan] [tetapi hanya] pada *ʿibārat* juga. Adapun kepada *ḥaqīqat,* tiada *waṣl* namaya jika suatu *shayʾ* dengan *shuʾūn*nya. [Yang demikian itu] tiada *waṣl* hukumnya. Adapun *waṣl* di*ʿibārat*kan supaya dapat boleh sekalian *ṭālib*, jika tiada dengan *ʿibārat*, tiada sekali[-kali dapat] menyebut dia dan mengetahui dan mengenal dia,' Hamzah Fansuri, "His Union is Constant in the Sea of the Subtle," *The Secrets of the Gnostics* in al-Attas, 1970, 294–5, 413.

[346] In Hamzah's usage, *shayʾ* denotes an entity within divine knowledge, while *shuʾūn* refers to the predispositions that condition its manifestation. Following Ibn ʿArabi, these predispositions preclude any literal union (*waṣl*) with the divine. *Waṣl* thus signifies a metaphorical mode of spiritual understanding rather than ontological fusion.

This passage affirms the Sufi view that metaphor is indispensable. It mediates what cannot be stated literally, giving seekers a way to approach realities beyond rational comprehension. Schimmel reinforces this perspective, noting that mystical metaphors are active forms that animate abstraction and make it experientially vivid.[347] Drawing on the medieval German term *Einbildung* (imagination, formative envisioning), she argues that metaphors shape perception by turning otherwise inaccessible truths into lived realities. In this sense, Sufi metaphors do not merely illustrate divine realities but help constitute them through language, at once revealing and veiling the Real.[348]

Abdul Hadi describes Hamzah's poetry as *shiʿr kashf wa-l-ilhām* (poetry grounded in unveiling and inspiration).[349] In this light, Hamzah's metaphors become vehicles of *kashf* (spiritual disclosure, unveiling), embedded in a cosmology shaped by the doctrines of *nūr Muḥammad* (the Muhammadan Light),[350] *fanāʾ* (annihilation), and *baqāʾ* (subsistence in God).[351] Symbols such as *ṭayr al-ʿuryān* (the naked bird) or *ikan tunggal* (the singular fish) serve as pedagogical instruments that guide the seeker through veiled intimations of divine presence.[352]

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[347] Schimmel, 1982, 3–4.

[348] Ibid., and passim.

[349] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 215–17, 220–22. He frames Hamzah's poetics as *shiʿr kashf wa-l-ilhām* and discusses their symbolic function in terms of *isyarat* (allusion) and *lambang* (symbol), arguing that such language enables the experience of *maʿrifa* through unveiled spiritual perception.

[350] On *nūr Muḥammad*, see Chapter 4.3.1 (p. 129, n. 440) of this dissertation.

[351] Abdul Hadi, 2001, 205, 216–17.

[352] Ibid., 302, 325–26. Abdul Hadi reads the phrase as *ikan tongkol* (tuna fish), though most editors and commentators accept the reading *ikan tunggal* (the singular fish).

Ibrahim, in his study of Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of divine love, shows that such imagery collapses the apparent boundary between human and divine love.[353] Metaphors of light, mirror, and beauty express the Oneness of Being and make the invisible perceptible. This insight illuminates Hamzah's use of symbols such as *laut* (sea, ocean) and *lāhūt* (divine nature), which form homophonic and ontological bridges, and *adamu* (your existence) with *ʿadam* (non-existence), which highlight the paradox of contingent being before the Necessary Being.

Hamzah's symbolic language is infused with the Sufi notion of theophany (*tajallī*), the divine self-disclosure that simultaneously reveals and veils the True (*al-Ḥaqq*). Natural elements such as light, fire, ocean and landscape function as signs (*āyāt*) of divine presence. The ocean symbolizes divine knowledge and transcendence; fire denotes annihilation and purification; light conveys the radiance of Being, central to Ibn ʿArabi's concept of *tajallī*.

Schimmel, Ibrahim, and Abdul Hadi converge on the hermeneutic role of metaphor. Schimmel highlights its imaginative and sensory resonance; Ibrahim emphasizes their ontological function; Abdul Hadi underscores their transformative and pedagogical function.

Nature plays a particularly rich role in Hamzah's poetics. Drawing on both Sufi cosmology and Malay conventions, he employs flora, fauna, landscapes, and celestial elements to trace the seeker's ascent. As Muhammad Haji Salleh points out, natural imagery in Malay poetry often reflects emotional states and moral reflections.[354] In *pantun* and *syair*, transient beauty such as flowers, jungles, birds, and rivers, encodes affective states through metaphor and sound

[353] See Ibrahim, 2022, 145, 149.

[354] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2008, Chapters 4, 5 and 7.

association: *selasih* (basil) for *kasih* (love), *padi* (rice) for *hati* (heart), *Daik* (a place name) for *baik* (good).[355] Hamzah extends this lexicon by imbuing nature-based words with Sufi metaphysical meanings.

The following is a thematic category of nature-elements in his poems:

Table 3.1: Natural imagery in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry

Nature Category	**Nature Elements in Hamzah's Poetry**
Plants and Trees (Flora)	*Bunga* (flowers), *Kapur* (camphor), *Kayu* (trees, wood), *Kapas* (cotton).
Landscapes and Earthly Features	*Gunung/Ṭūr* (mountain), *Bukit* (hill, peak), *Hutan* (jungle), *Tanah* (earth, land), *Padang* (an open plain or treeless expanse), *Rawang* (morass), *Sawang* (the expanse between sky and earth, or a distant view).
Animals and Insects (Fauna)	*Galuh-galuh* (firefly), *Ular* (snake), *Anjing* (dog), *Ikan* (fish), *Gajah mina* (mythical sea-elephant/fish), *Unggas/Ṭayr* (birds).
Weather and Natural Elements	*Hujan* (rain), *Angin* (wind), *Taufan* (typhoon), *Air* (water), *Api* (fire).
Celestial Bodies and Light	*Bintang* (stars), *Shams* (sun), *hilāl* (crescent moon), *Cahaya/ Nūr* (light), *Ḍiyāʾ* (radiance).
Water and Maritime Setting	*Laut/Baḥr* (sea, ocean), *Ombak* (waves), *Surut pasang* (ebb and flow of tides), *Karang* (reefs, corals), *Rantau* (coastline), *Teluk* (bay), *Rawang* (swamp).

Hamzah inherits and deepens both Malay and Sufi traditions. Birds and fish evoke stages of inner transformation. Abdul Hadi interprets *unggas pingai* and *ṭayr al-ʿuryān* (mythical birds)

[355] Ibid., 166–67.

as symbols of the soul stripped of illusions, while *ikan tunggal* alludes to hidden knowledge or the *nūr Muḥammad*.[356]

A central image in Hamzah's landscape is *padang*, the open plain. In the line, *Ẓāhirnya kata di tengah padang* (His word is revealed upon the luminous plain),[357] Hamzah evokes divine self-disclosure. In Old Javanese, *padang* signifies clarity and brilliance;[358] in early Malay, an open, treeless plain exposed to light.[359] In *hikayat* literature (i.e. *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, *Hikayat Indraputra*, and *Hikayat Pandawa Lima*), it appears as a terrain of trials, battles, and encounters.[360] The MCP concordance records recurring expressions like *melalui hutan, padang dan gunung* (passing through jungle, plain, and mountain), presenting *padang* as a space of testing.[361] In Hamzah's poetics, *padang* becomes a *maẓhar*, a locus of radiance where divine speech is disclosed, and at the same time a landscape of vulnerability and heroic striving drawn from Malay narrative tradition.

Winkel glosses *tajallī* as as God turning toward entities, a radiance that continually showers creation but is rarely perceived. When perceived, it overwhelms reason, even to the point of

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[356] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 232–33.

[357] Poem XIII, quatrain 8, line 3 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82. See also Chapter 3.2.2 (p. 86) of this dissertation for a discussion of *padang* in relation to this quatrain.

[358] *Padang* denotes brightness and clarity (*paḍaṅ*, "clearness, brightness, light"), OJED, online, s.v. p*aḍaṅ*. Abdul Hadi (2001, 271) notes *padang* as '*di tempat yang terang'* (a bright place).

[359] Wilkinson, online s.v. *padang* meaning a plain, an open space; In early Malay text, a treeless wasteland.

[360] MCP, s.v. *padang*, in texts dated circa 1300–1800.

[361] Ibid.

madness (*majnūn*). This paradox of radiance, manifest yet veiled, animates Hamzah's landscapes.[362]

Hamzah also employs sonic imagery, notably the word *bunyi* (sound, concealment). In early Malay, *bunyi* denotes both audible sound and hidden presence,[363] paralleling the tension between *ẓāhir* (manifest) and *bāṭin* (hidden). By warning against fixation on *bunyi dan ragam* (sound and form), Hamzah directs seekers beyond sensory perception toward *maʿrifa.*

His use of *karam* (drowning) likewise layers meaning across Malay and Arabic. In Malay, *karam* denotes submersion, evoking *baqāʾ*. In Arabic, it means generosity or nobility, implying that that self-effacement leads to spiritual elevation through divine attributes. As Hamzah writes:[364]

Jika dapat olehmu maʿna mati, *Engkaulah datang kepada* māʾ al-ḥayāti	Translation: If you have grasped the meaning of death, Then, you have arrived at the Water of Life.

Here *maʿna mati* (the meaning of death) signals *fanāʾ*, surrender of the self, through which the seeker reaches the eternal source, *māʾ al-ḥayāt* (the Water of Life). Drowning is thus not a loss but an arrival into divine subsistence.[365]

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[362] See Winkel, 2020a, 650.

[363] See Wilkinson, online, s.v. *bunyi*, *buni*.

[364] Poem II, quatrain 14, lines 3–4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 46.

[365] For a general survey of water symbolism in Hamzah's works, see Amir H. Zekrgoo, "The Confused Whale of the China Sea," *Al-Shajarah* 29, no. 1 (2024): 79–98.

Hamzah's metaphors are dynamic, unfolding like the ocean that recurs throughout his work. Oceanic imagery evokes the inexhaustible divine knowledge; fire represents purification and the consuming force of love. Both tropes recall theophanic states where divine presence overwhelms and transforms.[366]

By weaving together Qur'anic imagery, Sufi metaphysics, and Malay poetics, Hamzah enacts a hermeneutic in which symbols disclose what cannot be stated directly. His *syair* functions as both exposition and invocation, reminding audience of divine presence. Mohd Kamal and Mohd Syukri suggest that Hamzah's *syair* may have induced *wajd* (ecstatic trance) during recitation, creating an atmosphere akin to *wirid*, *dhikr*, or *samāʿ*.[367] If so, his poems do not merely describe mystical states but enacted them.

Hamzah's poetics thus aligns with the broader Sufi tradition where metaphor, sound, and symbol converge to mediate the inexpressible. Much like that of Ibn ʿArabi, ʿAttar, or Rumi, his symbols unfold progressively, guiding seekers through veils of perception toward the Real. His poetry is a sign of divine beauty and a form of transformative speech, charting the path toward it and calling the seeker to self-transformation.

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[366] Abdul Hadi discusses Hamzah's use of ocean and fire imagery as symbolic of mystical immersion and spiritual purification, paralleling the stages of the Sufi journey (Abdul Hadi, 2001, 257–314).

[367] See Mohd Kamal and Mohd Syukri, 2014, 108.

CHAPTER 4: THE MYSTICAL LANGUAGE OF DIVINE LOVE IN THE POETRY OF HAMZAH FANSURI

Ketahui bahawa pangkat berahi terlalu tinggi daripada segala pangkat

(Know that radical love ranks highest among all noble ranks)

—Hamzah Fansuri[368]

4.1 Introduction

Love stands at the heart of Hamzah Fansuri's mystical and poetic vision. It is neither sentimental nor merely emotional but the metaphysical ground of existence itself, animating creation and guiding the seeker toward the realization of *tawḥīd*, articulated through the discourse of *wahdat al-wujūd*. Drawing on the well-known *ḥadīth qudsī* of the Hidden Treasure: 'I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known, so I created the creatures and made Myself known to them, so they knew Me,' Hamzah portrays love as both the origin and ultimate goal of creation.

This conception of love as the primordial cause of being permeates his works, where love draws the seeker irresistibly toward God, like *galuh-galuh* (fireflies) to a flame.[369] It culminates in mystical annihilation in which self-regard dissolves. Through this ego-death the seeker attains knowledge of perpetual union (*dāʾim beroleh wiṣāl*). In Hamzah's writings, love is inseparable

[368] Hamzah Fansuri, "*Bāb al-sābiʿ fī bayān al-ʿishq wa-l-shukr*," *Sharāb al-ʿāshiqīn* (Chapter 7 On an Exposition of Love and Gratitude, *The Drink of Lovers*) in al-Attas, 1970, 325.

[369] Hamzah's verse on *galuh-galuh* appears in Chapter 4.3.1 (p. 171).

from *wujūd* (Being) and *raḥma* (divine mercy), with all existence unfolding as a theophany of divine love.

Hamzah's poetics adheres to the Prophetic saying, 'Whoever knows himself knows his Lord.' Love enables such self-knowledge by dissolving the veil of separation and revealing the self's utter dependence on God. This epistemology is experiential rather than conceptual, described through *dhawq* (tasting) and rendered into Malay as *rasa,* encompassing both bodily sensation and spiritual intuition.

The term *wujūd*, translated in this dissertation as either 'Being' or 'existence' depending on context, lies at the core of Hamzah's metaphysical framework. It emerges as a central theme in 13 of the 32 poems analyzed, underscoring its role as a unifying principle of reality.[370] Originating in the divine essence, described as the Hidden Treasure, it is often symbolized by the infinite ocean. Ibn ʿArabi's influence is evident in Hamzah's deployment of *wujūd*, particularly through lexical derivation. In Arabic, most words derive from a triliteral root system, with each root generating multiple meanings. Ibn ʿArabi captures this polysemy in his formulation:[371]

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[370] See Abdul Hadi (2001) and Muhammad Bukhari (1989) for the exploration of *wujūd* in Hamzah Fansuri's works, emphasizing its metaphysical roots in *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Wan Mohd Shaghir (1996) highlights its role in spiritual guidance and ethical development, while Mohd Kamal and Mohd Syukri (2014) provide a broader textual and thematic analysis, linking *wujūd* to Hamzah's integration of metaphysics and Malay literary aesthetics. These studies collectively affirm *wujūd* as central to Hamzah's poetic and metaphysical framework, consistent with the analysis presented here. On Ibn ʿArabī's use of the term wujūd, which is distinct from its classical meaning in *falsafa* or *kalam* see Vandamme, 2023, 48.

[371] See "Question 153," Chapter 73 of the *Futūḥāt* in Winkel, 2024, 81.

> If you ask, what is *wujūd* (being)?' We answer, *wijdān* (passionate awareness) of the True (*al-Ḥaqq*) in *wajd* (ecstatic emotion).

The root *w-j-d* encompasses meanings such as being, finding, perceiving, and knowing, suggesting that existence itself is an act of divine love.[372]

This framework shapes Hamzah's figure of the *orang berahi*, the lover consumed by longing.[373] Drawing on exemplars such as al-Hallaj and Bayazid al-Bistami, Hamzah portrays love as a radical and overwhelming force that strips away personal identity and compels total surrender to the Beloved. His poetry is marked by paradox: love both veils and reveals, annihilates and sustains, while the Beloved remains at once absent and present. Through metaphors of immersion in the ocean, consuming fire, and intoxicating wine, Hamzah traces a path in which suffering purifies, and annihilation yields ultimate fulfilment.

Although firmly situated in the broader Sufi tradition, Hamzah's poetics also engage with earlier Malay expressions of love. Courtly and popular narrative romances in *pantun*, *syair*, and *hikayat* depict love as passion, with trials resolved through reunion and marriage (*kawin*), thereby fulfilling social obligations. Hamzah reconfigures these affective registers within a mystical frame: love becomes existential, a divine imperative rather than a social bond. Its telos is not resolution but perpetual longing. Even when employing terms like *kawin* or *dakap* (embrace), these signify not substantial union but the unattainability of the divine, who remains forever beyond grasp.

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[372] See Chapter 2.4 (pp. 50-1) of this dissertation for discussion of the root *w-j-d* and its semantic field.

[373] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 6–7.

Hamzah's vocabulary reflects this ontological reorientation. Interweaving Arabic Sufi terms, namely, *ʿishq* (intense or radical love), *shawq* (longing), *ḥubb* (unconditional love), *mahbūb* (beloved), with Malay terms such as *berahi* (intense desire), *kasih* (tender love), and *sayang* (attachment), he fashions a plurilingual idiom attuned to both local sensibilities and transregional Sufi discourse. This synthesis not only broadens the expressive range of Malay but embeds it within a cosmopolitan metaphysical tradition.

This chapter examines Hamzah's poetics of love as both doctrine and aesthetic. His writings articulate love in three primary registers: ontological, transformative, and experiential. Together these frame love as the origin of Being, the path of annihilation and subsistence, and the mode of perception through which the seeker recognizes divine presence. Running through all three is a lexical-symbolic stratum, conveyed through plurilingual wordplay, semantic layering, and symbolic imagery. By interweaving Malay, Arabic, and Persian vocabularies, Hamzah expresses both spiritual longing and divine intimacy. Metaphor and emblematic imagery become the very medium of mystical articulation, the poetic vehicle by which these registers are realized in his plurilingual Malay poetics.

Table 4.1 Typology of love in Hamzah Fansuri's poetics

Category	**Description**
Ontological love	Love as the originating impulse of creation and the animating force of Being.
Transformative love	Love as the path from self-annihilation to subsistence in the Beloved.
Experiential love	Love as an embodied state of longing, perplexity, and intoxication.

This typology structures the analysis that follows, offering a framework for understanding how Hamzah's poetics of love operate simultaneously as mystical instruction and aesthetic

performance. His poems do not merely describe the journey of love; they enact it linguistically, symbolically, and affectively.

This chapter also incorporates concordance-based analysis using the Malay Concordance Project (MCP). By mapping the frequency and semantic range of love-related terms such as *berahi, gila, mabuk,* and *kekasih* across a corpus of Malay texts (dating from c. 1300–1800), it situates Hamzah's lexicon within the broader textual ecology of the period. These intertextual comparisons highlight both the continuity and innovation in Hamzah's poetic usage (see Table 4.7).

Ultimately, love emerges as the ground and structuring principle of existence in Hamzah's poetry. His verse stage love as divine impulse, epistemic unveiling, and transformative salvation. Through his plurilingual poetics and metaphysical intensity, Hamzah transfigures Malay poetry into a vessel for Sufi language of mystical yearning and ecstatic proximity. Hamzah's linguistic practice enacts what Abdul Hadi calls *destruksi bahasa*: a poetic dismantling of conventional forms to express ineffable truths.[374] By employing paradox, ambiguity, intertextual allusion, and plurilingual wordplay (e.g. *laut/lāhūt*, *serahi/ṣurāḥī*, *bisunya/bi-śūnya*), Hamzah intensifies the metaphysical charge of his verse.[375] Such strategies resonate with Wilson's observation that interpreting mystical texts requires more than word-by-word translation; it demands reconstitution of their symbolic and experiential meaning.[376]

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[374] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 238–9. See also Johns, 1990; and Sweeney, 1992.

[375] On Hamzah's plurilingual wordplay across Chapters 4.2–4.5, where Malay-Arabic-Persian-Indic pairings such as *ʿadam/adamu*, *dia/ḍiyāʾ*, *laut/lāhūt*, *karam/karām*, *serahi/ṣurāḥī*, and *bisunya/bi-śūnya* are analysed in detail.

[376] See Wilson 2024, 186. For discussion of the translation approach applied in this dissertation, see Chapter 1.5.5.

4.2 Love as the cause of existence

In Sufi metaphysics, such as in the works of Attar, Ibn ʿArabi, and Rumi, love is the primordial desire through which the cosmos comes into existence.[377] ʿAttar describes love as the principle of existence, declaring that 'the two worlds are but shadows of the sun of Love.'[378] Zargar notes that ʿAṭṭar treats love not only as ethical or devotional but a cosmological force.[379] Ibn ʿArabi and Rumi likewise spoke of their path as the 'religion of love,' naming it as their way to God.[380] Hamzah shares this vision, repeatedly invoking the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure (or, in Ibn ʿArabi's citation, the 'Unknown Treasure')[381] in his poetry, for example:[382]

Kuntu kanzan *mulanya nyata,* Ḥaqīqat *ombak di sana ada*.	Translation: 'I was a Treasure,' first made manifest, The reality of the waves traces back to there.

[377] For discussion on Ibn ʿArabi's teachings on love as a central metaphysical and spiritual force encompassing natural, spiritual, and divine dimensions, and its role in God self-disclosure and cosmic desire (*hawā*), see Morris, 2011.

[378] Zargar, 2024, 79.

[379] Ibid.

[380] See Chittick, 2013b, 37 and passim.

[381] This *ḥadīth qudsī*, frequently cited in Sufi literature and by Hamzah Fansuri, expresses the vision that creation originates from divine love and the desire for self-recognition. Although commonly transmitted as 'I was a Hidden Treasure' (*kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan*), Ibn ʿArabi in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* consistently uses 'Unknown' (*kuntu kanzan lam uʿraf*). Ibrahim (2022, 83) underscores the significance of this distinction: "hidden" suggests concealment, whereas "unknown" indicates that the divine Essence was simply beyond recognition until disclosed through love. This shift highlights Ibn ʿArabi's view that creation arises not from mere concealment but from God's will to be known.

[382] Poem XXIX, quatrains 2, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 128. Hamzah does not cite the *ḥadīth* in full in any of verses, reserving the complete quotation for his prose treatise *The Secrets of the Gnostics* in al-Attas, 1970, 246–7. See Chapter 4.4, p. 149 for further discussion.

He presents love as both the creative impulse and the telos of Being, frequently referring to the *ḥadīth qudsī* to underscore that divine love underlies all theophanic disclosure.[383] In this vision, love is an ontological force: the reason for creation and the path through which the seeker realizes *tawḥīd.*

This perpetual longing reflects a foundational principle in Hamzah's thought: the doctrine of the Oneness of Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*), or more universally, Oneness (*tawḥīd*). The theme recurs across his prose and poetry, forming the metaphysical core of his work. *Tawḥīd*, derived from the Arabic root meaning 'to unify', signifies the reduction of multiplicity to essential unity.[384] Love, in Hamzah's vision is inseparable from this principle, it is both the dynamic force that discloses divine reality and the seeker's experiential knowledge that dissolves the illusion of separation.

Hamzah thus articulates love as both the cause and the culmination of existence. Ontologically, love is the force through which Being discloses itself and to which the soul returns. It is the metaphysical and epistemological lens through which divine desire, creative manifestation, and existential longing are rendered visible. This interrelation between love and *tawḥīd* in Hamzah's poetry will be further examined in this chapter and beyond.

Hamzah expands on this ontological framework in the following quatrain:[385]

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[383] See Ibrahim, 2022, 12, 80–1.

[384] See Lo Polito, 2010.

[385] Poem XII, quatrain 10 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 78.

Rupa yang jadīd *itu asalnya* khayālāt*,* *Barang yang mendapat dia beroleh* najāt*,* Nafī*kan* wujūd*mu daripada sekalian* ṣifāt*,* *Supaya* wāṣil *adamu dengan* dhāt*.*	Translation: The newly wrought forms arise from Imagination, Whoever perceives this shall find salvation, Negate your existence of every attribute, That your (non)existence may unite with the Essence.

In this verse, creation is described as emerging from *khayālāt*, the divine imagination in which forms are continually brought forth. Hamzah distinguishes this from *wahm* (mere estimation), which is bound to the ego and illusion. The final line conveys the Sufi principle of self-negation: the seeker must recognize that created entities possess no independent being or attributes but are grounded in *ʿadam* (non-existence). This recognition leads to the awareness that the ultimate source of all existence is the divine essence (*dhāt*). *Wuṣūl* or *wāṣil* thus express arrival and connection with the divine, connoting nearness and subsistence in God rather than any notion of ontological union.

In another quatrain, Hamzah elaborates this reflective ontology in which created beings manifest as mirrors of the divine names and attributes:[386]

Raja Ḥaqq *dengan adanya,* Dāʾim *bermain dengan hambanya,* *Olehnya nyata dengan* asma*nya,* *Terlalu* ghālib *dengan mukanya.*	Translation: The Sovereign, the Real, through His Being, Is at play in ceaseless Self-disclosures to His servants,[387] By His Names, they are made manifest, It's His Face that is all-prevailing.

[386] Poem XVII, quatrain 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 96.

[387] *Bermain* can mean more than 'to play,' including active engagement, reciprocal interaction, and dynamic movement. In Hamzah Fansuri's metaphysics, it may denote literal play, but also participation in an unfolding process involving actor, action, and acted-upon. Here it refers to *tajallī* as an unceasing, dynamic interaction, in which God is ultimately the sole Reality

Existence is not autonomous but wholly dependent, functioning as a mirror for divine self-disclosure. The phrase *bermain dengan hambanya* renders this process as dynamic, intimate, and unceasing, evoking the Akbarian view that each created being is a unique *maẓhar* (locus) of divine disclosure. All that appears is made manifest through God's names (*asmāʾ*),[388] yet it remains transient and perishing: *Situlah wujūd sekalian fanūn* (There is the *wujūd* of all that is perishing).[389] This view aligns with the Akbarian principle that only God possesses true Being, while creation merely reflects it through the veil of Names and Attributes.

In Hamzah's writings, love is both the origin and fulfilment of this ontological structure.[390] It is the operative force of *wujūd*, a divine mercy that animates creation and draws all things back to their Source, as expressed in this verse:[391]

Jika sungguh kamu sekalian ṭālibūn, *Pada kuntu kanzan pergi rāji ʿūn.*	Translation: If indeed you are truly seekers, Return to 'I was a Treasure.'[392]

[388] In Hamzah Fansuri's Sufi metaphysics, following that of Ibn ʿArabi's, God's 'names' (*asmāʾ*) and 'attributes' (*ṣifāt*) are crucial for understanding divine essence and its manifestations in the universe. While God's essence (*dhāt*) remains transcendent, His names and attributes manifest within the cosmos, serving as loci where divine presence is realized. The names reflect various divine actions and aspects, such as *al-raḥmān* (the Merciful), demonstrating God's active engagement with creation. The attributes, including knowledge, power, and life, define God's intrinsic qualities. These names and attributes make creation a locus of divine self-disclosure, underscoring the unity and divine purpose behind all existence (see al-Attas, 1970; Kautsar, 1995; Ibrahim, 2022).

[389] Poem X, quatrain 14, line 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 74.

[390] See Chittick, 2014, 177.

[391] Poem VII, quatrain 5, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 62.

[392] Hamzah refers here to the *ḥadīth* of Hidden Treasure.

As in Ibn ʿArabi's teachings, love, mercy, and being are not separate realities but dimensions of a single truth. The seeker's path toward the Beloved is thus not a linear ascent but a return to what always was.

Hamzah often conveys this return through the metaphor of an oceanic voyage, in which the self (*nafs*[393]) is a *ṭālib* (seeker), a *sālik* (traveller) seeking *wiṣāl* (connection) with its divine origin. The notion of *kawin* (marriage or union) in the Malay narratives is reconfigured here not as ontological merging of Creator and creation, but as the recognition that all existence is contingent upon Being (*wujūd*).[394] Everything that appears to exists apart from God is merely metaphorical existence (*wujūd majāzī*).[395] Within this framework, love draws the seeker irresistibly toward the divine, culminating in *fanāʾ* (annihilation of lower self) and *baqāʾ* (subsistence in God).[396]

Malay literary traditions have long portrayed love as a force of refinement and wisdom.[397] Hamzah elevates these affective registers into a mystical key. For him, love is not fulfilled in union between individuals but in the soul's return to its ontological Source. This realisation of

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[393] In Sufi metaphysics, the self (*nafs*)—encompassing the soul, heart, intellect, and spirit—is seen as a mirror reflecting both God and creation. Hamzah's The concept of nafs in Sufi metaphysics is complex, encompassing the soul, heart, intellect, and spirit. Hamzah eloquently ties this concept to the process of fana (annihilation) and baqa (subsistence)

[394] See Chapter 3.2 of this dissertation on Hamzah Fansuri's explanation of metaphorical union in his treatise *Asrār al-ʻārifīn* (*The Secret of the Gnostics*), in al-Attas, 1970, 294–295.

[395] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 162.

[396] Ibid.

[397] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2011, 4–5, 12–13; 2006, 84–85; Braginsky, 2004, 206, 240–41.

the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[398] He expresses this principle in the following quatrain:[399]

Berdakap jangan kepalang, *Akan nyawamu jangan kau sayang,* Tawḥīd*mu yogia kau pasang,* *Supaya kasih* maḥbūb *yang larang*.	Translation: Embrace without reservation, To your self hold no attachment, Establish firmly your *tawḥīd*, That you may attain the Beloved's inviolable love.

The seeker must relinquish attachment to the self. Love, in its highest realization, demands the annihilation of any egoic notion of its self-sufficiency so that *tawḥīd* may be actualised within the heart. This self-effacement is not a denial of being but an affirmation of divine unity, wherein the lover (*ʿāshiq*) recognizes the illusion of separation between lover and Beloved. The dissolution unfolds within the metaphysical vision of the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure,[400] a divine unveiling whereby the seeker realizes that the lover and the Beloved are, in essence, One.

This principle intensifies in the quatrain that follow, which exhort the seeker to renounce themselves in the *padang*[401] (lit. open plain or wasteland) of love: *Buangkan diri di tengah padang*[402] (Renounce yourself in the luminous plain). As discussed earlier, *padang* is Hamzah's

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[398] See Chittick, 2013, xxiv; Ibrahim, 2022, 10.

[399] Poem XVII, quatrain 6 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 94. For a further discussion of this same quatrain in relation to transformative love and the vocabulary of self-effacement, Chapter 4.3 (p. 127) of this dissertation.

[400] See Ibrahim, 2022, 116.

[401] See Wilkinson, 1932, online dictionary, s.v. *padang*.

[402] Poem XVII, quatrain 12, line 3 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 94.

terminology for a site of theophany (*maẓhar*).[403] This image evokes the *madhhab al-ʿishq* (school of radical love), where absolute surrender and dispossession are the conditions for self-effacement and transformation, culminating in freedom from fear and return to divine unity.[404] Love, in this vision, is not an abstraction but an existential imperative. As Ibn ʿArabi affirms, God is simultaneously the lover, the beloved, and love itself; *tawḥīd* is the ultimate recognition that nothing truly exists but Him.[405]

This journey, for both Ibn ʿArabi and Hamzah, leads to the understanding that self-knowledge is inseparable from the knowledge of God. As Chodkiewicz notes, for Ibn ʿArabi, the goal is not literal union, but recognition that God is the true agent behind all knowing and loving.[406] The perfected state of the servant is the awareness that it is God who knows, loves, and desires through them.[407]

Love is inseparable from *raḥma* (Mercy). Hamzah explicitly links God's attributes *al-Raḥmān* (the All-Merciful) and *al-Raḥīm* (the Ever-Merciful) with the act of creation:[408] *Menjadikan ʿālam dari al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* (He created the cosmos from the All-Merciful, the Ever-

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[403] See Chapters 3.4 (p. 105) and 4.2 (p. 116 n.388) of this dissertation.

[404] See Zargar, 2024, 86–89.

[405] See Ibrahim, 2022, 11–3, 43 and passim.

[406] See Chodkiewicz, 1993, 124–9.

[407] Ibid.

[408] See al-Attas, 1970, 80–81; Hamzah Fansuri, *Asrar al-ʿArifin* (*The Secrets of the Gnostics*), in al-Attas, 1970, 262, 268, 382, 387.

Merciful).[409] Mercy, in this vision, is the all-embracing principle of creation, encompassing every being without exception. Through mercy, love gives rise to the cosmos, sustains it, and draws it back to its Source. Hamzah expresses this in the following quatrain:[410]

Raḥmān *itulah yang bernama* wujūd, *Keadaan Tuhan yang sedia* maʿbūd, *Kenyataan* Islām, Naṣrānī, *dan* Yahūd, *Dari* raḥmān *itulah sekalian* mawjūd.	Translation: The All-Merciful is called *wujūd*, The eternal state of the One worshipped, Manifest in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, From the All-Merciful comes all existence.

Here, Hamzah equates Mercy (*raḥmān*) with Being (*wujūd*), affirming that all existents (*mawjūdāt*) are manifestations of Essential Mercy. Ibn ʿArabi likewise teaches that Mercy is the very principle through which divine love becomes actualized and made perceptible in the world.[411] Across Hamzah's writings,[412] *wujūd* functions on multiple levels.[413] At its highest, it denotes Absolute Reality,[414] as in *Raja ḥaqq dengan adanya*[415] (The Sovereign, the Real,

[409] Poem X, quatrain 2, line 4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 70.

[410] Ibid, quatrain 4, 72.

[411] See Ibrahim, 2022, 51, 53.

[412] Al-Attas in his studies of Hamzah's three extant prose works, explains that for Hamzah, the concept of wujud (Being) is central to understanding the relationship between God and the cosmos. God, as the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*), is self-existent and the ultimate source of all that exists. The cosmos, however, derives its existence (wujud) from God, who is the only true reality. Hamzah emphasizes that God's Being is independent and self-sufficient, while the universe is a manifestation of God's creative will (al-Attas, 1970, 67, 73, 78).

[413] See Chittick's elucidation of *wujūd* in the works of Ibn 'Arabi including love as an inherent attribute of *wujūd* (2005, 36–46); Also, Vandamme (2023, 48) on Ibn 'Arabi's polysemy of *wujud.*

[414] *Al-wujūd al-ḥaqq* is The Real Being which is the Manifest within the loci of manifestation, see Armstrong-Chishti, 2001, 264.

[415] Poem XVIII, quatrain1, line 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 96.

through His Being). It can also signify contingent existence,[416] as cautioned in *Wujūd wahmī jangan kau lābis*[417] (Do not enwrap yourself in illusory existence). At the experiential level, it describes the gnostic's direct awareness, as in *Itulah ʿārif dāʾim bertemu*[418] (This is the gnostic, ever in meeting with Being).[419] The ceaseless nature of divine self-disclosure is expressed in this verse:[420]

Cahaya atharnya tiadakan padam, *Memberikan* wujūd *pada sekalian ʿālam,* *Menjadikan* makhlūq *siang dan malam,* Ilā abad al-ābad*, tiadakan karam.*	Translation: The radiance of His traces never fades, Bestowing *wujūd* upon the whole cosmos, Day and night He brings creation forth, Eternal, without ever passing away.

The 'radiance of His traces' refers to God's names and attributes, through which continuous theophanic activity proceeds. Without this perpetual mercy, creation would cease to exist.[421] This cosmology draws on Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of *tajallī* (theophanic manifestation), wherein all beings are *maẓāhir* (loci, sing. *maẓhar*) of divine names and attributes. Hamzah expresses

[416] Hamzah uses the term (*wujūd majāzī*) for metaphorically existent.

[417] Poem XXI, quatrain 3, line 4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 106.

[418] Ibid., 130, Poem XXIX, quatrain 9, line 4.

[419] See Chittick, 2005.

[420] Poem IV, quatrain 8 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 52.

[421] For detail commentary of *irāda* (Mal. *hendak*), the divine desire or creative will in Hamzah Fansuri's prose works see al-Attas, 1970, 111–41.

this as: *Maẓhar Allah akan rupanya*[422] (God's self-disclosure is its form'). In a related metaphor, creation is likened to a shadow:[423]

	Translation:
Ketahui olehmu hai anak dagang,	Know, O stranger,
Rupamu itu seperti bayang-bayang.	Your form is but a shadow.[424]

Existence apart from God is ephemeral, contingent, and dependent on divine light.

Hamzah affirms that true love must be rooted in the structure of *sharīʿa* (revealed law), which safeguards the seeker's path:[425]

	Translation:
Jika telah kau turut sharīʿat*nya,*	If you have followed the revealed law,
Mangka kau dapat asal ṭarīqat*nya.*	Then you have attained the root of the path.

He thus affirms the unity of *sharīʿa* and *ṭarīqa*: the exoteric law grounds the Sufi path, which leads to the unveiling of divine reality (*ḥaqīqa*) through gnosis (*maʿrifa*).

Hamzah's cosmology draws from the Akbarian doctrine of *aʿyān thābita* (immutable entities), the eternal archetypes of all things in God's knowledge.[426] In *The Secrets of the Gnostics*, he explains that the *ʿashiq* (lover) represents these immutable entities yearning for manifestation,

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[422] Poem XXVI, quatrain 3, line 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 120.

[423] Poem V, quatrain 10, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 56.

[424] For Ibn ʿArabi's view that everything other than the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) is a shadow with no independent existence apart from divine light, see Chittick, 1989, 204.

[425] Poem II, quatrain 7, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 46.

[426] The term *aʿyān thābita* (immutable entities) is not translated by Hamzah, he retains the Arabic term, *aʿyān thābita* refer to the immutable, pre-existent forms within the divine knowledge that lack independent existence. These essences are not yet manifested in the material world but exist in a state of potentiality.

while the Beloved (*maʿshūq*) is God's self-knowledge.[427] The cosmos is thus a theatre of divine love.

He writes:[428]

Huwa al-awwalu wa al-ākhiru *akan namanya,* Wa al-ẓāhiru wa al-bāṭinu[429] *rupanya,* *Sidang* ʿārif *mendapat katanya,* *Mabuk dan gila barang adanya.*	Translation: 'He is the First and the Last' — this is His Name, 'The Outer and the Inner' — this is His Form, The assembly of gnostics received His Words, Drunk with ecstasy, enraptured by His Presence.

Here, *mabuk* (drunkeness) and *gila* (rapture, madness) mark the experience of *maʿrifa*, the direct recognition of divine omnipresence. In this state, the seeker perceives the dissolution of multiplicity into divine singularity. This corresponds to what Ibn ʿArabi describes as *ḥayra* (perplexity): a knowledge beyond rational articulation, expressed as *ʿilm lā ʿilm* ("knowledge

[427] Hamzah Fansuri, "Chapter Five: On an Exposition of the Manifestations of the Pure Essence of God Most Exalted," *The Drink of Lovers*, in al-Attas, 1970, 317, 436; Hamzah Fansuri, *The Adept*, in al-Attas, 1970, 346, 464.

[428] Poem XIII, quatrain 10 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82. This quatrain reappears in Chapter 4.4 (p. 164), where it is read in relation to experiential love and the states of intoxication (*mabuk*) and madness (*gila*).

[429] 'He is the First (*al-Awwal*) and the Last (*al-Akhir*), the Outward (*al-Zahir*) and the Inward (*al-Batin*),' is a Quranic verse (Q.57:3). This fourfold structure represents the unity of opposites within the divine, a key theme in Hamzah's metaphysical thought.

that is no-knowledge").[430] Love in this context is not only epistemological, as the mode of knowing, but ontological, in that it constitutes the very structure of Being.

Hamzah employs a plurilingual lexicon to articulate love as both existential ground and transformative force. Arabic and Malay terms are woven together to express dimensions of divine love that are ontologically generative, as summarised in the table below.

Table 4.2 Key terms of ontological love in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry

Arabic Term	Malay Term	Meaning in Hamzah's Poetics
Wujūd	*Ada; Adamu*	God's Being; Existence itself as a manifestation of divine love.
Raḥma	*Kasih*	All-encompassing divine mercy sustaining existence.
ʿIshq	*Berahi*	Overflowing passion and desire that originates and attracts existence.
Maʿshuq; Mahbūb; Ḥabīb	*Kekasih*	The Beloved as both the source and the object of love, ultimately God.

As discussed earlier, *wujūd*, means both 'to exist' and 'to find,' encapsulating the idea that existence is the outcome of divine love seeking self-disclosure. The Malay *kasih*, typically denoting tender love, is elevated in Hamzah's poetics to signify God's active desire to bring about manifestation. *Berahi*, often connoting sensual desire, is reconfigured to express the

[430] See Vandamme, 2023, 8–9, 122–35.

seeker's overwhelming devotion to the divine. In his poetic idiom, *berahi* and *ʿishq* function as the human counterpart, depicting the lover's radical devotion and longing for constant connection with the Beloved.

The Unity of Essence (*dhāt*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*), a cornerstone of *tawḥīd*, is rendered vividly in the following quatrain:[431]

Dhāt *dan* sifāt *bersama-sama,* *Keduanya itu tiada berantara,* *Datang* tūfān *ombaknya nyata,* *Pada* 'kun fa-yakūnu'[432] *bangatlah kata.*	Translation: Essence and Attributes together abide, With nothing at all to stand between, A tempest surges, the waves break forth, At 'Be! — and it is,' the Word resounds supreme.

This quatrain reaffirms that creation is not autonomous but the visible surge of divine imperative. The image of the tempest and wave dramatizes the force of love which propels the hidden (*bāṭin*) into outward form (*ẓāhir*). The command *kun* (Be!) is the actualisation of divine desire.

If love is the ground of Being, then the seeker's path entails a radical reorientation toward that Source. The dissolution of egoic identity occurs in the blaze of divine love, through metaphors of annihilation, poverty, and return. Hamzah renders this trajectory in layered language that invites mystical recognition (*maʿrifa*) rather than discursive knowledge. Through this synthesis of Love, Mercy, and Being, his poetry articulates a mystical vision in which existence itself is

[431] Poem XXIX, quatrain 3 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 130.

[432] Qur'an 36:82.

the ongoing expression of divine love, which is manifested, sustained, and ultimately returning to its Source in the Hidden Treasure.

Hamzah describes the highest mode of knowing as *maʿrifa*. In Sufi epistemology, *maʿrifa* is the direct, unmediated, recognition of God, contrasting with *ʿilm*, knowledge acquired through instruction.[433] This distinction is crucial, as *maʿrifa* is not intellectual learning but unveiling of what has always been embedded within the self.

Hamzah directs his critique against Islamic scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) and judges (sing. *qāḍī*) who fixate only on outward forms and legalistic reasoning. As al-Attas notes, Hamzah censures these figures for their reliance on exoteric knowledge and for obstructing the seeker's access to higher truths of Sufism.[434] His prose and poetry implicitly contrast their formalism with the transformative knowledge of love and *maʿrifa*.

4.3 Transformative love: Self-annihilation and divine connection

In Hamzah's poetics, love is not a sentiment but an active force that radically transforms the seeker through the dual processes of self-annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and subsistence expressed in metaphorical language of 'union' (*wiṣāl*). This journey of radical self-effacement is rendered

[433] For e.g. Abu al-Ḥasan al-Shushtari (d. 1269) in his *Risāla al-Quṣāriyya*, outlines a hierarchy of knowledge: *ʿilm* (discursive theology), *maʿrifa* (direct recognition), and *taḥqīq* (realization by the *muḥaqqiqūn* who affirm that nothing truly exists but God). See Yousef Casewit, "Shushtarī's Treatise on the Limits of Theology and Sufism: Discursive Knowledge (*ʿilm*), Direct Recognition (*Maʿrifa*), and Mystical Realization (T*aḥqīq*) in *al-Risāla al-Quṣāriyya*." *Religions* 11, no. 5 (2020): 2. Hamzah likewise holds *taḥqīq* in esteem: in his poem, he links the perfection of the Prophet's path to *millat al-taḥqīq* (the community of realization, i.e. the path of the realizers (*muḥaqqiqūn*), emphasizing that true knowledge is not only recognition (*maʿrifa*) but complete realization in God.

[434] See al-Attas, 1970, 22–3.

through metaphors of fire consuming impurities, spiritual intoxication displacing reason, and water dissolving distinctions. At its peak, love purifies and dissolves the egoic self. The seeker must relinquish the lower self and its illusions of autonomy to realise that nothing exists independently of God.

This is conveyed in the following quatrain:[435]

Berdakap jangan kepalang, *Akan nyawamu jangan kau sayang,* Tawḥīd*mu yogia kau pasang,* *Supaya kasih* maḥbūb *yang larang*.	Translation: Embrace with nothing held back, Hold no attachment to your very life, But set your *tawḥīd* firm in place, That you may win the Beloved's guarded love.

The seeker is urged to renounce attachment (*sayang*) to temporal selfhood (*nyaw*a, 'one's very life') and commit fully to the realisation of divine Oneness (*tawḥīd*). In Malay usage, *nyawa* signifies life, breath, or soul, often evoking what is most precious and vital.[436] By pairing *nyawa* with the negation *jangan* (do not), Hamzah stresses that sincerity in love requires the surrender of even this dearest possession. This recurrent motif underscores that radical love demands a total effacement of selfhood, a central theme in Sufi discourse.

Hamzah's vocabulary of transformation integrates Arabic and Malay terms that express yearning, surrender, psychological death, and the gnosis of *tawḥīd*. As Ibrahim explains, this is a state in which, 'the soul of the lover loses all of its egotism, arrogance, and other inappropriate

[435] Poem XVII, quatrain 6 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 94. On this quatrain as an expression of the soul's return to its ontological Source, see Chapter 4.2 (p. 118) of this dissertation.

[436] See Wilkinson, online, s.v. *nyawa.*

attributes in exchange for the love of God, or rather God Himself.'[437] His terminology highlights the necessity of dissolving the ego or lower self (*nafs*) for spiritual purification.

Table 4.3 Key terms of transformative love in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry

Arabic Term	Malay Term	Meaning in Hamzah's Poetics
ʿIshq	*Berahi*	Overwhelming passionate love that transforms the seeker.
Tajrīd; Tafrīd	*Tanggal; Tunggal*	Stripping away all but God; Pure solitude in God
Fanāʾ	*Lenyap; Hapus; Hangus,*	Annihilation of self in divine presence; Psychological death.
Liqāʾ; Wāṣil	*Bertemu; Dakap; Kawin*	Encounter, arrival, connection, or reunion with the Beloved.
Baqāʾ	*Karam; Timbul*	Passage from annihilation to subsistence: *karam* (to drown) signifies effacement in the divine ocean, while wordplay with Arabic *karam* (generosity) and *timbul* (to surface) conveys abiding in God after annihilation.

The transformative effect of love is further expressed in the following quatrain:[438]

Hamzah Shahrnawi ẓāhir*nya Jāwī,* *Batinnya cahya Ahmad yang* ṣāfī, *Sungguhpun ia terhina jati,* ʿĀshiq*nya* dāʾim *akan* Dhāt al-Bāriʾ.	Translation: Hamzah of Shahr-i Naw, outwardly Malay, Inwardly, the pure light of Ahmad, Though he is indeed poor and lowly, Forever a lover of the Essence of the Maker.

Hamzah contrasts two dimensions of human existence: outward socio-cultural identity and inward spiritual reality. Outwardly, he identifies as Malay (*Jāwī*), yet his inner reality is derived

[437] See Ibrahim, 2022, 63.

[438] Poem XV, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 88.

from the 'light of Ahmad,' a reference to the primordial Muhammadan light (*nūr Muḥammadī*),[439] God's first creation from which all existence emanates in Sufi cosmology.[440]

By tracing his innermost essence (*sirr*) to the 'light of Ahmad,' Hamzah signals his affiliation not only with the historical Prophet but also with the eternal Muhammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*), the archetype of the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*). His confession of existential poverty (*terhina jati*) reflects the Sufi doctrine that all created beings are, in their essence, *ʿadam* (non-existence), contingent and entirely dependent upon divine *wujūd* (Being). This awareness perfects the seeker in the station of love (*ʿishq*), described in Hamzah's verses as *wāṣil-nya dāʾim* or *dāʾim bertemu,* ever in connection with the Essence, named *al-Bāriʾ* (The Maker).[441]

4.3.1 Love and the unveiling of the Self

The journey of love in Hamzah's poetry is inseparable from the journey of self-knowledge, encapsulated in the well-known Sufi dictum attributed to the Prophet: [442]

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[439] For an explanation of *Aḥmad*, see Chapter 2.3 (p. 41 n. 124) of this dissertation.

[440] The *nūr Muḥammadī* (Muḥammadan Light), often cited in early Islamic and Sufi cosmology, refers to the first act of creation and the luminous origin from which all existence flows. In the Akbarian tradition, this becomes the doctrine of *al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya* (the Muḥammadan Reality), which sees the Prophet as both a historical person and the ontological principle of creation, the isthmus between the divine and the created realms. The Muḥammadan Light is the first ontological manifestation of God's desire to be known (the Hidden Treasure), while the Muḥammadan Reality encompasses both the metaphysical source of all beings and the perfect archetype of human realisation (*al-insān al-kāmil*). See Addas, 2009, 15–24; Emirahmetoğlu, 2024, 42–47.

[441] *Al-Bāriʾ* (The Maker) is one of the *al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā* (the Ninety-Nine Most Beautiful Names of God), denoting the One who brings creation into existence in perfect proportion and harmony.

[442] This *ḥadīth* holds significant importance in the Sufi tradition, though it is not included in the canonical collections of *ḥadīth*. Known as an 'initiatic ḥ*adīth*,' it carries multiple layers of meaning, one of the most profound

Man ʿarafa nafsahu fa-qad ʿarafa rabbahu—Whoever knows himself knows his Lord.

This axiom underpins the Sufi path, where knowledge of the self becomes the gateway to gnosis. The obstacles to such realisation are not external but internal, veils woven by the illusion of selfhood. Love is the force that lifts these veils, unveiling the essential unity of knower, knowledge, and known.

Hamzah expresses this in the following quatrain:[443]

Man ʿarafa nafsahu *sabda baginda* rasūl, Fa-qad ʿarafa Rabbahu *tiada dengan* ḥulūl, Wāḥid*kan olehmu* fāʿil *dan* maf῾ūl, *Jangan di*takhṣīṣ*kan* maqām *tempat* nuzūl.	Translation: 'Whoever knows himself,' said the Messenger,[444] 'Knows his Lord,' yet not through incarnation, Realize the oneness of the Doer and the done-to, And do not ascribe a specific place to His descent.

This verse affirms the principle of *tawḥīd*, stressing the inseparability of divine action and manifestation while rejecting any notion of *ḥulūl* (incarnation or indwelling). Hamzah makes clear that all agency is ultimately divine, while also warning against confining or localizing the

being its alignment with the ultimate aims of Hamzah Fansuri's poetic vision. Hamzah references this saying in four of his thirty-two poems (Poems II, III, V, and VI in Drewes and Brakel, 1986).

[443] Poem III, quatrain 12 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 50.

[444] Hamzah Fansuri attributes this saying to the Prophet Muhammad, though it is also attributed to the fourth caliph, ʿAli ibn Abi Ṭalib.

presence of God. For him, the Islamic testimony of unity, *lā ilāha illa'llāh* (there is no god but God) is theological as well as ontological: 'There is no reality but the Reality.'[445]

Hamzah further draws upon Qurʾanic revelation to affirm that divine love and knowledge are unveiled within the self:[446]

Sabda Allah pada sekalian sālikūn, Yaʿni: Wa-fī anfusikum a-fa-lā tubṣirūn,[447] *Adamu itu* dawām al-wāṣilūn, *Dengan* subḥāna 'llāhi ʿammā yaṣifūn[448].	Translation: God has spoken to all wayfarers: 'And in yourselves — will you not see?' Nonbeing is the permanence of those who have arrived, And 'Exalted is God above what they ascribe to Him!'

The Qurʾanic verse (Q.51:21: *wa-fī anfusikum a-fa-lā tubṣirūn*) anchors Hamzah's epistemology in a cosmology of inner disclosure. In this view, knowledge God is not acquired externally but unveiled inwardly (*kashf*) — the lifting of the veil that conceals the divine reality already present within the self. As Andi notes, drawing on Ibn ʿArabi, the self is an *āya* (sign), a locus of ontological presence and divine self-disclosure.[449]

Hamzah's phrase *dawām al-wāṣilūn* (the permanence of those who have arrived) expresses the Akbarian principle that the *wāṣilūn* abide in an unbroken state of connection with the Real. The

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[445] See Ogunnaike, 2025, 32.

[446] Poem III, quatrain 11 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 50.

[447] Qurʾan 51:21.

[448] Qurʾan 37:159; 23:91.

[449] See Andi, 2024, 90.

path, therefore, is not about acquiring something new, but unveiling what has always been latent within the self. This corresponds to a metaphysical anthropology in which the human being is a *maẓhar* (locus) of divine disclosure.[450] As Kalin explains, the human self, 'is not simply a physical or rational being, but the mirror in which divine attributes are disclosed.'[451]

The third line affirms that the permanence of the *wāṣilūn* rests in the realization of *ʿadam* (nonbeing), which is the ontological truth of creation in relation to God.[452] The final phrase, *subḥāna 'llāhi ʿammā yaṣifūn* (Q 37:159), serves as a counterbalancing assertion of transcendence. It reminds the seeker that while God is disclosed within the self, He ultimately transcends all conceptualisation and linguistic attribution. Together, these lines affirm that divine signs are embedded within the self, pointing simultaneously to God's nearness and His unknowability.

In this context, Hamzah's vision of knowledge (*maʿrifa*) is inseparable from *berahi/ʿishq* (radical love). These are not two parallel paths but interdependent dimensions of the same ontological unfolding. Love draws the seeker toward metaphorical union; knowledge anchors this longing in unveiled certainty.[453]

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[450] See Chittick, 1989, 247; Kalin, 2008: 103–6.

[451] See Kalin, 2008, 94–96.

[452] *Adamu* is a recurrent term in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry used as wordplay on *ʿadam* in the Akbarian sense to denote creation's ontological nothingness, wholly contingent on the divine *wujūd* (Being). See e.g. Chapters 1.5.4 (p. 23), 3.2.3 (p. 89), 4.4 (p.156) of this dissertation.

[453] As cited by Schimmel, Abu Ḥamid al-Ghazali teaches that love is inseparable from gnosis, for "one cannot love what one does not know" (Schimmel 1977, 130). Lewisohn further notes al-Ghazali's assertion that true love (*ḥubb*) must arise from inner knowledge (*maʿrifa*) and perception (*idrāk*) (Lewisohn, 2008, 165). See also Ibrahim, who discusses these formulations in the context of the Sufi interconnection between love, knowledge, beauty and mercy (Ibrahim 2022, 49).

Hamzah views the culmination of the spiritual path in the figure of the *orang kāmil* (*al-insān al-kāmil*, the perfect human),[454] through whom divine names and divine attributes are reflected and love is consummated. The Prophet Muhammad, *Muḥammad ḥabīb*[455] (Muhammad the beloved), embodies this archetype.[456] He is not only the model of perfected ethics but also the cosmic axis of love and knowledge. This intimacy is echoed in Hamzah's reference to a mystical saying attributed to the Prophet, 'I have a moment with God' (*lī maʿa ʾllāhi waqtun*). The verse below elaborates this gnosis:[457]

Lī maʿa ʾllāhi waqtun qāla sayyid Aḥmad, Yaʿni wāṣillah *ia dengan* rūḥ al-jasad, *Inilah ilmu yang menjadi* aḥad, *Manakan dapat oleh sekalian* walad.	Translation: 'I have a moment with God,' said Master Ahmad, Meaning he is in union with spirit and body, This is the knowledge of Singularity, Beyond the reach of novices.

Hamzah contrasts superficial piety with realised gnosis. The knowledge of *aḥad* (the Single) is inaccessible to the *walad* (child, novice), attainable only by those who have traversed the

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[454] For Hamzah Fansuri's quatrain on the *orang kāmil*, see Chapter 4.4 (p.155. For an explanation of *al-insān al-kāmil* and *al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*, see Chapter 4.3 (p. 129 n. 440) of this dissertation. See also Ibrahim (2022, 94) for a concise summary of the perfect human as the complete theophany of all divine names and attributes, identified with the Muhammadan Reality, and serving as the *barzakh* (isthmus) between the divine and created realms.

[455] Poem VI, quatrain 14, line 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 60.

[456] The term *ḥabīb* (beloved) is one of the most significant honorifics of the Prophet Muhammad in Sufi tradition, emphasizing his role as the supreme exemplar of divine love. Ibn ʿArabi and his commentators view Muhammad as both the final prophet in the historical dimension and the eternal Muhammadian Light (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*) from which creation originates. This dual aspect positions him as the cosmic principle that links the Creator and creation. For a discussion of the Prophet as the archetypal lover and beloved, see Beneito, 2004. See also, Ibrahim, 2022, 38–40.

[457] Poem III, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 50.

esoteric path. The seeker who reaches this station knows not through conceptual thought but through unveiling (*kashf)*, where the self becomes a mirror of divine unity. As Hamzah puts it, 'That mirror has already been polished'[458] Once purified, the self becomes a luminous surface for divine reflection. This polished mirror trope, widely used in Sufi texts and classical Islamic philosophy expresses the transformative culmination of inner unveiling and ethical refinement.[459]

Hamzah presents love as both the origin and the final destiny of the self. The path of love unfolds as a return to the divine source, mapped symbolically through the four realms (*ʿālam*):[460] the human realm (*nāsūt*), the angelic realm (*malakūt*), the realm of divine power (*jabarūt*), and the realm of divine nature or essence (*lāhūt*). These realms mark successive progressive stages of realisation, culminating in complete self-effacement in divine unity (*tawḥīd*). This journey requires dissolving the ego (*nafs*) while remaining grounded in the sacred law revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*sharīʿa*), as conveyed in this verse:[461]

*Campurkan yang empat ʿ*ālam,	Translation:
Hancurkan di laut dalam,	Blend together the four worlds,
	Dissolve them in the deep ocean.

[458] The complete verse: *Rupanya ẓāhir kau sangka tanah / Itulah cermin sudah terasah / Jangan kau pandang jauh berpayah / Maḥbūbmu hampir sertamu ramah //* (You suppose your outward form is mere clay / But that mirror has already been polished / Do not look far and toil in vain / Your Beloved is intimately near, graciously with you // (Poem XV, quatrain 9, line 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 88).

[459] Hamzah's image of the polished mirror draws on the trope widespread in both classical Sufi texts (e.g., works by Rumi, Ibn ʿArabi, and al-Ghazali) and Islamic philosophy (e.g., Avicenna). It bridges spiritual practice with ethical philosophy, making it a central image in discussions about human perfection and divine connection. See Schimmel, 1977, 4, 171, 190, 382, 479.

[460] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 211.

[461] Poem XVII, quatrain 11 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 94.

Sharīʿat *nabi yang* khatam,	The sacred law of the Seal of Prophets—[462]
Kerjakan dāʾim *siang dan malam.*	Practice it steadfastly, by day and night.

These realms chart the seeker's ascent from the material world toward higher spiritual realities, ultimately arriving at the recognition of transcendent Unity. Outward practice of the religious law (*sharīʿa*) and its esoteric knowledge (*maʿrifa*) are not separate but integrated.[463] The exoteric bounds the esoteric, while the while the esoteric permeates the exoteric. The seeker does not abandon *sharīʿa* upon attaining deeper knowledge; rather, the structure of the spiritual path remains intact throughout the journey.[464]

Fire in Hamzah's poetry signifies love's dual power to annihilate and renew. It purifies by consuming impurities, just as love effaces selfishness, ego, and obstinacy before God. The fire of love transmutes the self and brings it to its goal. Love requires the relinquishing of selfhood in order to seek, serve, and encounter the Other. In its highest expression, love unites the seeker with the divine in every possible way.

This transformation is captured in Hamzah's quatrain on camphor where annihilation is imaged as burnt wood, divine unity as the ocean without currents, and purification as camphor

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[462] In Akbarian metaphysics, the 'seal of prophets' (*khatam al-anbiyāʾ*) refers to the Prophet Muhammad as the final manifestation of the prophetic reality, completing the cycle of divine revelation. While prophetic legislation ends with him, the Muhammadan reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya*) continues as the eternal source of spiritual guidance and as the archetype of the perfect human (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

[463] See Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 122.

[464] See Abdul Hadi, 2001.

crystallising into its pure form.[465] The same symbolism of fire and camphor here underlines love's capacity to consume the ego while refining the soul into luminosity.

4.4 Experiential love: Tasting, perplexity, madness

The deep interconnection of *kenal* (*maʿrifa*, gnosis) and *berahi* (*ʿishq*, radical love) in Hamzah's writing reveals his spiritual anthropology: the seeker is called to both love and knowledge, and through their union of heart and intellect, to return to the Origin. Love, as articulated by Ruzbihan Baqli, Ibn 'Arabi, and Rumi resists definition, for its reality exceeds the limits of conceptual abstraction.[466] According to these masters, those who attempt to define love have not truly known it. As Chittick and Ibrahim observe, Ibn ʿArabi offers only the most general definition: love is a knowledge of tasting (*dhawq*).[467] This suggests that love cannot be described unless it has been directly experienced. It is an epistemology of the heart, which cannot be understood or expressed without being tasted.

Hamzah's poetry likewise presents love not as a subject for rational speculation but as an experiential journey that requires direct, unmediated encounter. This journey is marked by intense emotional and psychological states, conveyed through imagery that captures the paradox of love. Whereby, suffering intertwined with ecstasy, madness inseparable from awakening to a reality beyond ordinary perception. The heart, caught between the tangible and

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[465] For further discussion see Chapters 4.5.1 (p. 184) and 4.6.1 (pp. 212-13) of this dissertation.

[466] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 35; Chittick, 2013a, xxiv; Williams, 2020, 3–4; Moqaddam and Nourian, 2021, 17; Ibrahim, 2022, 9–12.

[467] See Chittick, 2013a, 57; Ibrahim, 2022, 56.

the intangible, between form and formlessness, oscillates between these oppositions restlessly. This fluid and transformative states embody the essence of experiential love. It is a journey that unfolds in constant movement, perplexity, and revelation.

The ineffability of this path demands a particular disposition described in Sufi discourse as belonging to the *ahl al-dhawq* (people of tasting), which Hamzah renders in Malay as *anak jamu*.[468] In Sufi usage, *dhawq* denotes direct experience of divine realities, acquired through states of the heart rather than through discursive reasoning or theoretical study.[469] The distinction between conceptual and experiential knowledge is foundational to Sufi epistemology.[470]

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[468] Poem III, quatrain 2, line 4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 48. See Ibrahim who says that in general terms, Ibn 'Arabi defines love as 'knowledge of tasting' (Ibrahim, 2022, 56).

[469] *Dhawq* (tasting) is a Sufi term referring to direct, experiential knowledge of divine or mystical truths, transcending intellectual comprehension as it embodies an immediate 'taste' of spiritual reality. It becomes a metaphor for deeply personal spiritual realization, understood only through direct experience. See Hirtenstein, *EnI*, 2018, online.

[470] Rumi says: 'But he who has not tasted does not know / To one who asked the question "What is love?" / I said "You shall know this when you become me." / True love is love beyond all calculation, which is why it is said that it is in reality the quality of God, and for man his servant a mere figure of speech. "He loves them" is all there is—who are "they" in "they love Him?"' translated in Williams, 2020, 3–4. The phrases, 'He loves them' and 'they love Him?' derived from Qur'an 5:54.

In another poem, Rumi says: 'Someone asked me, "How would it be to be a lover?" / I answered, "Do not ask about this notion. / You will know when you become like me. / You will know when He invites you to be His table companion."' // in Moqaddam and Nourian, 2021, 17.

As Sviri explains, *dhawq* is likened to attending a divine banquet (*maʾduba*).[471] Those who arrive on time are served the finest nourishment,[472] symbolizing the immediacy and plenitude of divine knowledge. Hamzah captures this metaphor in a verse:[473]

Kalām *itu datangnya daripada* Maʿshūq*,* *Mengatakan dirinya* lā taḥta wa lā fawq*,* *Jangan di*iʿtiqād*kan seperti* makhlūq, *Supaya* dākhil *engkau pada* ahl al-dhawq.	Translation: *The Word comes from the Beloved,* *Declaring Himself neither below nor above,* *Do not conceive of Him as created,* *That you may enter among the people of tasting.*

Hamzah also employs the Malay term *rasa* as an equivalent to *dhawq*. *Rasa* encompasses tasting, sensing, feeling, and perceiving, uniting both sensory and affective dimensions. As Amdan notes, 'The knowledge of Sufism (*taṣawwuf)* is the knowledge of *rasa* or *dhawq*. Whoever wishes to experience and understand it must feel and live it.'[474] Hamzah's use of *rasa* expands its semantic field to convey the layered and immersive quality of divine love.

Elsewhere, Braginsky has explored the influence of Sanskrit *rasa* aesthetics on Malay literature, positing that *rasa* mediates between personal experience and metaphysical principles, integrating Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic elements.[475] Muhammad Haji Salleh, however, cautions against applying the Indian *rasa* framework uniformly to Malay literature,

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[471] See Sviri, 1997, 17.

[472] Ibid.

[473] Poem III, quatrain 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 48.

[474] '*[I]mu Tasawwuf adalah ilmu rasa atau ilmu dzauq. Sesiapa yang ingin merasai dan mengalaminya sendiri akan faham nanti*,' in Amdan, 2016, vii.

[475] See Braginsky, 1986.

especially to prose genres such as the *hikayat*.[476] He stresses that Malay *rasa* reflects its own literary and cultural values, shaped by diverse currents including Persian, Arabic, and indigenous traditions. This caution is particularly relevant in the case of Hamzah's poetics. Unlike Sanskrit *rasa*, which cultivates stylised emotions for aesthetic effect, Hamzah's *rasa* signifies experiential access to divine reality, an extension of the Sufi notion of *dhawq*.

Hamzah's poetry depicts three experiential stages in the seeker's journey, each marked by increasing intimacy with the divine as summarized in the table below.

Table 4.4 Stages of experiential love in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry

Term	**Meaning**	**Description**
Rasa (tasting)	Initial encounter	The first taste of divine intimacy; onset of mystical awareness.
Minum (drinking)	Intensified longing and receptivity	Partaking of *shurbat/tapai/arak*, the symbolic draught from the Creator as *sāqī*, deepening desire and openness to divine nourishment.
Mabuk, gila (Ar. *sukr, majnūn*)	Ecstatic intoxication; loss of self-reference	The lover is overcome in the Beloved, where distinctions dissolve.

These stages correspond with Sufi teachings on self-annihilation (*fanāʾ*) and subsistence in God (*baqāʾ*). However, Hamzah rarely employs the term *baqāʾ* in his poems. Instead, he favours Malay terms such as *bertemu* and Arabic equivalents like *wiṣāl*, *wāṣil*, or the Qurʾanic

[476] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2008.

liqāʾ, all of which emphasize direct encounter, meeting, or arrival. In the closing verse of one poem, he implores:[477]

ʿIshqi*nya jangan (hendak) kau padam,* *Supaya* wāṣil *dengan laut dalam.*	Translation: *Do not let his love be quenched,* *So that he may be joined to the deep ocean.*

Here, love must be sustained, not extinguished, if the seeker is to reach the fathomless ocean of divine unity. The destination is subsistence in the innermost secret of divine knowledge, the Hidden Treasure from which all existence originates.

Metaphors of drinking (*minum*), feasting (*jamu*), and intoxication (*mabuk*) convey the ineffable transformation wrought by love. Love is experienced through *rasa (dhawq)* as an immediate encounter with the Real.

Yet *dhawq* does not arise in isolation. It requires preparation through refined spiritual comportment, encompassing humility, receptivity, and ethical discipline, known as *adab*, which opens the heart to divine realities. Hamzah insists that without *adab*, anchored in *sharīʿa*, the seeker remains unfit for the banquet of gnosis. He writes:[478]

Jika kau ambil sharīʿat *akan* wakīl*,* *Pada kedua* ʿālam *engkaulah* jamīl*.*	Translation: If you take the Law as your guiding trustee,

[477] Poem XXIV, quatrain 15, line 3–4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 116.

[478] Poem I, quatrain 6, lines 4–5 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 42.

	In both worlds you shall be beneficent and beautiful.[479]

Here, *wakīl* (trustee) relates to *tawakkul* (trust in God), which, in Sufi ethics, denotes complete surrender. Hamzah affirms this with the Qurʾan (Q.3:159): 'Surely God loves those who put their trust (in Him),' Such trust leads the seeker into *kandang ʿāshiqīn*, which is the domain of radical lovers. [480]

Adab is thus not mere outward decorum but an inner disposition of humility and readiness before the sacred. Hamzah often employs Malay terms such as *patut, yogya,* and *sopan* to describe this refinement. The banquet metaphor reinforces this;[481] just as a guest must observe proper conduct at a feast, the seeker must cultivate the right *adab* to receive divine knowledge. Ibn ʿArabi describes *adab* as a banquet that gathers all good qualities.[482] Hamzah expresses this understanding through the following verse:[483]

	Translation:
Kenal dirimu hai anak jamu,	Recognize yourself, O table companion,
Janganlah lupa akan diri kamu,	Do not lose sight of yourself,

[479] *Al-Jamīl*, 'The Beneficent, the Beautiful,' is one of the Ninety-Nine Names of the Most Beautiful Names of God. On other instances in him poetry, Hamzah translates 'beneficent/beautiful' as *elok* or *indah,* or *permai.*

[480] Poem XI, quatrain 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 74: *Membawa āyat inna Allāha yuḥibbu al-mutawakkilīn / Yogya diketahui oleh sekalian sālīkin / Supaya masuk ke dalam kandang ʿāshiqīn* // (Bringing the verse, 'Surely God loves those who put their trust (upon Him)' / This must be known by all wayfarers / So they may enter the fold of radical lovers //

[481] See Mayeur-Jaouen and Patrizi, 2017.

[482] The banquet (*ma'duba*) received its name because it is the bringing of several people together around nourishment (Gril, 1993, 231).

[483] Poem XXII, quatrain 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 108.

ʿIlmu ḥaqīqa yogia kau ramu, *Supaya terkenal ʿālī adamu.*	Gather the knowledge of Reality, That you may recognize your noble being.

The phrase *anak jamu* is Hamzah's Malay rendering of the Sufi trope of the guest at God's banquet.[484] It signifies those who experience divine presence firsthand (*dhawq*).[485] *Jamu* refers to hosting or offering a banquet, while *anak jamu* connotes an honoured guest.[486] The Malay term *ramu*, (to gather or combine ingredients) extends this culinary metaphor for attaining *ʿilm al-ḥaqīqa* (knowledge of Reality). It also suggests a remedy or healing substance, reinforcing the idea that divine knowledge cures the soul.[487] 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani's (d. c. 1329) interprets the Qur'an 20:81, 'Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you,' as an allusion to nourishing the heart with gnostic teachings that give life.[488]

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[484] On the guest at banquet trope, see e.g. Rashid al-Din Maybudi, *Kashf al-asrār wa ʿūddat al-abrār*, ed. ʿAli Aṣghar Hikmat, 10 vols. (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1371 sh./ 1992), 4:406, cited in Moqaddam and Nourian, 2021, 15n.56.

[485] Sufis metaphorically describe themselves as guests at a banquet—those who arrive on time partake in the most exquisite nourishment (Sviri, 1997, 17).

[486] Wilkinson, online, s.v. *jamu*.

Abdul Hadi identifies *anak jamu* as one of the distinctive markers of Sufism in Hamzah's poetry, alongside terms such as *anak dagang* (spiritual exile), *anak datu* (princely lineage), *faqir* (seeker of poverty), and *ʿāshiq* (lover). He further explains that *anak jamu* signifies one who partakes in divine hospitality, aligning with the Sufi notion of *dhawq*—a direct and experiential 'tasting' of divine reality, which surpasses intellectual understanding (Abdul Hadi, 2001, 244).

[487] See Mohd Kamal and Mohd Syukri (2014, 83), in their commentary on Hamzah's line, '*Ilmu ḥakikat yogia kau ramu*' (Gather the knowledge of Reality).

[488] See al-Kashani, and William, 2021, 32. Al-Kashani is one of the most influential interpreters of Ibn Arabi's work.

Through such layered imagery, Hamzah counsels that divine love cannot be received without inner readiness. *Adab* becomes the vessel that allows *rasa* to be received; without it, even the most sublime truths remain veiled.

Hamzah also draws upon the legacy of early ecstatic mystics such as al-Hallaj and al-Bistami, renowned for their declarations of union. In one verse, Hamzah writes:[489]

Shurbat mulia dari tangan khāliq*,* *Akan minuman sekalian* ʿāshiq*,* *Barang meminum dia menjadi* nāṭiq*,* *Mengatakan* ana al-ḥaqq *terlalu ṣādiq*.	Translation: A noble draught from the hand of the Creator, The drink for all lovers, Whoever drinks it becomes a clear speaker, Proclaiming 'I am the Real' in utter truth.

The *shurbat* (noble draught, rendered elsewhere as *arak* or *tapai*), symbolizes the deepening of *rasa*, progressing from tasting to full absorption in divine love. Whoever drinks becomes *nāṭiq* (a clear speaker), capable of articulating divine truth. The phrase *ana al-ḥaqq* (I am the Real), attributed to al-Hallaj, marks the culmination of *fanāʾ*, when the seeker's selfhood dissolves into divine presence and the Real speaks through the human tongue.[490]

Hamzah honours al-Hallaj as *penghulu ʿāshiq* (chief of lovers), whose utterances reflect a state where personal identity is eclipsed by divine intimacy.[491] For Hamzah, such ecstatic speech is not irrationality but mystical clarity: the seeker's *rasa* has matured into an unmediated realization of divine unity.

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[489] Poem XIX, quatrain 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 98.

[490] See Sviri, 1997; Abdul Hadi, 2001.

[491] Poem XIII, quatrain 17 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82. See Chapter 4.4 (p. 155) for more on *penghulu ʿāshiq*.

In *The Drink of Lovers,* Hamzah contrasts this condition with the limitations of *buddi* (reason), a term derived from Sanskrit *buddhi*. He critiques reason as an adversary to love (*berahi/ ʿishq*), framing it as a faculty that obstructs direct knowledge.[492] At the same time, he acknowledges the role of *fikir* (reflection, thought) as a necessary stage to process understanding, though it remains subordinate to the immediacy of love. Zargar observes a similar dynamic in ʿAṭṭar, where the intellect is praised for its nobility yet depicted as a 'stranger to love,' prone to contradiction and incapable of unveiling divine realities.[493] Ibn ʿArabi deepens the critique, noting that *ʿaql* (intellect, from a root meaning 'to bind') is indispensable for rationalizing perceptions but incapable of love.[494] Love thrives in perplexity (*ḥayra*), where the binding power of the intellect falters.[495] Thus, while the intellect organizes and restrains, love transcends and transforms, embodying a mode of knowing irreducible to abstraction.

Toward the summit of Hamzah's spiritual vision stands radical love, which consumes the lover entirely: [496]

> *Ketahui bahawa pangkat berahi terlalu tinggi daripada segala pangkat*
>
> Translation: Know that radical love ranks highest among all ranks.

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[492] '*Maka kata ahl al-suluk, 'buddi setru berahi*,' Hamzah Fansuri, *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn*, in al-Attas, 1970, 327.

[493] See Zargar, 2024, 146–149.

[494] See Ibrahim, 2022, 144–145.

[495] Ibid.

[496] Hamzah Fansuri, *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn* (*The Drinks of Lovers*), in al-Attas, 1970, 325.

This path, known in Sufi discourse as *madhhab al-ʿishq*, affirms love not as an optional path but as the very essence of proximity to God.[497] Safi describes *ʿishq* as 'radical love,' an overflowing force that disrupts boundaries and consumes the seeker.[498] Ibrahim notes that in Sufi texts, *ʿishq* symbolizes passionate, fiery, all-consuming love experienced by aspirants on their journey to God.[499] This love entails psychological annihilation of the self, preparing the heart for divine subsistence. Hamzah expresses this movement succinctly: '*Melenyapkan dirinya tiada sayang*' (He effaced his self, without regret).[500]

Hamzah affirms that true knowledge (*maʿrifa*) is unattainable without love:[501]

Aho segala kamu yang ghāfilīn, *Yogya diketahui akan* ḥaqīqa al-wāṣilīn, *Kerana ḥaqīqat itu pakaian* ʿārifīn, *Menentukan jalan sekalian* ʿāshiqīn.	Translation: O you who are heedless, take heed! Know the reality of those who have arrived, For that reality is the garment of the gnostics, Marking out the path for all lovers.

The term *wāṣilīn* (sing. *wāṣil*, those who have arrived) designates those whose heart and soul are continuously attached to God, recognizing that all existence depends on *wujūd* (Being). The *ʿārifīn* (gnostics) embody this truth, attaining mystical 'union.' For them, *ḥaqīqa* is not a

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[497] Schimmel discusses *madhhab al-ʿishq* having shaped Sufi thought and literature across regions, becoming central to the Sufi vision of spiritual transformation (Schimmel, 1977, 141).

[498] See Safi, 2018, xx – xxi.

[499] See Ibrahim, 2022, 38.

[500] Poem II, quatrain 15, line 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 46. Hamzah Fansuri translates *fanāʾ* as *lenyap*, referring to the state of loss of self-identification with radical love (*berahi/ʿishq*) in metaphorical union with the Beloved.

[501] Poem XIV, quatrain 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 68.

metaphysical abstraction but a lived reality. Hamzah asserts that love is not a stage of the path but the path itself.

Hamzah's depiction of the qualities of the radical lover (*orang berahi*) in his treatise underscores their role as the ultimate seeker of spiritual proximity to the divine and the realisation of the *tawḥīd*.[502] *Fanāʾ* is not the merging of two separate entities but the erasure of illusion. As Ibrahim cautions, to speak of 'becoming one with God' misrepresents the Sufi aim. The true goal is *tawḥīd*, which is the realisation that only One exists, and all else is contingent.[503] Hamzah similarly avoids dualistic language, stating that 'union' transcends such terminology, portraying love as an experience that eludes rational categorisation.[504]

Although the term *ʿishq* does not occur in the Qurʾan, it emerges in early Sufi literature to designate a consuming, ecstatic love that draws the seeker toward divine proximity.[505] Al-Ḥallaj describes *ʿishq* 'the essence of the essence of God and the mystery of creation,' expressing it through ecstatic suffering and self-offering.[506] Al-Ghazali offers a rare but affirmative treatment of *ʿishq*, describing it as a firmer and more intense inclination than

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[502] Ibid.

[503] Ibid.

[504] See al-Attas, 1970, 49.

[505] See Ibrahim, 2022, 37–8, 46–7, 109–10; Schimmel, 1977, 137, 292; Lumbard, 2007: 347 and *passim*. While the Qurʾan frequently employs the root *ḥ-b-b* (love), the term *ʿishq itself* does not appear. Ibrahim notes, however, that Ibn ʿArabi and later Sufis read certain verses, such as Q. 12:30 *qad shaghafahā ḥubban* ('smitten to the heart with love') and Q. 2:165 *wa-alladhīna āmanū ashaddu ḥubban lillahi* ('but those who believe are ardent in their love of God'), as connoting *ʿishq*, thereby grounding it as an intensification of Qurʾanic *ḥubb*.

[506] See Schimmel, 1977, 72.

maḥabba (love, affection), elevating it to the highest level of spiritual realisation.[507] Rumi places *ʿishq* at the heart of his mystical poetics, portraying it as the divine force by which lover and Beloved mirror the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*), drawing the seeker into a self-transcending transformation often described as 'union.'[508] Ibn ʿArabī defines *ʿishq* as the overflow (*ifrāṭ*) of *ḥubb*, a love so total that it blinds the lover to all but the Beloved, resulting in a unitive experience in which only God is perceived to remain.[509] As Schimmel observes, this poetic and mystical tradition of *ʿishq* enabled Sufis to express experiential truths of divine love through symbolic language that surpassed doctrinal formulations.[510]

Hamzah's teachings resonate with those of early ascetic mystics such as Rabiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya (d. 801), who framed her love for God as entirely selfless,[511] seeking neither reward nor paradise. Her devotion exemplified a love that effaces the ego's expectations. Al-Hallaj speaks

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[507] Abu Hamid al-Ghazali distinguishes *maḥabba*as the inclination of the heart toward what is pleasurable or beautiful, rooted in recognition of divine perfection. He outlines five types of love for God: love due to His blessings, His acts of mercy and forgiveness, His names and attributes, love of His essence as the most perfect Being, and finally, love arising from *maʿrifa*. He then elevates *ʿishq* as a more intense inclination, stronger than *maḥabba*, marking the highest level of spiritual realization. See Lumbard, 2007, 378–79.

[508] Rumi describes *ʿishq* as the divine force of 'union,' when the lower and higher selves become one, erasing duality. This selflessness leads to self-realization in the journey toward God. See Tajer, 2021, 62.

[509] See Ibrahim, 2022, 109–10.

[510] See Ibrahim, 2022, 37–8, 46–7, 109–10; Schimmel, 1977, 137, 292. Lumbard, 2007, 345–385.

[511] The elevation of divine love in Sufism is often attributed to Rabiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya, the renowned Sufi ascetic of Basra. While ʿAbd al-Waḥid ibn Zayd of the early Basra school introduced the term *ʿishq* to describe the divine-human relationship in the 7th century, Rabiʿa became famous for distinguishing between the selfish lover, who seeks paradise, and the selfless lover, focused solely on the Divine Beloved, to the exclusion of all else. Ibn ʿArabi praised her as the foremost interpreter of divine love (Ernst, 1999, 438–439). As we will see, Hamzah Fansuri advocates similar ascetic and devotional practices, though he does not explicitly cite Rabiʿa.

of love as both a divine attribute and a supreme human possibility.[512] For Hamzah, al-Hallaj's ecstatic declaration *ana al-ḥaqq* (I am the Real) was not blasphemy but the utterance of one utterly effaced in the Real. In Hamzah's poetry, love strips the seeker of all illusions of self, dissolving the boundary between lover (*ʿāshiq*) and Beloved (*maʿshuq, maḥbūb*).

This journey is often depicted through the metaphor of the reunion, a Sufi trope in which the soul longs to return to its primordial intimacy with the Beloved. Hamzah invokes this theme by drawing on the Persian-Arabic allegory of Layla and Majnun, where Majnun's love, dismissed by others as madness (*junūn*), reflects the lover's complete absorption in the Beloved.[513] Though irrational by worldly standards, such love is for the mystic a deeper wisdom.[514] The allegory reveals Hamzah's view that the apparent duality between lover and Beloved is illusory. At the level of latent potentialities in God's knowledge, the lover 'exists' undifferentiated (*'adam*, or non-existent) within the Beloved.[515]

Hamzah articulates this ontological vision in the following lines:[516]

Kuntu kanzan *mulanya nyata,* Ḥaqīqat *ombak di sana ada,* *Adanya itu tiada bernama,* *Majnun dan Layla ada di sana.*	Translation: 'I was a Treasure,' first made manifest, The reality of the waves was present there,

[512] See Lumbard, 2007, 349; *idem*, 2016, 113.

[513] See Armstrong-Chisti, 2001, 103.

[514] Ibid.

[515] See Chapter 4.2 (pp. 122-23) of this dissertation, where Hamzah's depiction of lovers is read through the doctrine of *aʿyān thābita*, the immutable entities in God's knowledge.

[516] Poem XXIX, quatrain 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 128.

> That existence bore no name,
> Yet Majnun and Layla were present there.

The opening line recalls the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure, linking the creative impulse to divine love, situating Majnun and Layla not as historical figures but as archetypes that pre-exist creation. The image of waves (*ombak*) serves as a metaphor for multiplicity, emerging from the ocean of divine being and eventually returning to it.

For Hamzah, *berahi* (radical love) is the highest rank of love, a divine gift surpassing all others. The *orang berahi*, the radical lover, is the paradigm of the seeker:[517]

> Now, the sign of one who is in love is that one has no fear of death. If one fears death, then one is not truly in love, for the desire of the lover is death. … For reason desires life, but love desires death. Reason desires to amass abundant wealth, but love desires to spend it away. Reason desires to be king and minister, but love desires to be a *faqīr*. Reason desires comfort, but love desires affliction. Reason desires honour, but love desires abasement. Reason desires fullness, but love desires hunger. Reason desires to sit above, but love desires to sit below. Therefore the People of the Path say: 'Love is the foe of Reason.'

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[517] Original text: *Adapun ʿalāmat orang berahi, tiada takut akan mati. Apabila [takut ia akan mati, tiada berahi hukumnya, kerana] kehendak orang berahi [itu mati] … [kerana buddi] hendak hidup, berahi hendak mati; buddi hendak menchari arta banyak-banyak, berahi hendak memuangkan [arta]; buddi hendak menjadi raja dan mentri, berahi hendak menjadi faqīr; buddi hendak nyaman, berahi hendak sakit; buddi hendak mulia, berahi hendak hina; buddi hendak kenyang, berahi hendak lapar; buddi hendak duduk ke atas, berahi hendak duduk ke bawah-kerana itu dikatakan ahl al-sulūk: 'Berahi setru Buddi,'* Hamzah Fansuri, *Sharāb al-ʿĀshiqīn* (*The Drinks of Lovers*) in al-Attas, 1970, 325.

Hamzah articulates this radical detachment in a verse that underscores the necessity of inner steadfastness and renunciation:[518]

Jika belum tetap engkau seperti batu, *Ḥukumnya dua lagi* khādim *dan ratu,* Setelah *luput engkau daripada emas dan matu,* *Mangkanya dapat menjadi satu.*	Translation: If you are not yet steadfast like stone, You are ruled by two, servant and king, Once freed from gold and its carats,[519] Only then can you realise the One.

Here, stone signifies inner immovability and unwavering submission, qualities that ground the seeker in servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*) and strip away the illusions of self-will.[520] Gold and its carats represent worldly attachment and the deceptive measures of material value. Only when these are abandoned can the seeker actualise the unity signified by *tawḥīd*, not as ontological fusion but as the recognition that all multiplicity is contingent upon the One.

This process of self-stripping is central to Hamzah's articulation of *maʿrifa*. Self-knowledge is not abstract speculation but an awareness of the self's utter dependence on Being. Writing in *Jawi* script is significant here, since the script lacks capitalization and thus produces a semantic

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[518] Poem IV, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 54.

[519] Al-Attas translated *matu* (a variant of *mutu*) as coin, explaining that it refers to the measure of gold's purity, often associated with currency, particularly gold coins like the *ashrafī* (al-Attas, 1970, 406). In *Sharab al-ʿĀshiqīn* (para. 33), Hamzah Fansri uses the simile, '*Seperti emas dan ashrafī'* to compare gold with the Divine and coins with the transient nature of creation (al-Attas, 1970, 313–14). Drewes and Brakel echoes al-Attas's interpretation in their translation (Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 55). However, I have chosen to translate *matu* as carat to emphasize an alternative nuance in the quatrain, complementing al-Attas's earlier interpretation. This translation highlights the measure of purity, aligning with the poem's focus on spiritual refinement and detachment from material attachments, rather than the exterior form of the coin.

[520] See Jaffray's discussion of Ibn ʿArabi's praise for inanimates, which he describes as more knowing and worshipful of God than other beings because they act solely by divine direction. Their natural descent symbolises servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*). According to Ibn ʿArabi, this quality in the human being—his "stone nature"—is highest, since servanthood is his root as well (Jaffray, 2015, 152).

ambiguity around *diri* (self). Depending on context, *diri* may denote the ego-bound lower self (*nafs al-ammāra*), the perfected God-attuned self (*nafs al-kāmila*), or even the Self of the Real (*nafs al-ḥaqq*), the singular Self that sustains all existence. Later editors, in Latin-script transcriptions, have sometimes capitalised *Diri* to clarify these distinctions. Yet for Hamzah, the ambiguity itself is meaningful: the seeker must discern which *diri* remains, one veiled by illusion or one clarified through divine nearness.

Hamzah identifies the traits of the lower self in sharp ethical terms:[521]

Takabbur *dan* ghurūr *kerja* shayṭānī, *Ia itulah jauh daripada* raḥmānī, *Emas dan perak alat* nafsānī, *Manakan sampai kepada* rabbānī.	Translation: Arrogance and delusion are the works of Satan, They lie far from the mercy of the Compassionate, Gold and silver are instruments of the lower self— How could they ever lead to the Lordly Reality?

The *nafsānī* self, deluded by pride (*takabbur*) and deception (*ghurūr*), stands in direct opposition to the *raḥmānī* disposition that seeks alignment with divine mercy. Here, 'gold and silver,' signify material attachments that bind the self to illusion rather than guiding it toward the *rabbānī* (Lordly).

[521] Poem IX, quatrain 14 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 70.

In contrast, self-knowledge unveils that the self has no existence independent of Being.[522] Hamzah voices this state of annihilation in the following declaration:[523]

	Translation:
Hamzah nin jangan kau cahari,	Do not seek for this Hamzah,
Bangsanya bukan insānī,	His kind is not of humankind,
Rupanya sungguhpun fānī,	Though his form indeed perishes,
Wāṣilnya dāʾim *dengan* ḥaqqānī.	He remains forever joined to the Real.

This verse stands as Hamzah's confession of annihilation. The separate ego has been effaced, leaving only subsistence in divine reality. Though his form is *fānī* (perishable), he is *wāṣil*—one who has arrived and abides in connection with *al-Ḥaqq*.

In one of his most evocative passages, Hamzah recalls a *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet, in which he speaks of a moment of undivided intimacy with God:[524]

	Translation:
Sabda rasulullah nabī kamu,	The Messenger of Allah, your Prophet, says:
Lī maʿa ʾllāhi[525] *sekali* waqtu,	'I have a moment with God,'

[522] In line with the thought of Ibn ʿArabi, the *nafs* occupies an intermediate position between the spirit (*ruh*), which is pure light, and the corporeal body (*jism*), which is bound to darkness. The *nafs* is also the seat of imagination and the locus of spiritual struggle (*mujahada*), where the heart (*qalb*) is often drawn away from God by the lower self's tendencies. Sufi practice is directed toward transforming the *nafs al-ammara* (the commanding, lower self) into the *nafs al-kamila* (the perfected, higher Self). This transformation allows one to perceive God's presence and manifestation everywhere and in everything.

[523] Poem XXX, quatrain 16 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 136.

[524] Poem XIII, quatrain 15 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82.

[525] The phrase *lī maʿa Allāhi* (I have [a Moment] with God) is attributed by Hamzah Fansuri to a Prophetic saying, signifying a moment of intimate divine presence and union. It also appears in Ottoman Turkish Sufi literature. As Inan notes, Şemʿullah Şem'i (d. circa 1591), in his commentary on the opening poem of Hafiz of Shiraz (d. c. 1389), describes the Prophet Muhammad as the 'companion of *lī maʿa* Allāhi and confidant of the secrets of the Divine Court' (*ṣāḥib-i 'Lī maʿa Allāhi' ve maḥrem-i esrār-ı dergāh*). This reference underscores the mystical significance of the phrase, which represents the Prophet's unparalleled spiritual station as the recipient of divine intimacy and the highest level of spiritual realization. See Murat Umut Inan, *Writing a Grammatical Commentary*

Hamba dan Tuhan menjadi satu, *Inilah* ʿārif *bernama tahu.*	Servant and Lord are seen in truth as one: Thus the gnostic is called 'knower'

This *waqtu* signifies the unveiling of the highest gnosis, a moment in which all duality is suspended and the servant (*ʿabd*) is annihilated in divine unity. Hamzah describes this as the station of the *ʿārif* (a person who knows through direct experience of subsistence in God). In Akbarian metaphysics, *waqt* (the Moment) is not chronological time but the decisive instant in which divine decree discloses itself and the servant's state is actualized. Ibn ʿArabi teaches that to know one's *waqt* is to know oneself, and thereby to know one's Lord, while ignorance of one's *waqt* is ignorance of the self and of God.[526] Yet he also insists that the *waqt* cannot be anticipated or conceptually mastered, only received in the immediacy of presence. Hamzah's verse thus resonates with the Akbarian view that true gnosis arises in the unrepeatable Moment when God alone is revealed.

He then turns to al-Bisṭami, renowned for his ecstatic utterances that unsettled the boundaries of formal piety: [527]

Kata Bā Yazīd terlalu ʿālī, Subḥānī mā aʿẓama shaʾnī, *Inilah ilmu sempurna* fānī, *Jadi senama dengan* Ḥayy al-Bāqī.	Translation: The utterance of Ba Yazid is supremely lofty: 'Glory be to Me! How exalted is my state!' This is the knowledge of perfect annihilation,

on Ḥāfiẓ of Shiraz: A Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Scholar on the Divan of Ḥāfiẓ (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2012), 126.

[526] See Jaffray 2015, 109, 243, 246.

[527] Poem XIII, quatrain 16 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82.

> Becoming one in name with the Ever-Living, the Enduring.

Al-Bistami's cry, 'Glory be to me!' is not a claim of divinity but the speech of one utterly effaced (*fānī*) in God. It expresses the state of gatheredness (*jamʿ*), in which every trace of selfhood dissolves.[528] The term *shaʾn* (state) echoes its Qurʾanic usage (Q.55:29), where it signifies the perpetual renewal of divine activity, each instant a fresh disclosure of God's creativity.[529] Thus, when Ba Yazid (al-Bistami) exclaims *mā aʿẓama shaʾnī*, (how exalted is my state), the state refers not to a personal rank but to the majesty of divine disclosure manifesting through the annihilated self. The phrase *jadi senama dengan Ḥayy al-Bāqī* (becoming one in name with the Ever-Living, the Enduring) suggests that what remains after annihilation is not selfhood but divine attributes shining through the perfect human (*orang kamīl*). This paradox lies at the heart of Sufi ontology: the more completely the lower self is effaced, the more transparently the divine shines forth. Annihilation is not nihilism but transformation.

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[528] See Sviri, 1997, 20.

[529] In Ibn ʿArabi links *shaʾn* to his teaching on the ever-renewed creation of the cosmos (*tajaddud al-khalq),* describing it as occurring 'with the breaths' (*maʿa al-anfās*), at every instant of the divine self-disclosure (Morris, 1987, 650 n. 127). Each *shaʾn* is thus a fleeting act of renewal, not a fixed rank or station. Morris also notes that Ibn ʿArabi also ties *shaʾn* to love: every *shaʾn* is an instance of divine self-disclosure through which creatures experience both intimacy and awe (Morris, 2011,8).

Hamzah then reaffirms his lineage by invoking al-Ḥallaj as *penghulu ʿāshiq*, a chief of radical lovers, whose state exemplifies the complete dissolution of self in divine presence.[530] His utterance arises not from deliberate will but from ecstatic intoxication:[531]

Kata Manṣūr penghulu ʿāshiq*,* *Ia juga empunya* nāṭiq, *Kata di sini siapa* lāʾiq, *Mengatakan diri akulah* Khāliq.	Translation: Mansur, a chief of radical lovers, Whose speech is endowed with eloquence, He asks who here is truly worthy, To proclaim: 'I am the Creator!'
Dengarkan oleh mu hai orang kāmil, *Jangan menuntut ilmu yang* bāṭil, *Tiada bermanfaʿat kata yang* jāhil, 'Ana al-ḥaqq' *Manṣūr inilah* wāṣil.	Listen, O perfect human, Seek not knowledge that is false, The words of the ignorant bear no fruit, 'I am the Real!' was Mansur's arrival.

Hamzah does not present al-Ḥallāj's *ana al-ḥaqq* as a claim to divinity but as a declaration of his arrival as a *wāṣil* (one who has attained the station of divine proximity). The term *nāṭiq* here denotes not only eloquence but sacred, unveiled speech bearing the weight of truth. It is the utterance of one who truly knows, not of one who is ignorant.

Hamzah then turns inward, describing his own dissolution through oceanic imagery:[532]

Hamzah Fansuri terlalu karam, *Ke dalam laut yang mahadalam,*	Translation: Hamzah Fansuri is utterly drowned, In the depths of the fathomless ocean, The winds are stilled, the waves

[530] See McAuley, 2013.

[531] Poem XIII, quatrains 17–8 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82–4.

[532] Poem XIII, quatrain 19 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 84.

Berhenti angin ombaknya padam, *Menjadi sulṭān pada kedua ʿ*ālam*,*	extinguished, Becoming a sovereign in both worlds.

The verb *karam* (to founder or drown) invokes Hamzah's most pervasive metaphor, the ocean. The ocean signifies divine knowledge and Being itself. In the stillness that follows the storm of *junūn* (ecstatic madness), Hamzah proclaims the condition of those who have attained *baqāʾ* who are honoured by God with nobility of the divine attributes. The ocean, recurring throughout his poetry, symbolizes the fathomless and unknowable Reality into which the personal self must submerge.

Hamzah also plays on the resonance between Malay *karam* (to drown) and Arabic *karam* (generosity), invoking divine generosity that revives him after the initiatory death of drowning in the divine ocean:[533]

*Tuhan kita itu yang [em]punya ʿ*ālam, *Menimbulkan Hamzah yang sudah karam,* ʿIshqi*nya jangan (hendak) kau padam,* *Supaya* wāṣil *dengan laut dalam.*	Translation: Our Lord, the Owner of the cosmos, Has raised up Hamzah, already drowned, Do not extinguish his blazing love, That he may be joined to the fathomless Ocean.

This paradox is further reinforced in Hamzah's use of *adamu*, as mentioned before, a term phonetically resonant with both the Arabic *ʿadam* (non-existence) and the Malay phrase *ada-mu* (your existence).[534] This ambiguity alludes to the paradox of presence and absence in divine

[533] Poem XXIV, quatrain 15 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 116.

[534] *ʿAdam* represents absence or nothingness, which, in a positive sense, indicates the state of latent potentiality in God's Knowledge, where the perfect servant retreats. In its negative sense, it signifies relative nothingness or privation (Armstrong-Chisti, 2001, 4).

love. Ibn ʿArabi likewise teaches that God's Being is experienced precisely through its withdrawal: creation appears real, yet in truth it has no existence apart from God. Hamzah's play on *adamu* captures this oscillation, as expressed in this quatrain:[535]

Jika belum fanā' daripada ribu dan ratus, *Di manakan dapat adamu kau hapus,* Nafī*kan rasamu daripada kasar dan halus,* *Supaya dapat barang kata mu harus.*	Translation: If you are not yet annihilated from thousands and hundreds, How can you efface your existence? Negate your senses, both coarse and fine, That your speech may be truly affirmed.

Hamzah frames realization of *tawḥīd* (Oneness) as the stripping away (*tanggal*) of transient existence (*wujūd fānī*),[536] which includes attachments to wealth, status, and selfhood. The imagery of "thousands and hundreds" (*ribu dan ratus*) signals worldly accumulation, both material and symbolic. The seeker must negate (*nafīkan*) not only external possessions but also inner sensations whether coarse or subtle that perpetuate the illusion of autonomous selfhood. Only in this complete detachment can the seeker's speech become authentic (*harus*), aligned with Truth rather than illusion.

Hamzah refers to the well-known Prophetic saying *mūtū qabla an tamūtū* (die before you die), to articulate the passage from ego-death (*fanāʾ*) to subsistence (*baqāʾ*) in God. This 'death'

[535] Poem IV, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 54.

[536] The complete line: *Tanggalkan wujūd yang fāni* (strip away your transient existence) in Poem XXX, quatrain 14, line 2, ibid., 136.

obliterates illusory attachments preparing the seeker for the metaphorical union (*wiṣāl*) in God.).[537] He expresses this in the following verse: [538]

Jalan mūtū *yogia kau pakai,* *Akan air jangan kau lalai,* *Tinggalkan ibu dan bapai,* *Supaya dapat shurbat kau rasai.*	Translation: Take upon yourself the path of 'Die!', Of the Water of Life, do not be heedless. Leave behind both mother and father, That you may taste the draught of that Water.

Hamzah plays on the bilingual resonance of *mūtū* and Malay *mutu*. In Arabic, *mūtū* denotes death, while in Malay *mutu* means measure, standard, or quality, such as gold's carats. This double valence creates a paradox: death becomes the true measure of being. The seeker's worth is not determined by worldly carats, but by undergoing the initiatic death that purifies the soul, allowing it to partake of the Water of Life.

In his prose treatise *The Drink of Lovers,* Hamzah emphasizes that this initiatic death is the necessary price of the path.[539] This is not a physical death, suicide, nihilism, or escapism. Rather, it is the extinction of egoic impulses, the relinquishing of the nafs's claims, and the dissolving of self-will. In this annihilation lies the vestibule to *baqāʾ*, the state of subsistence or super-existence in God.[540] Once individual attributes are consumed, the seeker becomes the

[537] See Geoffroy, 2014, 159–60.

[538] Poem XXXI, quatrain 12, ibid., 138,

[539] Hamzah Fansuri, "Chapter Seven: On an Exposition of Love and Gratitude," *The Drink of Lovers*, in al-Attas, 1970, 326–27 and 445–6.

[540] See Geoffroy, 2014, 160.

locus of divine attributes. This is the mystery of *union without merging*, articulated throughout Hamzah's poetry and prose.[541]

Hamzah's poetics emerge from a lineage of Sufi voices whose writings on *ʿishq* shaped mystical discourse from the eleventh century onward. Figures such as Ibn ʿArabi, Rumi, al-Ḥallaj, and Ayn al-Quḍat each explored the transformative and annihilating force of love. Their influence is evident in both Hamzah's poetry and his prose treatises, where he cites them explicitly.[542]

For Ḥallaj, love entailed complete self-effacement, culminating in his martyrdom. In the *Mathnawī*, Rumi describes love as a fire that purifies, preparing the soul for proximity to God ('mystical union'). ʿAyn al-Qudat identified *ʿishq* as the primary epistemic path to God, a view, like Ḥallaj's, led to his execution. All three framed *ʿishq* not merely as emotion but as the means by which divine knowledge is realized and embodied.[543]

Hamzah channels this radical tradition into a local idiom, adapting its imagery and values to a Malay literary milieu. One such adaptation is his use of the term *hulubalang*, denoting a warrior or military commander. In Hamzah's poetics, the *hulubalang* becomes a figure of spiritual strength, valour, and sacrifice. This imagery aligns with what Safi calls the 'martyr of love,'[544]

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[541] See al-Attas, 1970, 294–295. See Chapter 3.4 (p. 101) of this dissertation on Hamzah Fansuri's explanation of metaphorical union.

[542] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 154. See also Muhammad Bukhari, 1994; al-Attas, 1970, 14.

[543] Safi, 2018, xxi, xliv–xlv.

[544] Ibid., xlv, 86.

a seeker who relinquishes all possessions, attachments, and even life itself in pursuit of the Beloved.

The *hulubalang* is thus a metaphor for the *ʿāshiq* who battles the lower self (*nafs al-ammāra*) and resists the comforts of the world and resists the comforts of the world. This inner striving (*jihad*) becomes a site of transformation. Just as the martyr of love is consumed by longing, the *hulubalang* fights not for conquest but for complete surrender. Both figures embody the radical commitment of *orang berahi*, who as Hamzah delineates in *The Drinks of Lovers,* is the paradigm of the seeker, one who fears not death but embraces it as the very desire of love.

Hamzah expresses this condition in the line: *Engkau ʿāshiq terlalu junūn* (You are a lover, seized in ecstatic madness).[545] Here, madness (*junūn*) does not imply disorder but signals the collapse of rational perception under the overwhelming presence of divine beauty. The rational mind (*buddi*) is undone by the force of *rasa* and intoxication. In this state, the seeker is no longer governed by discursive intellect but by ecstatic absorption.

In several poems, Hamzah deploys the imagery of veils to express the gradated structure of spiritual realization. The seeker, moving from outward forms to inward meanings, passes through layers of concealment toward direct knowledge. In one quatrain, he writes:[546]

Sharīʿat *akan tirainya,* Ṭarīqat *akan bidainya,*	Translation: The Law is its curtain, The Path its screen,

[545] Poem X, quatrain 14, line 3 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 74. For further discussion on this verse, see Chapter 4.4 (p. 165) of this dissertation.

[546] Poem XXVI, quatrain 11, ibid., 122.

Ḥaqīqat *akan ripainya,* Maʿrifat *yang wāṣil akan isainya.*	The Truth its inner veil, Gnosis of the arrived — that is its core.

Each layer of the *sharīʿa*, *ṭarīqa*, *ḥaqīqa*, *maʿrifa* marks a degree of increasing intimacy with the divine. Hamzah draws on the Sufi doctrine of *kashf* (unveiling) to describe this journey from exoteric observance to esoteric vision. The seeker must not discard these veils, but move through them, guided by love and *adab* (spiritual courtesy).[547]

This unveiling is not linear but recursive: at every stage, the divine remains simultaneously revealed and unknown. The goal is not conceptual mastery but arrival (*wuṣūl*) at certainty of tawhid, attained through direct experience of *dhawq/rasa*.

Hamzah further expresses this perplexity and the struggle for clarity through the imagery of obscured vision. He likens the difficulty of perceiving the Beloved to casting a sidelong, languishing glance at a distant horizon, where the view remains beyond human sight:[548]

Jika hendak engkau menjeling sawang, *Ingat-ingat akan hujung karang,* *Jabat kemudi jangan kau mamang,* *Supaya betul ke bandar datang.*	Translation: If you yearn to cast a sidelong glance at the horizon, Be mindful of the peril at the reef's edge, Hold fast the rudder, do not falter, That you may reach the true harbour.

[547] See also the discussion in Chapter 4.6, "The Circular Path," which takes up this quatrain to show the spiritual path not as a straight ascent but as a recurring movement of longing, loss, and return.

[548] Poem XXIII, quatrain 10 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 112.

Here, *sawang* denotes the vast expanse between sky and earth, rendered here as "horizon," an indistinct view where perception falters.[549] *Mamang* is a staring without comprehension, connoting entranced or uncertain vision.[550] The nautical imagery depicts the seeker navigating the ocean of love, striving for divine proximity while contending with veiled perception. The reefs serve both as hazard and as reminder for steadfastness (holding the rudder), crucial to reach the haven.

The phrase *menjeling sawang* (casting a sidelong glance at the horizon) evokes knowledge not grasped directly but glimpsed at the periphery of awareness. Though the Beloved is ever-present, such knowledge remains veiled, felt by most as distant and indistinct. The seeker perceives it only in flashes of illumination rather than as a single, complete revelation.

The motif also recurs in Malay literature, where averting the gaze (*palis*) signifies modesty, restraint, or the overwhelming presence of the beloved.[551] In courtly settings, it appears as a maiden's bashfulness, while in mystical discourse, it conveys awe before divine majesty. *Palis* also mean being thrown off course, as in mythological epics where winds scatter weapons or vessels. This double sense is evident in Hamzah's verse immediately preceding the quatrain:[552]

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[549] See KBMN, s.v. *sawang* (2003, 2395).

[550] See s.v. *mamang* in Wilkinson, online.

[551] The term *palis* and its variant forms (*memalis, berpalis, terpalis-palis*) appear in 15 texts in the MCP online database, including *Hikayat Hang Tuah, Hikayat Raja Bikrama Sakti,* and *Hikayat Pandawa Lima*—texts contemporaneous with Hamzah Fansuri's manuscripts.

[552] Poem XXIII, quatrain 9, lines 3–4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 112.

Rubing sharī'at yogia kau lābis, *Supaya jangan markabmu palis.*	Translation: Clothe yourself in the bulwark of the Law, Lest your vessel stray from its course.

The *rubing* (bulwark) is the protective planking that keeps a ship from being swamped, while *palis* warns of being cast off course. Hamzah's use of the Arabic *lābis* (clothed, enveloped) underlines the need to be securely garmented in the revealed law. The near-sound resemblance to Malay *lapis* (layer, fold) further enriches his plurilingual wordplay. Through this nautical metaphor, Hamzah issues a warning that from the very outset of the path the aspirant must be firmly grounded in the knowledge and practice of the Law. Only by being clothed in its protective fold can one be safeguarded from calamity; without it, one drifts into deviation, like a vessel driven from its course.

This illustrates the perplexity of experiential love, where the lover moves toward the Beloved but vision remains veiled, the Beloved is ever-present but perception falters, and longing only deepens while fulfilment remains out of reach.

Arrival does not bring the mystic a state of impersonal detachment, as is might be imagined at the apex of metaphorical union. Instead, it initiates a fluid, dynamic state of continuous transformation, the only possible response of the heart when exposed to the infinite revelations of the divine. This narrative unfolds from the standpoint of subjective and relative existence, where the Beloved is both hidden and manifest, sought yet unattainable, absent yet intimately near.

In his poetry, Hamzah assumes the temporal and spatial perspective of a lover, perpetually oscillating between self-annihilation in love and continued existence in the world. At times he speaks from within the turmoil of longing, at others he voices the obliteration of self in love.

This oscillation recalls his play on the polysemy of *wujūd*, discussed earlier, where Being (*wujūd*) is inseparable from passionate awareness (*wijdān*) and ecstatic emotion (*wajd*).[553]

Hamzah reinforces this paradox through a Qurʾanic echo that asserts the totality of God's presence: [554]

Huwa al-awwalu wa al-ākhiru *akan namanya,* Wa al-ẓāhiru wa al-bāṭinu *rupanya,* *Sidang* ʿārif *mendapat katanya,* *Mabuk dan gila barang adanya.*	Translation: 'He is the First and the Last' — this is His Name, 'The Outer and the Inner' — this is His Form, The assembly of gnostics received His Words, Drunk with ecstasy, enraptured by His Presence.

Here, Hamzah combines doctrinal citation with the affective response it provokes. The declaration of God's total immanence—both *ẓāhir* (manifest) and *bāṭin* (hidden)—elicits a state of *mabuk dan gila*, mystical intoxication and ecstatic madness. This condition of bewildered presence characterizes the *ʿārif*, who sees the world as a veil of divine signs.

In another verse, Hamzah intensifies the imagery of annihilation and return:[555]

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[553] See the discussion of the polysemy of *wujūd* in Ibn ʿArabi's formulation, Chapter 4.1 (pp. 109-10) in this dissertation.

[554] Poem XIII, quatrain 10 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 82. For an earlier discussion of this quatrain in connection with *maʿrifa* and the epistemological structure of love, see Chapter 4.2 (p. 123).

[555] Poem X, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 72.

Kullu man ʿalay-hā fānin[556] āyat min Rabbihi, *Menyatakan* maʿna irjiʿī ilā aṣliki, *Akan* insān *yang beroleh* tawfīqihi, *Supaya karam di dalam* sirru sirrihi.	Translation: 'All that dwells upon the earth is perishing'—a verse from the Lord, Declaring the meaning: 'Return to your Origin,' For the human who attains by His divine aid, To drown within the secret of His secrets.

The Qurʾanic verse (Q.28:88) affirms the perishing of all that is not God. The seeker's annihilation (*karam*) leads to *sirru sirrihi*, 'the secret of His secret,' the innermost chamber of divine intimacy. This is a state of consciousness in which even the sense of dissolves and only God remains.[557]

From the earliest centuries of Sufism, mystics described spiritual progress in terms of *maqāmāt*, (stations), each marking a stable level of inward transformation attained through discipline and divine grace. Within this hierarchy, Hamzah places radical love (*berahi/ishq*) at the summit of all the stations of love of the seeker's ascent, positioning it just before *wuṣūl* (arrival). At this final station, the lover becomes 'alone with the Alone,'[558] stripped of all attachments and absorbed in divine immediacy.

Hamzah encapsulates this state in a quatrain that expresses both the annihilation of self and the renunciation of all worldly ties:[559]

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[556] Qur'an, 55:26.

[557] See Armstrong-Chisti, 2001, 219.

[558] See Ibrahim, 2022, 2.

[559] Poem X, quatrain 14 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 74.

Situlah wujūd *sekalian* fānun, *Tanggallah engkau daripada* māl wa al-banūn, *Engkau* ʿāshiq *terlalu* junūn, Innā li ʾllāhi wa-innā ilayhi rājiʿun.	There is the Being of all that perishes, So, renounce your wealth and children, You are a lover, seized in ecstatic madness— 'To God we belong, and to Him we return.'

This verse completes the arc of experiential love. The seeker must *tanggal* (shed or divest) the most intimate forms of worldly identity: wealth (*māl*) and offspring (*banūn*), echoing Q.18:46. The closing line cites the Qurʾanic declaration of impermanence and the return to God.[560] The phrase *Engkau ʿāshiq terlalu junūn* (You are a lover, seized in ecstatic madness) conveys that only a lover can let go of the world's adornment and truthfully proclaim, 'Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return' (Q.2:156). Here, *junūn* (madness), becomes the undoing of ordinary perception through the unbearable nearness of the Beloved.

Rooted in Sufi poetic tradition, this dimension of love is both agonizing and ecstatic, drawing the seeker into an unceasing pursuit of the Beloved while dissolving all barriers between self and seeing divine presence. Love is experienced as an insatiable thirst that deepens rather than diminishes as the lover approaches the Beloved. The pain of separation, the longing for union, and the perception of divine beauty create an emotional and existential state in which love is at once torment and fulfilment. Through this final return (*rujūʿ*), Hamzah portrays love as a paradoxical force: it wounds and heals, intoxicates and clarifies, annihilates and subsists. The seeker, emptied of self, discovers the One who has always been present.

[560] Qurʾan 2:156.

A defining mode of experiential love in Hamzah's poetry is *shawq* (longing), the yearning that arises from separation from the Beloved. For the lover, this distance is unbearable. *Shawq* manifests as an unrelenting ache that no worldly pleasure can relieve. It compels movement, withdrawal, and perpetual search.

Hamzah captures this restless yearning in the following lines:[561]

	Translation:
Jika sungguh kau ʿāshiq dan mabuk,	If truly you are a lover, intoxicated,
Memakai khandi pergi menjaluk.	Don your satchel and go forth to beg.

The phrase *pergi menjaluk* (to go begging) expresses the lover's existential condition: wandering in exile, seeking sustenance as a sign of the Beloved. The *khandi* (a begger's satchel),[562] becomes emblematic of this state: empty yet expectant, a vessel of receptivity. Shams al-Din al-Sumatraʾi explains:[563]

> The meaning of *khandi* is a cloth pouch, and the meaning of *menjaluk* means 'to ask, to beg.' Thus, the intended sense here is that if one truly enters the path of God as a lover of God, one should don the *khandi* and beg for food as the poor customarily do.

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[561] Poem XIV, quatrain 6, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 84.

[562] *Khandi* is possibly a variant of *kandi*. Wilkinson, online, glosses it as "small satchel" (*s.v. kandi*). KDP (2021, 2295) records regional usages: in Kelantan, a small cloth or leather pouch with a drawstring for money; and in Javanese, a larger cloth bag for rice or other staples, also drawn closed at the top. In the Fansurian usage, the *khandi* signifies the beggar's pouch, emblematic of poverty and receptivity on the path.

[563] Original text: *Maka arti khandi itu: telekung, dan arti menjaluk itu 'minta' maka kehendak kata ini: jika sungguh yang memasuki jalan kepada Allah itu ʿāshiq akan Allah, hendaklah ia memakai khandi dan minta makan seperti yang dikerjakan segala yang miskin itu*. (Shamsuddin's commentary on Poem XIV, in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 211).

The image situates the seeker within the state of *ghurba* (spiritual estrangement), being cut off from worldly securities yet drawn irresistibly toward the Real.

This restless transformation appears in one of Hamzah's extended poetic sequences, where he charts the seeker's shifting identities, alternating between age, mood, role, and orientation:[564]

	Translation:
Sekali muda dan sopan,	At one time young and modest,
Sekali tuha berhuban,	At another, old and grey-haired,
ʿUzlat*nya berbulan-bulan,*	In seclusion for months on end,
Mencari Tuhan ke dalam hutan.	Seeking God deep in the jungle wilderness.

The oscillation continues:

Sekali menjadi ṣūfī,	At one time a Sufi,
Sekali menjadi shawqī,	At another a lover aflame with longing,
Sekali menjadi rūḥī,	At yet another a spiritual being,
Gusar dan masam di atas bumi.	Fretful and sour upon this earth.

Each identity is provisional. The only constant is longing. Even spiritual roles—*ṣūfī*, *shawqī*, *rūḥī*—are not fixed states but temporary configurations within a deeper transformation. What emerges is not a stable self but a heart in motion, caught between remembrance and perplexity.

The motif continues:[565]

Sekali pandai dan utus,	At one time, a smith and craftsman
Sekali lapar dan kurus,	At another, hungry and gaunt,

[564] Poem XVIII, quatrains 6–12 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 96–8.

[565] Poem XVIII, quatrains 8–12 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 98.

Sekali menjadi Yunus, *Di dalam ikan terlalu lukus.*	At another, like Jonah, In the belly of the fish, utterly bare.
Sekali menjadi dagang, *Sekali kawan berladang,* *Sekali artanya alang-alang,* *Dāʾim berlayar ke hujung karang.*	At one time, a wanderer, At another, a fellow tiller, At yet another, with wealth scarce and scant, Ever sailing toward the furthest reef.
Sekali bernama guruh, *Sekali bernama suluh,* *Sekali menjadi musuh,* *Dāʾim mengharu di dalam tubuh.*	At one time, it's called thunder, At another, a torch of light, At yet another, an enemy, Ever stirring turmoil in the body.
Sekali menjadi qurbān, *Sekali menjadi* ʿuryān, *Sekali membawa* burhān, *Di bumi Makkah dan ayat* Qurʿān.	At one time, a sacrifice, At another, utterly bare, At yet another bearing clear proof, In the land of Mecca and in the verses of the Qur'an.
Sekali menjadi ṭālib, *Sekali menjadi* ghāʾib, *Sekali menjadi* tāʾib, *Di dalam dunya terlalu* ghālib.	At one time, a seeker, At another, absent, At yet another, repentant, In the world, He is supremely prevailing.

Hamzah portrays the seeker as never at rest. He is *ṭālib* (seeker), *ghāʾib* (absent), *tāʾib* (penitent, one who turns back to God), subject to the tidal forces of longing. What binds these movements is the unquenchable desire (*shawq*) to reunite with the Beloved.

This oscillation plunges the lover into perplexity (*ḥayra*), a defining aspect of the love experience best expressed through poetry.[566] Poetry captures love's ambiguities and contradictions. In Ibn ʿArabi's teachings, *ḥayra* confusion but an awestruck response to divine

[566] See Yiangou, 2012, 349.

beauty.[567] His poetry illuminates the mystic's experience of surrendering to the infinite manifestations of the One Real Being.[568] Ruzbihan similarly links perplexity to *ʿishq* and annihilation.[569] The object of contemplation and desire that occasioned perplexity is divine beauty itself, which transports the wayfarer from intellect to perplexity.[570]

This link between love, beauty, and perplexity is vividly expressed in Hamzah's poetry, where experiential love is sensorial and emotional. In Poem XIV, he employs the Sufi bridal motif, invoking the imagery of the lover and beloved entering the wedding chamber of intimacy. The bridal ornament (*sunting malai*), associated with floral or jewelled headdresses, reinforces both romantic and mystical themes of union. *Malai*[571] signifies the reviving influence of the Beloved, recalling the legendary *bunga wijaya mala*, the mythical flower that restores the dead to life.[572]

This imagery captures the essence of mystical longing, where love is drawn to beauty like a firefly to flame. The Beloved's beauty does not merely inspire longing but overwhelms, consumes, and transforms, making union both ecstatic and annihilating. Hamzah likens this

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[567] Ibid.

[568] Ibid.

[569] According to Vandamme, Ruzbihan cites Ibn Khafif as declaring: 'The foundation of *ʿishq* is *ḥayra*' (Vandamme, 2023, 81).

[570] Ibid.

[571] See Wilkinson, online, s.v. *malai*. See also MCP database.

[572] *Hikayat Sang Samba* cited in Wilkinson, 1901, 636.

fatal attraction to the firefly's flight into the flame, symbolizing love's irresistible pull toward beauty and light:

Bersunting bunga lagi bermalai, *Kainnya warna berbagai-bagai,*[573] ...	Translation: Adorned with floral headdress and gilded garlands, Clad in vesture of many-coloured hues.
Yogya kau tuntut jalan yang āmin, *Supaya dapat lekas kau kawin.*[574] ...	Seek out the path that is secure and peaceful, So that your union may be swiftly attained.
Indah-indah akan galuh-galuh, *Ke dalam api pergi berlabuh.*[575]	How fine and fair are the fireflies, Sailing forth to anchor in the flame.

Another defining feature of experiential love in Hamzah's poetics is mystical intoxication (*mabuk, gila*), a state of overwhelming absorption that erases boundaries between lover and Beloved. In Sufi discourse, intoxication (*sukr*) contrasts with sobriety (*ṣaḥw*): while the sober mystic maintains conscious awareness of God, the intoxicated mystic (*sākir*) is engulfed, unable to distinguish between subject and object.

Hamzah expresses this state:

Barang meminum dia lupakan cawan.[576]	Translation: Whoever drinks forgets the cup.

[573] Poem XIV, quatrain 3, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 84.

[574] Ibid., quatrain 7, lines 3–4.

[575] Ibid., quatrain 12, lines 3–4, p.86.

[576] Poem XIX, quatrain 2, line 3 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 100.

Pada orang mabuk lupakan serahi.[577]	For the intoxicated, the goblet is forgotten.

The vessels of knowledge —symbols, intermediaries, and methods—lose relevance once the drink of divine presence is tasted. Intoxication marks the point where love surpasses thought and passes into direct experience. The thirst it induces is never satiated, for divine love is without end.

Hamzah deepens the metaphor:[578]

	Translation:
Hapuskan hendak sekalian laut,	Desire to drain the entire ocean!
Habiskan minum jangan kau takut.	Drink it dry — and do not fear!

Here, the ocean is both the object of desire and the divine plenitude itself. To drink it is to surrender to Being. Fearless consumption signifies the soul's courage to lose itself entirely in the Real.

The oceanic metaphor continues in Hamzah's use of nautical imagery:[579]

	Translation:
Markab tawḥīd *yogia kau pasang,*	Set sail the vessel of Oneness,
Di tengah laut yang tiada berkarang.	Amidst the ocean without reefs.

[577] Ibid., quatrain 9, lines 2. See Chapter 4.4 (p. 187 n. 83; p. 188 n. 608) of this dissertation for further explanation of *serahi*.

[578] Poem XIX, quatrain 11, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 100.

[579] Poem XXV, quatrain 12, lines 3–4, ibid., 118.

The *markab* (ship) of *tawḥīd* must navigate a boundless sea free of obstacles (*berkarang*). There are no anchors, no shores only fluidity and exposure. To sail this ocean is to relinquish control and trust entirely in the Beloved.

Hamzah also draws on Persian motifs of the cupbearer (*sāqī*) and the inebriated lover. In the line, *Lagi kau sāqī lagi kau sākir* (You are both cupbearer and inebriate),[580] The Beloved is is portrayed as both giver and drinker of love. In this vision, distinctions collapse, and lover, Beloved, vessel, and drink dissolve into a single movement of Being.

In a final distillation, Hamzah expresses the culmination of experiential love in the realization of Oneness:[581]

Shurbat tawḥīd *akan minumannya,* Dāʾim *bertemu dengan Tuhannya.*	Translation: The draught of Oneness is his drink, Ever in meeting with his Lord.

Shurbat tawḥīd does not refer to adopting taught principles but to the tasting (*rasa/dhawq*) of divine unity through direct encounter. The one who drinks is in perpetual meeting, (*dāʾim bertemu*), a state beyond speech, sustained by Presence. In Hamzah's vision, love is like a fire that consumes, an ocean that drowns, a drink that obliterates. The seeker on this path is not merely transformed but undone. Only the ungraspable, luminous, and ever-present Face of the Beloved remains.

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[580] Poem XV, quatrain 7, line 3, ibid., 88.

[581] Poem XXIV, quatrain 7, lines 3–4, ibid., 114.

Hamzah's terms for experiential love convey affective and embodied states that are felt, tasted, and lived.

Table 4.5 Key terms of experiential love in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry

Arabic Term	**Malay Term**	**Meaning in Hamzah's Poetics**
Shawq	*Gila*	Restless longing born of separation, driving the seeker's ceaseless pursuit of the Beloved
Ḥubb	*Kasih*	Constant, tender devotion; Hamzah uses *ḥubb* sparingly, preferring *kasih* as enduring affectionate love.
–	*Sayang*	Care and attachment, often marked by sorrow or reluctance to let go; in Hamzah's poetics, it signals worldly attachment that must ultimately be relinquished.
ʿIshq	*Berahi*	Passionate, radical love that overwhelms the self and draws the lover toward annihilation in the Beloved.
Hawā	–	Desire or inclination; in Hamzah's usage, the passionate pull toward the Beloved.
Jawā	–	Deep, often painful yearning; in Hamzah's idiom also resonant with *Jawi* identity and openness.
Sākir	*Mabuk, mamang, pening*	Mystical intoxication (*sukr*), where distinctions between self and Beloved collapse.
Dhawq	*Rasa, minum*	Experiential tasting of divine reality, embodied as *rasa* (sensing) and *minum* (drinking).

The Malay terms are not direct translations but resonant expressions within a sensory-mystical idiom. Together, they articulate an embodied epistemology of love.

4.5 Language of love: Lexicon and symbolism

Hamzah's poetry unfolds divine love through a lexicon that is semantically layered and interlingually resonant. Drawing on Arabic and Malay, he develops a vocabulary that stages the seeker's journey of mystical love, moving from longing and perplexity to ego-loss and ecstatic connection with God. Each term, such as *shawq* (yearning), *fanā'* or *lenyap* (annihilation), and *wiṣāl* (recognition of perpetual connection), evokes a stage in spiritual progress.

This section classifies these terms by distinguishing Arabic-derived from Malay expressions, while foregrounding their spiritual resonances in Hamzah's usage. Based on Malay Concordance Project (MCP) data from 56 texts dated between the 14th and 19th centuries, the analysis highlights the historical presence, literary distribution, and mystical valence of each lexeme. This concordance-based approach situates Hamzah's vocabulary within a broader intertextual and diachronic framework.

Table 4.6 presents seven Arabic terms that structure the metaphysical dimension of Hamzah's poetic language. Table 4.7 summarizes the usage and semantic scope of eight Malay terms across the MCP corpus. Together, these entries trace both Hamzah's poetic reconfigurations and broader lexical shifts in Malay Sufi discourse. Terms such as *berahi*, *kasih*, *sayang*, *gila*, *mabuk*, and *pening* move from romantic, ethical, or courtly contexts into mystical registers of longing, transformation, and disorientation. Hamzah refashions this lexicon of love into a vehicle of spiritual transformation.

Table 4.6 Arabic terms for love in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry

Term	Description
ʿIshq	Passionate, overflowing love that consumes the lover entirely, leaving only desire for union with the Beloved. Hamzah uses *ʿishq* to highlight the fiery, transformative mode of love.
ʿĀshiq	The lover in the state of ʿishq, actively pursuing the divine, enduring trials and yearning for the divine presence.
Shawq	Deep yearning born of separation. For Hamzah, longing sharpens awareness of distance and compels the seeker's quest for divine presence.
Ḥubb	General term for love; in Sufi usage, pure devotion to God. Hamzah employs it only once, preferring the Malay *kasih*.
Maʿshūq; Ḥabīb; Maḥbūb	Designations of the Beloved, usually God. In Hamzah's usage, they highlight the reciprocity of love and blur the line between lover and Beloved.
Hawā[582]	Desire or inclination. Ambivalent in Sufi usage, but in Hamzah's poetry it signifies the passionate pull toward the Beloved.
Jawā[583]	Deep, often painful longing akin to *shawq*. Hamzah uses it for the transformative suffering of separation.

[582] See Ahmad Mudakir, Dadang Darmawan, and Wildan Taufiq. "The Meaning of Hawa in the Qur'an: A Semantic Analysis of the Perspective Toshihiko Izutsu." *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas* 2, no. 2 (2022): 155–66.

[583] See Ibrahim, 2022, 157. He explains that in Ibn ʿArabi's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (3rd ed., p. 177. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), *al-jawā* denotes the intense emotion marking the expansion (*infisāḥ*) or broadening of the lover's

Table 4.7 Malay terms for love in Hamzah Fansuri's poetry

Term	Description	Concordance and Historical Usage
Berahi	Strong, passionate love with erotic undertones. In Hamzah, parallels *ʿishq* as both bodily and spiritual longing.	Occurs 80 times across 32 texts. Earliest attestations in *H. Bayan Budiman* and *H. Amir Hamzah* cast it in courtly and romantic registers, denoting affective longing or erotic captivation. In *Bayan*, the merchant Khojah Maimun becomes *berahi* not with a person but upon hearing of maritime riches; illustrating the lexical permeability between desire for wealth and emotional intoxication. In later texts, i.e. *H. Syah Mardan* and *Sy. Siti Zubaidah*, *berahi* marks destabilizing passion linked to beauty or seduction. While not yet spiritualised, its persistent use for overwhelming desire prepared the ground for Hamzah's Sufi reconfiguration.
Kasih	Affectionate, tender, enduring love. Gentler than *berahi*, it conveys devotion and compassion.	Appears 200 times in more than 60 texts. In early texts like *H. Bayan Budiman* and *H. Amir Hamzah*, *kasih* structures kinship bonds, royal virtue, and ethical responsibility. By the 17th century, it acquires moral-theological resonance in works such as *Taj al-Salatin* and *H. Hang Tuah*, reflecting sovereign justice and divine favour. In *K. Tib* and *R. Maʿrifat*, it surfaces in didactic prose as the basis of mercy and spiritual obedience.

experience across the various stations of love. The term *jawā* etymologically derives from *jaww*, meaning air or atmosphere (ibid). Interestingly, this shares the same linguistic root with *Jāwī*—a designation applied by Arabic speakers to people from the maritime Southeast Asia. As Laffan (2009) notes, the term *Jāwī* was historically used as a marker of Islamic identity and was often applied to Southeast Asian Muslims residing in the Hijaz. Hamzah Fansuri, for instance, described himself as 'outwardly a *Jāwī,'* reflecting this identity within a transregional Sufi milieu.

		These shifts chart its evolution from personal affection to theological ethic, which Hamzah radicalises as the soul's abiding connection with God.
Sayang	Care, attachment, and sorrow at loss. In Hamzah, it marks worldly attachment, entangled with grief at separation.	Found 96 times across 48 texts. In *H. Bayan Budiman*, it conveys compassion for kin and animals, while in *H. Panji Semirang* it marks grief at separation or betrayal. In later texts like *Taj al-Salatin* and *H. Syah Mardan*, *sayang* is deployed in diplomatic and moral registers, urging rulers to act *penyayang* (compassionately). By the 18th century, in *Sy. Siti Zubaidah* and *Sy. Ken Tambuhan*, *sayang* carries emotional ambivalence, connoting both endearment and futility. This ambivalence resonates with Hamzah's Sufi usage, where *sayang* signals worldly attachment rather than divine love.
Kekasih	The Beloved, often God or the Prophet. In Hamzah, evokes intimacy and recognition of divine presence.	Occurs 61 times in 44 texts. In early *hikayat* such as *H. Bayan Budiman* and *H. Panji Semirang*, it designates romantic partners and conjugal bonds, usually gendered and reciprocal. In *Sy. Siti Zubaidah* and *H. Muhammad Hanafiyyah*, it is linked to sacrifice and fidelity. By the 17th century, in works like *Bustan al-Salatin*, *kekasih* acquires metaphysical resonance, often paired with *nūr* to denote the Prophet or God as the radiant Beloved.
Mabuk	Mystical intoxication (*sukr*), where self-awareness is effaced in the Divine.	Appears 67 times in 36 texts. In early literature such as *H. Bayan Budiman*, it denotes physical drunkenness, seasickness, or stupor. In *H. Inderaputera*, it signals enchantment during supernatural encounters. From the 17th century,

		works like *Sy. Siti Zubaidah* and *Taj al-Salatin* employ *mabuk* to mark folly or affective disarray. While rarely mystical in pre-Hamzah usage, these contexts of destabilisation enabled its Sufi re-signification as ecstatic self-effacement.
Gila	Love-induced madness disrupting ego and reason. In Hamzah, ecstatic longing that overwhelms self-possession.	Found 88 times in 35 texts. In *H. Amir Hamzah* and *H. Panji Semirang*, it denotes both political madness and amorous obsession. In *H. Muhammad Hanafiyyah*, *gila* reflects divine punishment or ironic excess. By the 18th century, in texts like *Sy. Ken Tambuhan*, it appears in contexts where madness conceals spiritual truth, often voiced by figures who reject norms or speak in riddles. This polyvalence allowed Hamzah to reinterpret *gila* as sacred madness, a rupture necessary for mystical transformation.
Mamang	Bewilderment and dizziness, aligned with *ḥayra* (perplexity).	Occurs 13 times in 9 texts. In *H. Inderaputera*, it marks mass disorientation when a sword emits blinding smoke. In *H. Sang Boma*, it signals battle daze. These portrayals are sensory and martial—physical or optical bewilderment. Later, in pedagogical texts like *K. Tib*, *mamang* takes on moral connotations of confusion or hesitation. Hamzah extends it to signify mystical perplexity (*ḥayra*).
Pening	Dizziness and cognitive disorientation. In Hamzah, epistemic vertigo at the threshold of annihilation.	Appears 20 times in 15 texts. In *H. Amir Hamzah* and *H. Inderaputera*, it describes physical dizziness from duels, storms, or poison. In *H. Sang Boma*, it connotes incapacitating illness. These physiological senses dominated until the 17th century, when in *Bustan al-Salatin* it depicts

		collapse under the radiance of the Prophet's light. Hamzah deploys *pening* as epistemic vertigo—the cognitive disorientation that heralds annihilation.

Hamzah's transformation of terms like *berahi* and *kasih* signals a shift from affective emotion to ontological intimacy. By contrast, his use of *sayang* functions as a warning against attachment to the lower self. In this ethical-spiritual reorientation, expressions once tied to courtly longing or familial affection are redirected toward the divine axis.

Gila and *mabuk* often appear together to evoke ecstatic self-loss. Hamzah's *gila* (madness) is not irrationality but a form of spiritual lucidity, in which reason collapses under the force of divine attraction. Similarly, *mabuk* (intoxication) becomes a sign of divine nearness, in which ordinary cognition dissolves in mystical absorption.

The terms *mamang* (lit. stunned, entranced stare) and *pening* (lit. dizziness, loss of equilibrium) articulate the condition of *ḥayra*: a threshold state in which divine proximity destabilizes ordinary perception.[584] While earlier *hikayat* texts associate these words with martial confusion or physical disorientation, Hamzah reconfigures them as signs of epistemic rupture, signalling the destabilization of reason and the onset of mystical vision.

The lexicon of love in Hamzah charts a graded movement from desire and inclination (*hawā*) into the ache of separation (*shawq, gila, jawā*). Malay *berahi* expresses the same condition as *ʿishq*, the passionate, transformative love that consumes the self, while *ḥubb* / *kasih* designates

[584] See Vandamme, 2023, 49–50.

steady devotional affection. *Sayang* conveys attachment and grief tied to the lower self and must be relinquished. Toward the crest of the path the *ʿāshiq* enters states of mystical intoxication and sacred madness (*mabuk, gila*), while the language of the Beloved (*maʿshūq, ḥabīb, maḥbūb; kekasih*) expresses reciprocity and nearness. *Mamang* and *pening* register *ḥayra*, the bewilderment and dizziness that accompany proximity to the divine. Taken together, these terms articulate transformation through cycles of longing, surrender, and encounter.

A distinctive feature of Hamzah's language is the ambiguity between the lover and the Beloved. Their identities often blur, often making it difficult to distinguish one from the other. This ambiguity extends to gendered expressions of love, reflecting the Sufi recognition that all love is ultimately directed toward God. It affirms the transcendent unity of existence, at the moment when the seeker discovers that the Beloved is no other and the apparent distinction collapses in theophanic recognition.

By combining Arabic and Malay, Hamzah expands the expressive range of Malay Sufi poetics. His language does more than combine vocabularies, it redefines how divine love is understood and experienced. Reworking familiar terms through Akbarian metaphysics, he links Malay literary forms with Sufi cosmology, presenting love as both the path and the goal of the mystical journey.

4.5.1 Symbolic extensions and embodied imagery

Hamzah's metaphors deepen and extend his lexicon of love. Among the most frequent is the imagery of the ocean (*laut*), as in the line, *Laut akbar tiada bersisi* (The Great Ocean is without

shore).[585] This phrase echoes a recurrent Sufi metaphor that evokes the transcendent Real (*al-Ḥaqq*), prior to all Names and Attributes. In Ibn ʿArabi's cosmology, the ocean without shore is not a spatial expanse but an apophatic symbol for the Real's unbounded presence, veiled and unknowable.[586] The imagery predates Ibn ʿArabi, earlier Sufi masters, such as Junayd al-Baghdadi (d. 910) and ʿAbd Allah al-Ansari (d. 1089) also invoked it to express immersion in divine unity.[587] For these mystics, entering the ocean does not produce knowledge one can possess, but awakens *ḥayra*, a luminous perplexity that unsettles rational certainty and prepares the self for gnosis.[588]

Hamzah illustrates the paradox of proximity and seeking in the following quatrain:[589]

Gajah mina terlalu wāṣil, *Dengan laut yang tiada ber*ṣāḥil, *Gila mencari seperti* jāhil, *Oleh itu kerjanya* bāṭil.	Translation: The *gajah mina* has already attained, Abiding in the ocean without shore, Madly it seeks, like one unknowing— Thus all its striving is futile and false.

The *gajah mina*, a fantastical hybrid of elephant and fish, derives from Malay mythology and is linked to the *makara* of Hindu-Buddhist cosmology.[590] Associated with Varuna, god of the

[585] Poem XXIX, quatrain 14, line 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 132.

[586] See Vandamme, 2023, 156–7.

[587] See Vandamme, 2023, 47, 74–5.

[588] See Vandamme, 2023, 157, 187–88.

[589] Poem XXXII, quatrain 12 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 142.

[590] KBMN, 2021, 614.

oceans, and Kama, god of love, the *makara* joins terrestrial mass and aquatic mobility.[591] Often depicted with tusks and curling tails, it represents threshold states and liminal depths. In Hamzah's verse, the *gajah mina* figures the seeker who is immersed in divine reality but fails to perceive that nearness. Though already *wāṣil* (one who has arrived), the seeker continues searching, driven by madness and perplexity. This state is conveyed through *gila* and *jāhil*, terms that in Sufi usage carry layered meaning. They can imply ignorance and misguided striving, but also the ecstatic unreason of the lover who has abandoned intellect for longing. The final line declares this effort *bāṭil* (false), not through insincerity, but through a misunderstanding of what is sought. The Real is not absent; it is unrecognized.

The figure of the *gajah mina* appears in only three known Malay texts in the MCP corpus between the 14th and 19th centuries. Its rarity makes its symbolic redeployment all the more striking, underscoring its resonance across literary and spiritual contexts.[592] In *Hikayat Pandawa Lima*, it emerges from the sea in a dazzling, chaotic display that startles royal attendants with its glittering form and crashing waves. In *Hikayat Sang Boma*, it becomes the named mount of Maharaja Boma, transporting him from beneath the sea to the shore, signifying a crossing between realms. There it surfaces amid cosmic upheaval, alongside other mythic creatures like the *merak setua*. In all three narratives, the *gajah mina* is associated with disrupted perception, boundary-crossing, and the sublime. Hamzah's poetic redeployment of

[591] See Cooper, 1987, 62–64; René Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*, ed. Michel Vâlsan and Martin Lings (Cambridge: Quinta Essentia, 1995), 245.

[592] MCP, s.v. *gajah mina*, in texts dated circa 1300–1850.

the figure participates in this tradition while reorienting its mythic ambiguity toward spiritual perplexity and the misrecognition of nearness.

This quatrain reflects Ibn ʿArabi's teaching that the journey to God is not movement toward an external goal but a return to what has always been present. Proximity to the Real is not spatial or temporal, but existential.[593] What appears as distance is the illusion of separation, awaiting the unveiling of perception. Hamzah's verse stages this tension precisely: the *gajah mina* is already in the ocean without shore, yet its seeking betrays a failure to perceive the intimacy in which it abides. What is sought has never been absent. The paradox is resolved not through the seeker's efforts but through the divine gift of unveiling (*kashf*), in which the *ʿārif* (knower or recognizer) encounters *maʿrifa* (gnosis).

The image of *api* (fire) expresses the annihilating power of love, which purifies the seeker by consuming the ego. Hamzah depicts this transformation in the following quatrain:[594]

Hamzah Shahrnawi terlalu hapus, *Seperti kayu sekalian hangus,* *Asalnya laut yang tiada berharus,* *Menjadi kapur di dalam Barus.*	Translation: Hamzah of Shahr-i Naw is utterly effaced, Like wood reduced to ash by flame, His origin is the ocean without current, Transformed as camphor in the heart of Barus.

This quatrain condenses three interwoven metaphors. Burnt wood evokes the annihilation of the temporal egoic self. The ocean without currents suggests the boundless stillness of transcendent unity. Camphor represents the culmination of purification, crystallising from the

[593] See Mohammed Rustom, 2007, 96–97, 103–4.

[594] Poem XXXII, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 142.

tree that contains it into a pure and fragrant substance. The symbolism of camphor, which Hamzah develops more fully elsewhere, represents the seeker's refinement through love into a state of purity and readiness for return (see Chapter 4.6.1).

This recalls Moses' encounter with the divine fire in Qurʾan 20:9–12.[595] In such theophanies, the Real is simultaneously the speaker (in the burning tree) and the hearer (Moses), yet the tree remains tree and Moses remains Moses. There is no fusion of essences. Hamzah, following Ibn ʿArabi, explicitly rejects union (*ittiḥād*) and incarnation (*ḥulūl*): *Iʿtiqadmu jangan ittiḥād dan ḥulūl* (Do not hold belief in union and incarnation).[596] Love purifies, but it does not conflate the Creator and creation.

For Ibn ʿArabi and Hamzah alike, *ittiḥād dan ḥulūl* falsely assume that two distinct essences, divine and human, can merge or occupy the same ontological space.[597] Such merging is metaphysically impossible, since it presupposes duality: an independent human essence capable of uniting with God. What appears as union is instead the recognition of *aḥadiyya*, the indivisible Singularity of the Real. Multiplicity dissolves into its source, yet the distinction between Creator and creation remains intact. In Hamzah's verse, fire and tree do not signify fusion but unveiling: the ego burns, but God remains transcendent.

Hamzah weaves a network of Qurʾanic symbols to express the paradoxes of divine proximity. Among the most prominent are *qāb qawsayn aw adnā* (two-bows length or nearer, Q.53:9),

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[595] See Johns, 1995, 176.

[596] Poem VII, quatrain 1, line 4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 60.

[597] See Harris, 1984, 45; Winkel, 2024, 81; s.v. *ittiḥād*.

bahrayn (two seas, Q.55:19–20), and *barzakh* (isthmus, Q.25:53). Each maps the seeker's encounter with divine nearness and stages the tension between separation and connection (*wiṣāl*).

While experiential love conveys the affective and sensory registers of longing, Hamzah's symbolic language enacts a deeper transformation in perception. His symbols both veil sacred knowledge and reshape how the seeker understands the relation between self and the Real. At this stage of maturity, the distinction between self and non-self begins to falter. As Kars explains, Ibn ʿArabi's apophatic mode does not collapse into mysticism or anti-intellectualism but sustains a dialectic of affirmation and negation that exposes the limits of theological discourse.[598] Both affirmation and negation must themselves be affirmed and denied, not to reach resolution but to let the unknowability of the Real disclose itself as such.[599] Building on this, Vandamme shows how Ibn ʿArabi captures instability of identity through a triadic formulation, 'as if he is him, but he is not him, yet he is him,' which does not resolve into unity but initiates the luminous perplexity (*ḥayra*) of witnessing the Real beyond categories of being and non-being.[600] This triad intensifies the ambiguity of identification and disidentification, not through contradiction, but by staging a looping recognition of likeness and unlikeness that suspends finality.[601]

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[598] See Kars, 2019, 165–8.

[599] Ibid.

[600] See Vandamme, 2023, 156–8, where he cites Ibn ʿArabi's formulation: *ka-annahu huwa wa mā huwa huwa wa huwa huwa* from *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, chapter 177, to illustrate the ambiguity in recognizing the Real—neither affirmable nor deniable—giving raise to perplexity.

[601] Ibid.

Hamzah dramatizes the condition of *ḥayra*, which is a state of luminous perplexity and unknowing, through imagery of drinking and rupture:[602]

Setelah terminum jadi ḥayrānī, *Takar pun pecah belah* ṣerāhī/*serahi*.[603]	Translation: Once drunk, one turns to perplexity, The cup shatters, the goblet asunders /surrenders in devotion.

Here Hamzah breaks not only the vessels but the certainties they represent. The *takar* (earthen cup) and *serāhī* (goblet) evoke vessels of selfhood and acquired knowledge.[604] The *takar* is both a drinking cup and a measure (*takaran*), evoking boundaries of capacity, value, or limit. Its shattering signals the collapse of all measures before divine overflow.[605]

The *serahi*, meanwhile, plays on a layered plurilingual field.[606] On one level it recalls the Persian *ṣurāḥī*, a long-necked wine flask familiar in Indo-Persian literary symbolism as a vessel of intoxication and spiritual outpouring. Drewes and Brakel consistently read it in this sense

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[602] Poem XXV, quatrain 3, lines 3–4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 118.

[603] Drewes and Brakel spell *ṣerāhī* (1986, 119) but the Leiden MS Cod. Or. 2016 gives <s-r-a-h-y>. In another Poem XIX (quatrain 9, line 2) they spell *serahi* (ibid., 100–101). The Persian *ṣurāḥī* is a long-necked wine flask, goblet (Wilkinson, online, s.v. *sĕrahi*); Steingass, online, s.v. *ṣurāḥī*. Of different etymology is Malay *serah*, which denotes surrendering, handing over tribute, giving a bride in marriage, and submitting to God's will (Wilkinson, online, s.v. *serah*).

[604] *Takar*, KDP, 2021, 2216.

[605] MCP, s.v. *takar*, in texts dated c. 1600–1850. The polyvalence of *takar* is reflected in the wider Malay corpus. In *Taj al-Salatin*, a rain of divine origin causes a *takar* to fall and shatter, releasing a written message from God, here the vessel functions as a medium of revelation whose breaking signifies divine disclosure. In *Syair Siti Zubaidah*, *takar* appears as a repeated measure of wine, associated with indulgence and intoxication. In *Adat Raja Melayu*, it designates the precise quantity required in alchemical preparation, while in *Hikayat Hasanuddin* it measures abundance in a tale of supernatural rice.

[606] MCP, s.v. *serahi*, in texts dated c. 1300–1850. In *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, it often holds wine, used in scenes of seduction, poison, or revelry. In *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah*, it contains sacred soil from Karbala, sealed until its redness signifies imminent martyrdom. In *Hikayat Sang Boma*, a *serahi kaca* (glass flask) contains enchanted water used to revive the dead. In each case, the *serahi* holds a substance that alters perception, life, or destiny.

and translated it as 'bottle.' Yet in Malay, *serahi* resonates with *serah*, 'to hand over, to surrender, to devote.' In this register, the *serahi* is not only a flask but an act of self-surrender: the vessel that breaks is the self, yielding to God.

Hamzah reworks these motifs into a symbolic act of mystical undoing. The *serahi* does not merely hold liquid but stands for the self's attempt to contain the divine. Its shattering, along with the *takar*, dramatizes the futility of grasp, divine knowledge cannot be measured or possessed. What breaks here is not just a vessel, but the illusion of containment. The seeker, overwhelmed, yields to the Real not through mastery but through surrender to unknowing.

As Beneito and Hirtenstein observe, *wiṣāl* (connection, arrival) is inherently paradoxical: it presumes a distance to be crossed, yet that distance proves illusory. When the veil lifts, the seeker realises that union has always been.[607] Hamzah's symbolic triad—the two-bows length, the two seas, and the isthmus—encodes this tension between absence and presence, annihilation and subsistence.

Through this lexicon and its symbolic extensions, Hamzah stages divine love as both disorienting and clarifying. The seeker, drawn by longing, loses and finds the self in the same motion. Language becomes the site of this transformation, where body, soul, and word converge.

[607] See Beneito and Hirtenstein, 2021, 100.

4.6 The circular path: From desire to arrival

Hamzah describes the spiritual journey of love as unfolding inwardly and outwardly, mirroring divine descent into creation and the self's ascent back to its Source; it is not linear but circular.[608] The lover traverses spiritual stations (*maqāmāt*)[609] in the quest for intimacy with the divine. While earlier Sufi writers outlined discrete waystations, Hamzah avoid systematic enumeration.[610] Still, his poetry evokes key transformative states such as *faqīr* (poor before God), *ʿubūdiyya* (servanthood), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *qāb qawsayn* (the Prophet's nearness to God during his ascension), each depicting a mode of consciousness.[611]

Yet these stations, as Hamzah emphasizes, are not ends in themselves but thresholds to be crossed. The true seeker must ultimately transcend all waystations to reach the *maqām lā maqām*—the 'station of no station,' where Reality is no longer bound by form or degree:[612]

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[608] See Jaffray's commentary on Ibn ʿArabi's 'circle of existence' (*dāʾirat al-wujūd*), which describes the movement of all things as proceeding from God and returning to Him. This circularity symbolizes the completeness of creation: descent reflects God's self-disclosure in creation, while ascent marks the soul's return to its Origin (Jaffray 2015, 148, 152).

[609] In Sufi teachings, a *maqām* (pl. *maqāmāt*) refers to a stage on the spiritual path, representing a level of spiritual consciousness that the seeker must cultivate and perfect before advancing further. These stations are reached through discipline and self-purification, marking key transformations in the journey toward divine oneness (*tawḥīd*). Classical Sufi writings describe structured progressions of *maqāmāt*, but perspectives vary on their necessity. Some masters emphasize the importance of fulfilling the requirements of each station, while others—like Hamzah—stress that true realization lies in moving beyond all fixed stages to embrace the ever-unfolding nature of divine self-disclosure.

[610] See Ibrahim, 2022, 2.

[611] See Ab. Halim and Omrah (2016) for an exploration of the Sufi spiritual stations in Hamzah Fansuri's poems. They noted at least nine stations recurrently mentioned, and many more mentioned but in lesser frequency.

[612] Poem III, quatrain 17, lines 3–4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 50.

Daripada sekalian maqām *disuruhnya ubah,* *Supaya* wāṣil *tiada dengan susah.*	Translation: From every station you are commanded to move, So that arrival comes without constraint or toil.

This verse gestures toward what Ibn ʿArabi associates with the Muhammadan inheritance: the culmination of spiritual ascent at the *maqām lā maqām*.[613] Unlike other stations that define and contain the seeker, this threshold is beyond positionality. Here, the seeker reaches the boundary of the divine, dissolving into pure servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*) and shedding all attachments to selfhood. This is the threshold of witnessing (*shuhūd*), where the veil of separation between lover and Beloved is lifted:[614]

Jikalau sini kamu tahu akan wujūd*,* *Itulah tanda tempat kamu* shuhūd, *Buangkan rupamu daripada sekalian* quyūd, *Supaya dapat ke dalam diri* quʿūd.[615]	Translation: If here you perceive Being, That is the sign of your witnessing, Cast off your form from every bond, So you may abide in the Self's repose.

Ibn ʿArabi describes this final station as one in which the seeker cannot remain,[616] for to linger would be to claim permanence where none is possible. It is the *maqām lā maqām*: the point at

[613] On the Muhammadan Station (*maqām Muḥammadī*, *maqām al-maḥmūd*), Ibn ʿArabi affirms that each station offers a standpoint for knowing God, though each delimits Him to certain attributes. The Prophet alone embodies all stations in perfection, hence the title. At its boundary lies the *maqām lā maqām* ('station of no station'), described as 'a station on the human side, and a non-station on the divine side,' where all positionality disappears and the seeker realizes pure servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*). See Benaïssa, 2005, 80-81.

[614] Ibid.

[615] Poem IV, quatrain 11 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 52.

[616] See Benaïssa, 2005, 81.

which all prior stations are revealed as shifting perspectives on divine manifestation. Beyond them lies no differentiation, only Oneness.

Following this path, Hamzah warns that every ascending station offers a lens to perceive the divine but also limits it by binding it to specific Attributes. Thus, the seeker must abandon every fixed vantage point and surrender to the perpetual unveiling of divine self-disclosure.

Hamzah figures radical love as a cyclical pedagogy: awakening and separation, longing and intoxication, trial, grace, and fulfilment. This journey unfolds in cycles, each refining the seeker in self-loss and drawing them toward divine intimacy. Abdul Hadi visualizes Hamzah's poetics of circling and repetition through a diagram of concentric circles, each marking a stage in the seeker's return to the divine centre.[617]

The circular movement of the mystical path is grounded in Qurʾanic declarations of return[618] and elaborated by Ibn ʿArabi's teaching that all spiritual motion returns to its origin.[619] The seeker emerges from God into the world and journeys back to God again. Hamzah illustrates this dynamic through the primordial narrative of Adam and Eve's descent from paradise: estrangement from the soul's homeland awakens longing for return.[620]

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[617] See the concentric diagram in Abdul Hadi, 2001, 212.

[618] See Qurʾanic declarations of return, e.g.: 'Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return' (Q.2:156); 'And unto Him you shall be returned' (Q.36:83); cf. 'What, did you think that We created you only for sport, and that you would not be returned to Us?' (Q.23:115).

[619] See Emirahmetoglu, 2021.

[620] Poem XXXII, quatrain 5 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 140.

Ādam ṣūfī *diharu* shayṭān,[621] *Di dalam syurga berbunga* rayḥān, *Datang ke dunia ke Bukit Sailan,* *Mabuk akan* Ḥawā *terlalu* hayrān.	Translation: Adam the Sufi was confounded by Satan, In paradise, where the r*ayḥān* bloomed, He came to the world, to Mount Ceylon, Intoxicated with Eve, utterly perplexed.

The fragrance of *rayḥān* in paradise stirs longing and sets the return in motion. In Qurʾan 56:89, *rayḥān* is paired with *rawḥ* ('reviving joy and sweetness'),[622] promised to those brought near to God, which Ibn ʿArabi interprets as indicating not only eschatological reward but also the present reality of spiritual completion. Commonly translated as sweet basil, *rayḥān* appears in Malay as *selasih*. In *pantun*, *selasih* resonates phonetically with *kasih* (love), linking scent with yearning and affect. Like Adam, the seeker enters exile, undergoes trials, and seeks metaphorical reunion (*wuṣūl*). The state of *ḥayrān* (being perplexed) registers the simultaneous experience of distance and nearness and prepares the paradoxical recognition that intimacy was never absent.

In Ibn ʿArabi's teaching, *ḥayra* (perplexity) is the apex of knowing by presence: nearness and transcendence are apprehended together, disorienting the intellect and yielding a knowledge beyond rational categories.[623] At its peak, *ḥayra* marks the moment when the seeker dissolves

[621] See Qur'an verses 2:36, 7:24.

[622] Stephen Hirtenstein, "A Poem from *Futūḥāt Makkiyya*: On Perfecting One's Humanity," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society* 39 (2006): v.

[623] See Vandamme, 2023, 159–161.

into the Real while recognizing their own enduring otherness. This tension between unity and alterity embodies the paradox of divine intimacy.[624]

The seeker's condition is often described with the metaphor *anak dagang*, akin to the Arabic *gharīb*, meaning foreigner, wanderer, or spiritual exile.[625] In earlier Malay usage, *dagang* primarily denoted a foreigner or outsider rather than a trader or merchant.[626] The *anak dagang* signifies the *sālik*, the seeker who has renounced worldly attachments in pursuit of divine truth:[627]

Barangsiapa dāʾim *kepada* dunyā qarīb*,* *Manakan dapat menjadi* ḥabīb?	Translation: Whoever persists in attachment to the fleeting world, How can they ever become the beloved?

The path begins in separation. Veils (Ar. *ḥijāb*, Mal. *dinding*) obscure divine Reality. This illusion of distance ignites *shawq* (longing), urging the self forward. Hamzah expresses this

[624] Ibid., 2023, 49–50, 162–66.

[625] Abdul Hadi argues that Hamzah Fansuri introduced terms like *anak dagang* and *faqīr* to signify poets or writers whose works emerge from both physical and spiritual journeys, often culminating in a state of *fanāʾ* (annihilation) and a profound awareness of human frailty and dependence on divine love. Hamzah's use of these terms influenced later writers, who described themselves as *anak dagang* or *faqīr ḍāʿīf*. In the 20th century, Amir Hamzah reimagined this as *musafir lata* (aimless wanderer), while Chairil Anwar used *pengembara di negeri asing* (a wanderer in a foreign land) in his poem "Doa," evoking spiritual poverty and existential orphanhood. This demonstrates Hamzah's enduring influence, extending beyond 17th- and 18th-century Malay poets to modern writers in Indonesia and Malaysia (Abdul Hadi 2001, 145–46, 314).

[626] See Wilkinson, online, s.v. '*dagang*'.

[627] Poem IX, quatrain 9, lines 3–4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 68.

state through terms like *ḥayrān* (perplexed) and *hintai* (spying, gazing), capturing the seeker's disorientation and desire.

In one verse, Hamzah links *hintai* with both *iʿtiqād* (conviction) and *naẓar* (gaze, vision), writing: *'*Commanding your gaze (*hintai)* upon *iʿtiqād* and *naẓar*.'[628] Here, *hintai* points to the inward discipline of orienting one's gaze, connoting deliberate, sustained attentiveness. This gaze, directed toward *iʿtiqād* and *naẓar*, is not passive but disciplined and epistemologically grounded. While often translated as 'speculation,' *naẓar* carries a deeper connotation. Rooted in the Arabic root *n-ẓ-r*, it invokes deliberate looking, contemplative gaze, and rational consideration.[629] As Akkach explains, *naẓar* in Islamic thought is a multifaceted visual-cognitive act that combines physical seeing with reflective and ethical intentionality.[630] Hirtenstein notes that *naẓar* is not passive observation but an 'active turning of the gaze toward divine reality,' a gaze that both reveals and transforms.

This links closely to Hamzah's line cited earlier: '*Itulah tanda tempat kamu shuhūd*' (That is the sign of your witnessing). In Akbarian metaphysics, *naẓar* is the contemplative means through which *shuhūd* (direct witnessing of the divine) is prepared and actualized. The divine gaze precedes and makes possible the human act of seeing; one witnesses only because one is already being seen.[631]

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[628] '*Menyuruhkan hintai* iʿtiqād *dan* naẓar' in Poem III, quatrain 10, line 2, ibid, 50.

[629] See Hirtenstein, 2022, 65.

[630] See Akkach, 2022, 3.

[631] See Hirtenstein, 2022, 83–84.

Read in this light, Hamzah's *hintai* echoes the speculative tradition in its classical sense, from the Latin *speculum* (mirror), where to speculate is to gaze through the mirror of thought toward realities that exceed the surface. *Naẓar* opens the space of vision, and *shuhūd* marks its transformation into knowledge. To fix the gaze upon conviction and contemplation is to prepare for unveiling. What is seen, if only momentarily, is no longer merely perceived, but witnessed.

As love intensifies into *ʿishq* and *berahi* (radical love), the ego begins to dissolve. The seeker enters trials that culminate in annihilation and the realization of subsistence in God. This is not union as merging, but the awareness that the journey was always within God.

To navigate this terrain, the seeker requires guidance. Hamzah underscores the necessity of a teacher (Mal. *guru,* Ar. *shaykh*), and names the Prophet Muhammad (Abu al-Qasim) as the perfect guide:[632]

Yogia kau tuntut pada shaykh al-ʿālim, *Shurbat mulia daripada Abu al-Qasim.*[633]	Translation: Seek guidance from the learned master, Drink the noble draught from Abu al-Qasim.

He further affirms that the subtle knowledge (*rahasia*—secret, Ar. *sirr al-ʿilm*) is entrusted to the Prophet Muhammad and transmitted through generations within the community of lovers (*qawm al-ʿāshiqīn*):[634]

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[632] Poem XIX, quatrain 6, lines 1–2, ibid., 100.

[633] *Abu al-Qasim* (father of al-Qasim) is a *kunya* ('parental title') for the Prophet Muhammad.

[634] Poem VIII, quatrain 13, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 66.

Rahasia itu daripada khātim al-nabiyyīn, *Turun-temurun kepada* qawm al-ʿāshiqīn.	Translation: This secret comes from the Seal of the Prophets, Passed down through the generations of the community of lovers.

The culmination of this circular path is the Prophet's ascension (*miʿrāj*),[635] which marks the apex of unveiling (*kashf*). Hamzah likens his own spiritual aspiration to this ascent:[636]

Hamzah gharīb *terlalu* miskīn *Dimanakan sampai kepada* Rabb al-ʿālamīn, *Seperti* miʿrāj sayyid al-mursalīn, *Jadi* qāb qawsayn[637] *dengan Tuhan* sālimīn.	Translation: Hamzah, a stranger, utterly poor, How could he reach the Lord of all worlds? Akin to the ascension of the Master of Messengers, In safety becoming 'two-bows length' with God.

The phrase *qāb qawsayn* (two-bows length) originates from the Qur'an (Q.53:9), describing the Prophet's nearness to God during his ascension. Ibn ʿArabi identifies this as the station of pure *ʿubūdiyya*, attained through perfect self-effacement. He distinguishes this station from all others by calling it the 'station of no station' (*maqām lā maqam*) because all named stations imply confinement, whereas this station marks the boundary where the human reaches the limits of the divine and realizes pure servanthood. It is not a station that can be possessed, but

[635] Qur'an verses 17:1, 53:2–18.

[636] Poem VII, quatrain 17, ibid., 64.

[637] Hamzah cites the from the Qur'an (53: 2–10): 'Your comrade is not astray, neither errs, nor speaks he out of caprice. This is naught but a revelation revealed, taught him by one terrible in power, very strong; he stood poised, being on the higher horizon, then drew near and suspended hung, two bows' length away (*qāb qawsayn*), or even nearer (*aw adnā*), then revealed to His servant that he revealed.'

the threshold associated with the Muhammadan saints (*awliyāʾ*), who are freed from all defined states.[638]

Hamzah celebrates the friends of God who dwells intimately with God:[639]

Maʿrifat *itulah yang terlalu* ʿajīb, *Akan pakaian* walī *yang beroleh* naṣīb, *Barang mengetahui dia menjadi* ḥabīb, *Kepada* Rabb al-ʿālamīn manzil*nya* qarīb.	Translation: That gnosis is exceedingly wondrous, The garment of the *walī* who has received his share. Whoever knows it becomes beloved, Whose waystation lies near to the Lord of all worlds.

This intimacy rests on self-knowledge as the path to divine knowledge:[640]

Man ʿarafa nafsahu ḥadīth *daripada* nabī, Fa-qad ʿarafa rabbahu *pada sekalian peri,* *Setelah sampai mengenal diri* qawī, *Mangkanya dapat menjadi* walī.	Translation: From the Prophet: 'Whoever knows himself,' 'Indeed knows his Lord'—having grasped the matter well, Once one has firmly attained knowledge of the self, Then one may become a friend of God.

By weaving together the motifs of *anak dagang* and the *miʿrāj*, Hamzah maps love as a circular unveiling of divine reality. Separation is illusory. The soul, brought into being through the divine command, returns to its Source, not by moving forward but by awakening to what always was. Hamzah's circular vision of love unfolds in three interlinked phases:

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[638] See Benaïssa, 2005.

[639] Poem VIII, quatrain 2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 64.

[640] Poem V, quatrain 7 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 56.

1. Separation and awakening

The journey begins with the self's sense of separation from God. Hamzah employs symbols such as *bunyi* (sound, concealment), *ḥijāb* (veil), and *dinding* (screen, partition). Each term conveys the paradox of a reality both revealed and concealed: *bunyi*, as discussed earlier,[641] resonates with the polarity of *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, signifying presence that also veils; *ḥijāb* denotes the protective veil separating phenomena from their noumenal source; *dinding*, in its enantiosemic range, shifts from blocking to exposing light.[642] Together, these images form a symbolic lexicon of concealment and disclosure, marking the thresholds through which the seeker perceives distance from the Beloved. Yet this very sense of concealment awakens *shawq* (longing), urging the self to press beyond veils toward its origin.

This awakening brings turmoil. Terms like *haru* (disturbance, turmoil), *ḥayrān* (perplexed), and *hawā* (desire or passionate inclination) convey the inner turbulence of one drawn toward intimacy with the Beloved. Sensory images such as *rayḥān* (fragrant blossoms) and *kapur barus* (fragrant camphor) evoke the subtle scent of divine traces that stir remembrance and recognition.

2. Experiences of divine love

As the seeker advances, love intensifies. Hamzah turns to metaphors of taste to describe this transformation. This journey begins with tasting (*rasa*/*dhawq*), where the seeker moves from

[641] See chapters 1.5.4; 3.4; 4.6.1 of this dissertation.

[642] On *dinding* as both 'screening off' and 'to hold up to the light,' see Chapter 1.5.4 (p. 24) of this dissertation.

intellectual apprehension to direct experience. Words such as *minum* (drinking), *jamu* (feasting), *dhawq*, and *rasa* (sensation, taste, perception) mark this transition.

As longing deepens, Hamzah turns to vision. Terms such as *shawq* (yearning) and *hintai* (gaze, watch) evoke the intensifying pull of divine presence. At its height, love becomes absorption. Hamzah describes this state with *ʿishq* (radical love), *mabuk* (intoxication), and *gilā* (madness). These terms illustrate ego-dissolution, where the lover is consumed, drawn wholly into the Beloved. Love is both ordeal and purification, burning away illusion and returning the self to Being.

Hamzah captures this elusive intensity in a quatrain of winding perplexity:[643]

	Translation:
Rumahnya bertukar-tukar,	His dwelling shifts from place to place,
Jalannya berputar-putar,	His path winds in endless circles,
Manikam di mulut ular,	Like a jewel held in a serpent's mouth,
Mendapat ia terlalu sukar.	So hard indeed is it to attain.

The image of *manikam di mulut ular* (jewel held in a serpent's mouth) may be read in more than one way. Abdul Hadi interprets the serpent as a symbol of the lower self to be subdued to attain gnosis.[644] Yet, the phrase may also allude to the *ular cintamani* (*cintāmaṇi*), a legendary snake said to grant one's deepest longing, especially in love.[645] In *Hikayat Hang Tuah* and

[643] Poem XVII, quatrain 8 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 94.

[644] See Abdul Hadi, 2001, 271.

[645] See Wilkinson, s.v. c*intamani*; *KDE4*, s.v. "ular cintamani"; Muhammad Haji Salleh, "Notes on Translating the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 34, no. 99 (2006): 402; Guénon, 1995, 197; R.O. Winstedt, "Some More Malay Words," *JMBRAS* 80 (1919): 135.

Hikayat Raja Muda, the *ular cintamani* is described as golden or radiant serpent, bearing a shining gem. In Hindu and Buddhist cosmology, the *cintāmaṇi* is the wish-fulfilling jewel, signifying not only danger but the miraculous reward hidden at the heart of longing.[646] My reading of the *cintamaṇi* motif complements Tee's observation that Hamzah frequently drew upon analogical patterns already familiar from Hindu-Buddhist traditions, such as seed and tree, ocean and waves, or sun and heat, which he reoriented within an Islamic metaphysics of Being.[647]

The image, then, may evoke both peril and promise. The path of love seems ever winding in circles (*berputar-putar*), shifting (*bertukar-tukar*), and fraught with danger. Yet, it hides the rarest treasure. The seeker who dares this peril may find, in the serpent's mouth, the very jewel that redeems all longing.

3. Trials, divine grace, and fulfilment

The seeker is tested and refined. Terms like *basuh* (washing), *asah* (polishing), and *tersuci* (purified) signify the refinement of the self. Obligatory worships and ascetic practices such as *dhikr* (remembrance), *ʿuzlat* (isolation), fasting, and night prayers prepare the seeker for the station of proximity, expressed through metaphors such as: *berenang tiada berbatang* (swimming without support); and *tunggalkan diri* (rendering the self solitary in God)

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[646] MCP, s.v. *cintamani*, in texts dated circa 1300–1850.

[647] Tee highlights that Hamzah's analogical repertoire, including seed and tree, ocean and waves, rainwater and plants, and sun and heat, in his prose and poetry work, reflects earlier Hindu-Buddhist and Yogacara metaphysical traditions in the Malay world. While Tee does not discuss the *cintamaṇi* motif, his analysis underscores that Hamzah's metaphorical language often reworks pre-Islamic symbolic patterns into an Islamic grammar of Being (Tee, 2024).

These images suggest trusting without grasp and letting go of egoic ground in submission. The seeker undergoes *fanā'* (annihilation) and *karam* (drowning), representing the ego's death and the soul's rebirth as *baqā'* (subsistence in God).

The moment of *wiṣāl, liqā'*, or *bertemu* (union, encounter, connection) marks the seeker's unmediated intimacy with the Beloved. This is not a fusion of essences but the unveiling of unity that was always real. Hamzah uses metaphors such as *kawin* (marriage) and *dakap* (embrace) to signal this closeness, where the lover abides in the divine presence:[648]

Engkaulah wāṣil *pada* azal *dan* abad.	Translation: You are the one who arrives in pre-eternity and abides through everlasting eternity.

This *liqa'* (meeting) is beyond time and space. It is not a new attainment but the unveiling of what has always been: the soul's pre-existent intimacy with divine eternity. Human souls, in their origin, dwell in *azal* (pre-eternity). The return to this state is not progression but unveiling, remembrance, and recognition of the Real behind illusions.

Hamzah also emphasizes the sacred exclusivity of divine love. Terms such as *rahasia* (secret) and *ghayr* (jealousy) affirm the singular bond between lover and Beloved. Refinement of character is indispensable. The vocabulary of *adab* through terms such as *sopan* (courtesy) and *santun* (gentle restraint), foregrounds the seeker's spiritual etiquette (*adab*) before God.

[648] Poem VII, quatrain 8, line 4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 62.

The station of fulfilment is marked by intimacy, expressed in words like *lamar* (desiring) and *damping* (proximity). These terms suggest not just closeness, but belovedness, upon having been gathered back to the Source.

Hamzah's poetics of love chart a path of perpetual unveiling. Through sensual, emotional, and metaphysical registers, his language evokes love as the ever-deepening awareness that nothing lies outside the Real.

Hamzah's poetic engagement with *qāb qawsayn aw adnā* (two-bows length or nearer) is rooted in Qurʾanic imagery (Q.53:9–11), which describes the Prophet's ascension (*miʿrāj*) and his proximity to the divine:[649]

Arti ʿqāb qawsayn aw adnāʾ,[650] *Pertemuan dengan Tuhan yang* aʿlā, *Pada* mā kadhaba al-fuʾādu mā raʾā,[651] *Tiada lagi lain* ʿalā mā yarā.[652]	Translation: The meaning of 'two bows-length, or nearer,' A meeting with the Lord Most High, 'The heart did not lie about what it saw,' Nothing lies beyond what he saw.

Ibn 'Arabi describes *qāb qawsayn* (two-bows length) as the station of the realized servant, exemplified by the Prophet during his ascension. The phrase *aw adnā* (or nearer) is the station

[649] Poem VI, quatrain 7 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 58.

[650] Qur'an 53:9.

[651] Qur'an 53:11.

[652] Qur'an 53:12.

of love and divine election, denoting a proximity beyond the subject-object duality of witnessing. He writes:[653]

> If you ask: What is the 'He'? We answer: The Essential Unseen (*ghayb*), which one cannot witness. For He is neither manifest nor a locus of manifestation.

In this way, *aw adnā* collapses the binaries of proximity and distance, revealing that nothing exists apart from God. In Akbarian cosmology, the 'two seas' (*bahrayn*) symbolize the meeting point of divine names and created realities. The *barzakh* (isthmus) is the intermediary that both separates and unites them. It is the realm where the Real manifests in forms comprehensible to creation, allowing divine self-disclosure without obliterating distinction between Creator and creation. The heart (*fuʾād*) of the gnostic perceives through this isthmus and beholds divine realities without contradiction.

Multiplicity disappears at the point of realization, where all differentiation dissolves into Unity. Rumi describes this as the Station of the Beloved (*maqām-i maʿshūqī*): certain servants are so beloved that God seeks them, blesses them, and performs all the acts of love for them.[654] Elsewhere, he distinguishes two stations on the path: *maqām-i ʿāshiqī* (the Station of the Lover) and *maqām-i maʿshūqī* (the Station of the Beloved).[655]

Hamzah adopts this triadic symbolism to express the unity of *ʿāshiq* (lover), *ʿishq* (love), and *maʿshūq* (beloved). The two bows-length becomes not a fixed distance, but a fluid threshold of

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[653] See Ibn ʿArabi, *al-Futūḥāt*, Chapter 73 cited in Jaffray, 2015, 68.

[654] Rumi's discourse in *Fīhi ma fīhi* cited in Moqaddam and Nourian, 2021, 15.

[655] In *Mathnawī Book Six* cited in Moqaddam and Nourian, 2021, 15.

shifting arc of perception. The *barzakh*, as a realm that unite paradoxes, becomes the threshold to gnostic vision. In one of his quatrains, Hamzah illustrates this:[656]

Qāb qawsayn *itu suatu* tamthīl, Maʿna*nya* ʻalī *timbangnya* thaqīl, Baḥrayn *di dalamnya sempurna* jamīl, *Orang mengetahui dia terlalu* qalīl.	Translation: 'Two bows-length' is a similitude, Of lofty meaning and decisive weight, The two seas within — this is beauty supreme, Exceedingly few are those who know it.

The two bows-length thus marks the meeting point between divine infinitude and human limitation. Al-Kashani, in his Qurʾanic commentary, describes it as the 'circle of total existence,' where the Real and creation form two arcs of one continuous curve.[657]

For poets and mystics, the image of two bows-length raises the question: how close is this nearness?[658] Rustom explains that the bows represent opposing arcs forming a single oval, uniting opposites so that the seeker and the Sought, the lover and the Beloved, collapse into singularity.[659] If the encounter is described as 'or nearer' (*aw adnā*), it signifies either an intimacy beyond the reach of human language or a proximity in which all barriers between lover and Beloved dissolve.[660]

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[656] Poem VI, quatrain 8 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 58.

[657] Al-Kashani commentary of *qāb qawsayn* (Q.53:9) as a circle of total existence in Al-Kashani and Williams, 2021, 369.

[658] See Schimmel, 1977, 222; Also, M. R. Hotham, "Seeing God with Both Eyes: Asceticism, Ascension and Poetry in the *Makhzan Al-Asrar* of Nizami Ganjavi (d.1209)." PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2016.

[659] See Rustom, 2007, 95.

[660] Ibid.

In Hamzah's poetry, *bahrayn* (the meeting of the two seas in Q. 55:19–20) and *barzakh* (the isthmus that both separates and joins them) represent the relationship between divine transcendence and immanence:[661]

	Translation:
Qāb qawsayn *itu seperti kandang,*	The 'two bows-length' is like an enclosure,
Tali antaranya bukannya benang,	The line between them is no thread of yarn,
Barzakh *namanya sana terbentang,*	*Barzakh* by name, it stretches wide,
Ketiganya wāḥid *yogia kau pandang.*	Yet the three you must behold as one.

This quatrain offers a metaphysical schema of divine proximity. The 'line' (*tali*) that divides the two arcs of the bows is not a material thread but a veil (*ḥijāb*), subtle yet real. Ibn ʿArabi describes the *barzakh* as the locus where opposites converge: form with formlessness, presence with absence, meeting without merging. Here, paradox is the very grammar of divine intimacy.

4.6.1 The paradox of absence and presence

Hamzah's language is shaped by paradox, enantiosemy, and polysemic wordplay. These techniques both obscure and disclose, conceal and reveal, the nature of divine love. Central to this paradox is *ghayb* (absence). This is not the absence of Being, but its hiddenness as perceived by creation. From the human perspective, this absence intensifies longing, for what appears hidden draws the seeker ever closer. As seen earlier in Hamzah's evocation of the Qurʾanic verse 'He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward' (Q.57:3),[662] this

[661] Poem VI, quatrain 9 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 58.

[662] See discussion on Hamzah's poem that integrate the verse Q.57:3 in Chapters 4.2 (p. 123) and 4.3 (p. 164) of this dissertation.

paradox of presence in absence lies at the heart of his poetics of love: God is never absent; rather, it is creation that veils and is veiled.

In Ibn ʿArabi's teaching, love itself unfolds through this paradox. Love inclines toward what is veiled, absent, or not-yet-existent (*ghayr mawjūd, maʿdūm*).[663] It is absence that provokes yearning and sustains creation. This dynamic is framed by the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure: divine love yearns for manifestation in order to be known. The Qurʾan alludes to this movement when it says, *"God will bring forth a people whom He loves and who love Him"* (Q.5:54). The verse's use of the absent pronoun and the future tense signals that God's love embraces entities even before they exist, calling them into presence.[664] Thus, absence is not lack but the very condition that provokes yearning and sustains creation.

Hamzah identifies with the *unggās quddūsī* (holy bird),[665] a creature estranged from the world and in constant flight within the Unseen:[666]

Kitāb Allāh *dipersandangnya,* Ghayb Allāh *akan tandangnya,* ʿĀlam lāhūt *akan kandangnya,* *Pada* dāʿirah hu *tempat pandangnya.*	Translation: It carries the Book of God across its breast, Its journey is within the divine Unseen. The realm of Divine Nature is its dwelling, Upon the Circle of *Hu* its gaze is fixed.

[663] Ibrahim, 2022, 139–41, citing *Futūḥāt*, II:327. Ibn ʿArabi links love specifically to the absent and non-existent, reading Q.5:54 as proof that divine love is directed toward entities (*aʿyān thābita*) not yet manifest. On Hamzah's related usage of the *ʿāshiq* (lover) as *ʿayn thābita*, see Chapter 4.2 (pp. 122-23) of this dissertation.

[664] Ibrahim, 2022, 140.

[665] *Hamzah gharīb unggas quddūsī* (Hamzah, a stranger, a bird of holiness), Poem X, quatrain 15, line 1 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 74.

[666] Poem XXIV, quatrain 6 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 114.

This bird does not seek a worldly perch. It moves in the *ghayb*, its path never fixed, its flight within the *dāʾira* (circle). The circle, or *dāʾirah Hu*, is the emblem of divine unity. It connotes both containment and motion, wholeness and return.

The seeker perceives multiplicity, yet Reality remains undivided. The tension between the One and the many is echoed in Hamzah's image of the mythical elephant-fish:[667]

*Gajah mina ter*dāʾir-dāʾir*,* *Di dalam laut mencari air.*	Translation: The *gajah mina* circles endlessly, In the ocean, it seeks for water.

The absurdity is deliberate. The seeker moves restlessly within what already contains them. This is *ḥayra* (perplexity) not confusion but awe: the recognition that the Real cannot be grasped, only circled.

Hamzah reinforces this motif through his innovative use of affixation (prefix *ter*-) and word reduplication in Malay, he applied to these Arabic loan words. Thus, *ṭāʾir* (to fly, move swiftly) becomes *terṭāʾir-ṭāʾir* suggesting restless fluttering back and forth, while *dāʾir* (to move in circles) becomes *terdāʾir-dāʾir*, evoking the soul's ceaseless movement in divine orbit.

In one quatrain, he conveys the continuous motion of the soul's journey, guided by his spiritual guide, ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani, the 12th century Sufi master of Baghdad:[668]

Hamzah Fansuri sedia ẓāhir, *Tersuci pulang pada sayyid ʿAbd al-Qādir,*	Translation: Hamzah Fansuri appears in outward form, Purified in his return to God, guided by

[667] Poem XXXII, quatrain 8, lines 1–2 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 140.

[668] Poem XVI, quatrain 15, ibid., 92.

Dari sana ke sini terṭāʾir-ṭāʾir, *Akan mendapat pada diri ẓāhir.*	Sayyid ʿAbd al-Qadir, Fluttering from there to here, to and fro, So as to realize the Self in its outward form.

This quatrain gestures toward the paradox that the journey outward ends in inward arrival. The beloved was never elsewhere. Longing both path and destination.

In another verse, Hamzah reflects:[669]

ʿĀjīb *sekali akan hati saya,* *Hendak berdakap dengan mulia raya.*	Translation: How astonishing indeed is my heart, Longing to embrace the Majestic Exalted One.

Here, *hati saya* (my heart) is the locus of *liqaʾ*, where the Real is encountered through ascent into one's interiority. *Saya* or *sahaya* (both variants occur in Hamzah's poems) is a Sanskrit loanword meaning 'humble servant,' from which the first-person singular pronoun *saya* derives. The term denotes the lowly devotee returning to their Lord.

[669] Poem XIV, quatrain 8, lines 3–4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 86.

Hamzah deepens the paradox of absence through the *pingai* bird, the Malay analogue of the *ʿanqāʾ*, the mythical phoenix of Arabic tradition,[670] also known as the *sīmurgh* in ʿAttar's *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr*. (lit. 'the language of the birds').[671] Hamzah writes:[672]

Unggas pingai bukannya balam,[673] Dāʾim *berbunyi siang dan malam,* *Katakan olehmu hai* ahl al-ʾālam*,* *Hamzah Fansuri sudah karam,*	Translation: The *pingai* bird is no *balam*, Ever resounding—yet hiding—day and night,[674] Proclaim it, O people of the world! Hamzah Fansuri has drowned!'

The *pingai* is perhaps a bird always heard but never seen. Its *bunyi* (calls) signals presence, yet *bunyi* also means concealment. The sound is sensorial, but the source remains hidden. Thus, the Beloved is most intimately present when seemingly absent.

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[670] The *anqā* (gryphon or phoenix) symbolizes the ultimate realization of the self's annihilation in God. See Jaffray, 2006.

[671] ʿAttar's *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* commonly translated as *The Conference of the Birds*, presents the journey of the soul toward divine realization through the symbolism of birds, culminating in the paradoxical revelation that the sought-after *simurgh* is none other than the seekers themselves. The poem serves as an extended reflection on the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure, as well as the Prophetic tradition, 'He who knows himself knows his Lord,' framing love as the force driving both creation and self-discovery. The birds' journey mirrors the seeker's movement through *ghayb*—an absence that paradoxically reveals the divine. Like the *simurgh* Hamzah's *pingai* bird embodies the tension between concealment and disclosure, absence and presence, ultimately dissolving the distinction between seeker and sought. See J. W. Morris, "Reading *The Conference of the Birds*," in *Approaches to the Asian Classics*, ed. W. T. De Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

[672] Poem XXVI, quatrain 15 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 122.

[673] *Balam* means 'turtledove', or 'dimly seen' - differentiating the configuration of the corser *balam* with the enlightened *pingai* who also possesses perfect vision.

[674] *Bunyi* is enantiosenic, also meaning 'calling out', 'making sound', 'singing' 'Bunyi' means concealment or hidden (*buni, bunian, sembunyi*); sound, melody, music; meaning, purport in Wilkinson, online, s.v *bunyi, buni*. See also p. 82 of this dissertation.

The closing line with *karam* marks complete effacement. Yet the word bears a double resonance: in Malay, 'to drown' but in Arabic, 'generosity' or 'nobility.' Hamzah plays on this ambiguity: the lover drowns not into loss but into divine nobility. The *ashiq* (lover) sinks into the mysterious Unseen, not as an act of loss but as an ascent into ultimate intimacy

In another quatrain, Hamzah portrays the seeker's final surrender:[675]

Hamzah miskin hina dan karam, *Bermain mata dengan* Rabb al-ʿālam, *Selamnya sangat terlalu dalam,* *Seperti mayat sudah tertanam.*	Translation: Hamzah, poor and lowly, is drowned, Exchanging glances[676] with the Lord of all worlds, His plunge is immeasurably deep, Like a corpse already laid to rest.

The phrase *bermain mata* (lit. 'playing eyes') is a Malay idiom connoting reciprocal gazing, often suggestive of flirtation or subtle intimacy. Here, however, Hamzah radicalizes it into a mystical register. I have rendered it literally as 'exchanging glances' to preserve the audacity of his idiom. Earlier, he drew on related terms such as *hintai* (focused gaze) and *naẓar* (contemplative vision) to describe the seeker's epistemological orientation.[677] In this later

[675] Poem XIV, quatrain 13 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 86.

[676] Johns (1990, 327) highlights the difficulty of translating *bermain mata dengan Rabb al-ʿālam*, since it implies an interaction between the human and divine that resists easy rendering in English. He argues that Drewes and Brakel's choice, 'makes eyes at' (1986, 87), fails to capture the nuance, and notes that Hamzah's use of Malay idioms demonstrates his poetic mastery. The Arabic *dallala*, a possible equivalent to *bermain*, does not require the preposition *bi-* as *dengan* does in Malay, suggesting that Hamzah was employing the idiom in its natural linguistic register. Johns describes the phrase as emerging from an intoxicated rather than a sober mystical state and praises Hamzah's poetic genius, particularly how the audacity of 'daring to exchange glances with the Lord of the worlds' strikingly juxtaposed with the immobility of being laid in the earth.

[677] See Chapter 4.6 (p. 194) of this dissertation.

quatrain, the gaze is no longer preparatory but consummate: *bermain mata* dramatizes the moment of intimate reciprocity between the soul and the divine gaze.

As Hirtenstein observes in his study of Akbarian metaphysics, the act of *naẓar* is never unilateral: 'human seeing is only possible because one is already being seen.'[678] The divine gaze (*al-naẓra al-ilāhiyya*) grounds all perception and renders it meaningful.[679] In such a mutual gaze, 'the one who sees and that which is seen are one;' there is only the divine gaze.[680] Within this context, *bermain mata* signals an ecstatic intersection where divine and human vision converge. The seeker, already drowned (*karam*) in self-effacement, does not claim to see God through their own agency. Rather, they are seen into—gathered into divine perception.

The plunge into the ocean suggests a depth beyond return. The final image: 'like a corpse already laid to rest,' does not depict death as nihilism, but as the effacement of self (*fanāʾ*) before the Real. Love here culminates not in attainment or possession, but in utter dissolution.

Keshavarz observes that Rumi's *Dīvān-i Shams* exalts silence as the space where truth unveils itself. [681] Speech emerges from silence and returns to it. This longing for silence reflects the recognition of language's inherent limits.[682] In silence, the seeker renounces the illusion of

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[678] See Hirtenstein, 2022, 83–4.

[679] Ibid.

[680] Ibid.

[681] See Keshavarz, 1998, 49.

[682] Ibid., 61.

expressive autonomy, recognizing all voice as divine.[683] Rumi likens humans to a flute, this silent wood that only finds its voice when filled with the divine breath.[684]

Hamzah reflects this mystical silence in his line: *Mengenal Allah dengan bisunya'* (recognizing God through one's muteness). *Bisunya* carries layered meaning: Malay *bisu* (mute), Arabic *bi-* (with), and Sanskrit *śūnya* (void, silence, immateriality[685]). Here, speech dissolves into the ineffable. *Bunyi*, connoting both sound and concealment, leads back to stillness.

In another verse, Hamzah writes:[686]

Laut itulah yang bernama sedia, *Tempatnya* ghāʾib *terlalu sunya,* *Sungguhpun Tuhan yang mahamulia,* *Hampirnya sangat kepada yang mengenal Dia.*	Translation: That Ocean is called the primordial, Its place is unseen, utterly still, Though God is supremely exalted, He is exceedingly near to those who recognize Him.

God's presence is not discovered through distance or conceptual grasp but through unveiled knowing (*kashf*), where absence becomes the very form of nearness.[687]

Hamzah's allusion to the hidden engages with the imagery of camphor from Barus (*kapur barus, Dryobalanops aromatica*), one of the most prized commodities in pre-modern global

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[683] Ibid., 52.

[684] See Feuillebois, n.d., 22.

[685] OJED, online, s.v. *śūnya*.

[686] Poem V, quatrain 14 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 56.

[687] See Ibrahim, 2022, 39, 139–140.

trade. Extracted from the heartwood of solitary trees in the highland jungles of Sumatra's highland jungles, camphor was valued for ritual purity, medicine, and fragrance.[688] Its extraction requires felling the tree, and this act becomes a violent revelation of what lies within.

In Hamzah's idiom, the camphor tree becomes a symbol of mystical transformation. Qurʾan 76:5 describes the drink of the righteous as mixed with *kāfūr*, linking camphor with purity and recompense. In Islamic funerary rites, camphor is used to wash the body, signifying purity at the threshold of return. Ostøanský notes that in Sufi symbolism camphor represents the senses, which must be dissolved to restore primordial purity.[689] Hamzah weaves these resonances into his quatrain, where burnt wood (*kayu hangus*) figures the annihilation of ego, the ocean without currents (*laut tiada berharus*) evokes the undifferentiated stillness of divine unity, and camphor (*kapur barus*) embodies the crystallisation of the soul refined by love.[690]

Al-Attas interprets this as a reference to Ibn 'Arabi's concept of *istiʿdād aṣlī,* which refers to primordial predispositions or potentialities within God's knowledge. To become camphor is to

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[688] The port of Barus in West Sumatra was renowned for producing camphor. For further reading on its cultural, spiritual, and mystical significance, see R. A. Donkin, *Dragon's Brain Perfume: An Historical Geography of Camphor* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), which traces its role in medicine, ritual, and purity symbolism; C.J: Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India.* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2004), which examines its use in Hindu *pūjā* as a symbol of divine purity; and H. Lake, H. J. Kelsall, and H. N. Ridley "The Camphor Tree and Camphor Language of Johore." *JBRAS* 26 (1894): 35–40, with their "Pantang Kapur Vocabulary," in the same issue, 41–56, documenting Southeast Asian indigenous practices where it is valued for its protective and sacred qualities. See also Faizah Zakaria's *The Camphor Tree and the Elephant: Religion and Ecological Change in Maritime Southeast Asia* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2023), which analyses its ecological and religious significance, especially in animist ritual and colonial extraction. Together, these studies highlight camphor's association with purification, transcendence, and spiritual resonance across Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese, and Southeast Asian traditions.

[689] Bronislav Ostøanský, *"The Sufi Journey to the Next World: The Sepulchral Symbolism of Muslim Mystics, Its Context and Interpretations" Archiv orientální* 83, no. 3 (2015): 488. See also Cooper, 1987, 28.

[690] For the full quatrain, see Chapter 4.5.1 (p. 184) of this dissertation.

return to primordial unity, where each entity crystallises its unique potential through divine grace. Camphor thus figures for the seeker's transformation into luminosity, purity, and detachment from worldly dross. The journey leads not outward but inward, into the unmanifest seeds (*aʿyān thābita*) from which all existents emerged.[691]

Fire (*hangus*) and water (*karam*) converge as symbols of annihilation and transformation. From this union comes the fragrant and purified camphor. As mentioned earlier, self-annihilation is not nihilistic erasure but awakening to the truth that one never was apart from the Beloved.

Hamzah writes:[692]

ʿĀshiq *dan* maʿshūq *dari* ʿishqi *rata,* *Pada bilangan* maʿlūmāt *ia tiga nyata,* *Sungguhpun emas berbanyak mata,* *Pada* istiʿdād aṣlī *sekalian esa.*	Translation: The lover and the Beloved are made one in love, In the reckoning of knowables, they appear as three, Though gold displays many grades of purity, Yet in primordial potentiality, all are one.

Thus, the relationship between the lover, the Beloved, and love itself is ultimately returns to the essence (*ʿayn*) of the lover, which is none other than God. God is simultaneously the source of love, the essence of the lover, and the ultimate Beloved. Within this triad, there is nothing but God: He is the lover, the Beloved, and love itself.[693]

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[691] See al-Attas, 1970, 6.

[692] Poem XXVIII, quatrain 4 in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 126.

[693] See Ibrahim discussion of Ibn ʿArabi's analysis of human love for God as presented in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Chapter 178, emphasizing the ultimate goal of love as unifying the lover, beloved, and love itself within the

Love is not only the origin of *wujūd* but also the force that sustains existence, aligning with Ibn ʿArabi's doctrine of perpetual theophany.[694] This triad, the lover (*ʿāshiq*), love (*ʿishq*), and the beloved (*maʿshūq*), mirrors other Sufi metaphysical structures, such as knower, knowledge, and the known (*ʿārif, maʿrifa, maʿrūf*).

In Ibn ʿArabi's metaphysics, each existent has an *ʿayn thābita*, an immutable entity in God's knowledge before creation. In this context, Hamzah's imagery of camphor, dissolution, and annihilation signifies the return of the seeker to their *ʿayn thābita*, which is a state of pure potentiality, where individuality dissolves, and existence is recognized as nothing but a manifestation of divine love.

Having outlined the stages of love in Hamzah's mystical vision, the following chapter explores how his portrayal resonates with, and diverges from, traditional love narratives in Malay literature.

4.7 Comparative reflections: Mystical and courtly love in Malay literature

Hamzah's poetry presents love as a transformative force that transcends personal and societal dimensions, framing it as an individual seeker's path to metaphorical union in God. Malay literary traditions also centre love, particularly in prose narrative (*hikayat*), and poetry (*syair* and *pantun*), though primarily within the sphere of human relationships, social obligations, and emotional experience. While Malay romances and Hamzah's poetry alike emphasize longing

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Divine (2022, 138–39). As Ibrahim explains, for Ibn ʿArabi, human love for God ultimately reflects God's own love, wherein the triad is unified in the divine essence.

[694] See Takács, 2014, 102.

and union, Hamzah redefines love not as worldly fulfilment but as the annihilation of self before God.

A key sensibility in Malay poetic expression is *rasa*, which evokes taste, feeling, and intuition. In poetry, *rasa* shapes both aesthetic refinement and emotional depth.[695] Rather than declaring emotions outright, Malay poets employ layered metaphors, allowing *rasa* to emerge through imagery and suggestion.[696] This sensibility resonates in Hamzah's verse, where metaphor functions as a mode of cognition and unveiling. It serves as initiatory language, at once veiling and disclosing divine reality.

Longing figures prominently in both Hamzah's poetry and early Malay romance. Courtly narratives unfold through narrative phases such as *berita-imbasan* (premonition or first news) and *mengintai* (the first glimpse of the beloved), sustaining anticipation and suspense.[697] The secrecy of first encounters, often mediated by intermediaries, reflects a veiled reality, just as divine truth in Sufi thought remains hidden until the seeker is prepared. In both genres, love entails suffering and rupture. Malay texts speak of *berahi* (passionate desire), *dendam* (yearning), *sakit cinta* (love sickness), and *gila* (madness), [698] echoing the affective intensity of Hamzah's use of *berahi, mabuk,* and *gila*.

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[695] See Noriah, 2006.

[696] Ibid.

[697] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2011.

[698] Ibid.

The *pantun* and *syair* tradition embed *rasa* within poetic structure.[699] The indirectness of *pantun* conveys longing subtly, while *syair* develops narratives of separation and reunion. In *Hikayat Raja Kulawandu*, for example, the hero must endure exile before reuniting with his beloved, underscoring the virtue of perseverance.[700] Hamzah adopts this motif but redirects it toward metaphysical ends: love is a series of inner trials that refine the soul and recover divine proximity.

Unlike the resolution-driven arc of Malay romance, which frequently culminates in *kahwin* (marriage) and *bersanding* (sitting-in-state ceremony),[701] Hamzah's poetry disclaims closure. In *Hikayat Raja Kulawandu*, love leads to marriage, securing lineage and royal authority.[702] In Hamzah, love never achieves fulfilment because the Beloved is beyond possession. Love becomes an existential imperative rather than a social culmination. This aligns with the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, in which longing remains perpetual because Being itself eludes final grasp.[703]

Malay prose and poetry often link love to beauty and virtue, particularly in female characters, whose desirability structures the male protagonist's pursuit. Women are frequently portrayed as prizes to be won, with men proving their worth through trials. In *Hikayat Inderaputera* and *Hikayat Malim Dewa*, the narrative hinges on the hero's perseverance to attain a princess,

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[699] See Noriah, 2006.

[700] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2009.

[701] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2011.

[702] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2009.

[703] See Ibrahim, 2022.

whose beauty and virtue are idealized according to courtly norms.[704] These tales reinforce heteronormative structures of desire and virtue through narrative closure predicated on romantic or dynastic union.

By contrast, Hamzah destabilizes gendered subjectivity. In his poems, identity, including gender, is fluid, and distinctions between lover and Beloved collapse. The *maʿshūq* (Beloved) is God, beyond form and beyond possession. As Shaikh notes in her reading of Ibn ʿArabi, the symbolic fluidity of gender in Sufi discourse gestures towards the metaphysical priority of divine intimacy over binary constructions: 'the lover and the Beloved exchange roles… [and] the gendered pronouns shift and invert' to reflect the soul's transformation through divine love rather than to describe gendered identities.[705] Hamzah's verse performs similar inversions, drawing on Akbarian metaphysics in which divine love transcends dualities. Erotic metaphors are retained but redirected to a mystical register, thereby unsettling the narrative logics of conquest or romantic completion.[706]

His poetic style nevertheless retains affinities with courtly refinement. Terms such as *patut* and *yogia* (suitability and appropriateness)[707] recall the aesthetic codes of earlier Malay literature, where emotion is rarely declared outright and love is inferred through restraint.[708] This restraint

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[704] See Zalila and Jamilah, 1993, 159–60.

[705] See Shaikh 2012, 121–2.

[706] Although this dissertation does not engage directly with the theme of gender in Malay Sufi poetry, and a full gendered analysis lies beyond its scope, the way Hamzah's mystical eros unsettles fixed identities warrants closer attention in future studies of embodiment and voice in the Malay Sufi archive.

[707] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2006; Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2008.

[708] Standard contemporary spelling is *yogia* in *KKBI* and *KDE4*.

is evident in *pantun* and *syair*, where love is conveyed through intuited rather than stated *rasa*.[709] In Hamzah's verse, this aesthetic of reserve mirrors the Sufi emphasis on a direct, affective tasting of the Real that transcends intellectual claim to *dhawq*.

Symbols such as fragrance, water, and birds recur in love poetry, alluding to the fleeting nature of temporal beauty and the intangibility of longing.[710] Hamzah intensifies these motifs, transposing them into a Sufi register. Where a bird once stood for longing in separation, it now embodies the soul's return to its Source. Where water once refreshed the beloved, it now dissolves the self.

Hikayat Panji Semirang and related narratives[711] share structural parallels with Hamzah's vision: disguise, separation, and recognition mark the stages toward union.[712] However, while Malay romances depict the lover's trials as tests of worthiness, Hamzah reinterprets them as stations (*maqāmat*) along the path of radical love. Though he employs the language of romance, the true reward of suffering is not transient union but martyrdom in eternal love. The lover's ultimate prize is self-annihilation where love reaches its highest form, one that demands complete surrender in the presence of the Beloved.

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[709] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2008; Noriah 2006.

[710] See Noriah, 2006.

[711] Malay *Panji* stories are adaptations of Javanese romantic epics that narrate the trials and adventures of noble lovers, particularly Raden Inu Kertapati and Princess Galuh Candra Kirana. Originating from the Majapahit period, these tales blend courtly ideals with elements of disguise, separation, and eventual reunion, symbolizing perseverance and destiny in love. In Malay versions, such as *Hikayat Panji Semirang* and *Hikayat Andaken Penurat*, the narratives were reinterpreted within an Islamic framework, often emphasizing moral virtue and divine intervention while retaining the theme of love's transformative power (Faizah, 2007).

[712] See Faizah, 2007.

A key distinction between Hamzah's poetics and Malay romance lies in the role of fate and supernatural intervention. Many *hikayat* present love as shaped by supernatural prophecy, dreams, or magic.[713] In *Hikayat Malim Dewa*, for instance, a parrot brokers romantic union. In contrast, Hamzah's vision is ontological rather than magical. Love is not dictated by stars (*bintang tujuan*)[714] or disclosed through *hikmat* (magical arts)[715] Instead, he emphasizes self-knowledge and trust in God (*tawakkul*). Love is not orchestrated by demi-gods, spirits, or talismans. It is the structuring force of existence.

In this vision, Malay literary forms are not abandoned but transfigured. The social and emotional codes of romance are retained but emptied of their worldly telos. Hamzah replaces resolution with recurrence. Where the *hikayat* ends with a wedding, Hamzah leaves the reader with a wound. Longing does not cease, because the Beloved remains beyond reach.

Concluding remarks

Part II has analysed how Hamzah Fansuri employs poetic form and lexical strategy to articulate key aspects of Sufi metaphysics. Chapter 3 examined the formal structure of *syair*, showing how Hamzah deploys repetition, rhyme, and parallel phrasing to shape a mode of reading attentive to sound and semantic pattern. Special attention was given to his use of Malay and Arabic lexical pairing, where terms such as *karam* and *bunyi* activate multiple semantic fields. These features are not peripheral but central to how Hamzah communicates mystical insight.

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[713] See Muhammad Haji Salleh, 2009.

[714] For example, '*Jangan kau* muḥtaj*kan bintang tujuan*' in Drewes and Brakel, 1986, 48, Poem III, quatrain 9, line 3.

[715] For example, *'Hikmat dan khayal tinggalkan bapai'* in ibid., 44, Poeom I, quatrain 12, line 1.

His verses organise meaning through patterned movement rather than linear exposition. Motifs such as birds, circles, fire, and water structure this poetic movement and reflect dynamics in the path toward the divine.

Chapter 4 examined Hamzah's treatment of love as the principle underlying both creation and return. Through terms such as *shawq*, *lenyap*, *ʿishq*, *berahi*, and *tahu*, he develops a lexicon in which love is inseparable from longing, annihilation, and knowledge. Metaphors of flame, intoxication, and light articulate shifts in perception and states of nearness or concealment. The chapter also showed how Hamzah's lexical choices draw from earlier Malay literature while extending its meaning through integration with Sufi metaphysical concepts. His language does not simply convey ideas but conditions how the reader encounters them, often through resonance, ambiguity, and repetition.

Together, these chapters demonstrate that Hamzah's poetics are integral to his expression of mystical experience. His formal techniques and symbolic language are not secondary to meaning but part of how meaning is made accessible. Through bilingual diction, rhythmic structure, and metaphor, Hamzah creates a poetic space in which spiritual insight is approached through sound, texture, and layered expression.

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the poetics of love in the work of Hamzah Fansuri, demonstrating that love is not simply a thematic motif but the structuring principle of his metaphysical vision. Love mediates the self's journey from its ontological origin in divine being (*wujūd*), through annihilation (*fanāʾ*), to the realization of Oneness transcending multiplicity. Hamzah presents this culmination as the ceaseless *wiṣāl* of radical love, a state in which only the One remains. This teleology reflects a metaphysical singularity, rooted in the *ḥadīth* of the Hidden Treasure, rather than any sense of emotional closure. Hamzah's poetics therefore discloses love as the very mode by which Being manifests, veils, and reveals Himself.

Through close textual analysis, lexical comparison, and intertextual engagement, this study has shown that Hamzah articulates a distinctively Malay formulation of Akbarian Sufi metaphysics. His plurilingual idiom, shaped primarily of Malay and Arabic with traces of Persian and Sanskrit, serves as a performative medium for mystical ontology. Poetic sound, metaphor, and structural repetition are at once aesthetic and epistemic, functioning as instruments of knowledge. In enacting what they express, they draw the reader into both the affective and cognitive registers of the mystical path.

5.1 Addressing the research questions

The study was guided by four central questions, each of which has been addressed through the preceding chapters.

The first concerned the portrayal of love in Hamzah's writings. Love emerges as both origin and telos. It is the force of creation, the annihilation of selfhood, and the mode of knowing by

which divine reality is unveiled. It encompasses and exceeds human passion, manifesting as the creative and annihilating power of Being itself.

The second question concerned the defining features of Hamzah's poetic language of love. His plurilingual diction fuses Malay with Arabic, generating semantic depth through enantiosemy, layered wordplay, and resonance. Poetic form and texture marked by rhyme, rhythm, and recursive structure are integral to meaning-making, producing a poetics that enacts mystical pedagogy.

The third question examined the metaphors and symbols through which Hamzah expresses love. Images of the ocean, fire, light, wine, and camphor articulate paradoxes of longing, concealment, and disclosure. Pre-Islamic cosmological symbols such as *gajah mina*, and *ular cintamani* are reoriented within an Islamic grammar of Being, exemplifying symbolic transposition rather than syncretism.

Finally, the study asked how love functions to unify mystical and metaphysical thought. Love emerges as the principle of integration, bringing together ontology (Being as love's origin), epistemology (knowledge through affective tasting of *rasa/dhawq*) in relation to *maʿrifa*), and language (poetry as enactment). Hamzah's metaphysics of love articulates the relation of self to God, word to meaning, and form to reality. These relations are expressed through dynamics of unveiling and concealment, by which the seeker comes to a deeper recognition of divine presence.

These findings were elaborated in the preceding chapters: Chapter 2 re-situated Hamzah's intellectual biography within a transregional Sufi network, supporting an earlier dating of his activity and tracing his reception history; Chapter 3 analysed the formal and sonic structures

of his verse, showing how *syair* and *pantun* were adapted for metaphysical articulation; Chapter 4 developed a typology of love across three registers—ontological, transformative, and experiential—each interwoven with a lexical-symbolic stratum expressed through plurilingual wordplay and symbolic imagery.

5.2 Contributions of the study

This dissertation contributes to Malay literary history, comparative Sufi poetics, and Islamic intellectual traditions through five main interventions:

i. **Typology of love**: It develops the first sustained typology of love in Hamzah's corpus, identifying three registers, namely ontological, transformative, and experiential. Each interwoven with a lexical-symbolic stratum through which mystical love is expressed and enacted.

ii. **Semantic field of love**: It reconstructs the semantic field of Hamzah's love lexicon in relation to the broader Malay literary archive, using Malay Concordance Project data to map innovations and continuities.

iii. **Poetic form as metaphysical pedagogy**: It demonstrates that Hamzah's poetic form is integral to his metaphysical vision. Through syntax, rhythm, sonic texture, and metaphor, his verse enacts mystical truths and draws the reader into a contemplative mode of learning. This performative pedagogy is intertextually grounded in Qurʾanic language, the Akbarian tradition, and the longstanding hermeneutics of Sufi texts, which Hamzah reconfigures within a distinctively Malay idiom.

iv. **Interlingual translation as mystical articulation:** It reframes the translation of Arabic Sufi terminology into Malay as a form of linguistic hospitality[716] and performative translation[717] in which the dissonance between languages is preserved and made productive. Hamzah's poetics welcomes the foreign while reconfiguring it within Malay, turning interlingual tension into a site of mystical articulation where meaning emerges through the play of languages.

v. **Symbolic transposition:** It introduces the concept of symbolic transposition to explain how Hamzah reoriented select pre-Islamic motifs toward an Islamic metaphysics of Being and love, without collapsing into syncretism.

Together, these interventions confirm the central claim: that Hamzah's poetry is a literary enactment of Sufi metaphysics, in which love, self-annihilation, and divine singularity are rendered affectively real and imaginatively accessible.

5.3 Limitations

The scope of the study is textual and hermeneutic. It does not provide a critical edition of Hamzah's corpus, nor a codicological analysis of manuscript transmission. While it considers key manuscript variants and contexts, it does not systematically trace redactional layers or scribal practices. Furthermore, comparative engagement with other Malay, Javanese, or Persian mystical authors remains limited. The study also brackets other approaches, such as cognitive poetics, anthropology of language, or materialist historiography, that could illuminate the

[716] See Ricoeur, 2006, 10.

[717] See Wilson, 2024, 142–43.

reception, circulation, or performative aspects of Hamzah's poetry. These exclusions are delimitations of focus, not oversights. They reflect a methodological commitment to examining Hamzah's metaphysical poetics as a primary mode of knowing, while leaving open other interpretive avenues for future work.

5.4 Future research

Several directions for future research emerge from this study.

First, comparative poetics offers fertile ground for deepening the analysis. A multilingual comparison between Hamzah and mystical poets regionally or beyond could shed light on how metaphor, rhythm, and paradox mediate divine love across distinct but structurally resonant literary systems. Such a comparison would help to situate Hamzah's innovations within a broader ecology of mystical poetics.

Second, Hamzah's reconfiguration of Arabic terms in Malay invites analysis through the lens of linguistic anthropology and translation studies. Here, translation is not equivalence but metaphysical innovation. Examining his language as cultural translation and world-making could show how Malay became a vehicle for universal metaphysical reflection while retaining its own poetic particularity.

Third, the history of emotions provides another avenue. Studying affective terms such as *berahi*, *kasih, saying, cinta, gila*, and *mabuk* as epistemological devices in early Malay Islamic writing could illuminate how emotion itself functioned as a mode of knowing in mystical discourse.

Finally, Hamzah's paradoxical and performative idiom could be situated within global conversations on the philosophy of language and symbolic logic. Engaging his poetics with broader debates on ontology and linguistic disclosure would underscore his relevance to contemporary discussions of how language mediates reality.

These directions affirm that Hamzah's work speaks beyond its immediate literary and historical context. His poetics of love offers a gateway to thinking through non-Western metaphysical traditions and the linguistic mediation of spiritual knowledge.

5.5 Final reflection

Hamzah Fansuri's writings emerged circa the mid-15th century and continued into the early 16th century at the intersection of the localization of Akbarian metaphysics, the development of Malay manuscript culture, and the circulation of Sufi networks across the Indian Ocean and Red Sea. Moving within these transoceanic circuits that linked maritime Southeast Asia with South Asia, Yemen, and the Ḥijaz,[718] Hamzah encountered theological and literary currents shaped by Persianate, Arab, and wider Indian Ocean traditions, amid the shifting geopolitics of the Ottoman ascendancy and the encroaching presence of Portuguese power in Melaka. Within this mobile and plural intellectual world, he crafted a poetics rooted in Malay *syair* and *pantun*, while articulating a metaphysical vision of universal scope.

His verse integrates speculative reflection with experiential insight performed through metaphor, rhythm, and plurilingual resonance. By embedding Sufi metaphysics in Malay poetic

[718] See Feener and Laffan, 2005.

form, Hamzah expanded the language's capacity for ontological and affective inquiry. His poetry both expresses mystical experience and enacts the paradoxes of love. It stages the self-annihilation that yields self-knowledge and the dissolution of duality into divine singularity.

Though posthumously condemned in 17th-century Aceh, Hamzah's legacy persists, not institutionally as he founded no *ṭarīqa*, but interpretively. Modern Indonesian and Malaysian writers have reclaimed him as a voice of resistance and renewal. Works such as *Cinta Fansuri*, *Takdir-Takdir Fansuri*, and *Kias Fansuri* draw on his idiom to critique doctrinal rigidity and to reimagine spiritual language for postcolonial modernity. In the 1970s, Abdul Hadi W.M. situated Hamzah at the origins of *sastra sufistik*, a literary tendency that he himself helped pioneer together with fellow poets such as Sutardji Calzoum Bachri and Danarto.

Hamzah's legacy is not a closed system but an open daring. His poetry endures not by smoothing over mystical paradoxes, but by sustaining them as productive sites of reflection and unveiling. It invites each generation into the tasting (*dhawq, rasa*) of what lies beyond language.

SELECTED GLOSSARY

adab — Ethical comportment or spiritual courtesy; in Sufism, the inner discipline and proper conduct toward God, the shaykh, and fellow seekers.

ʿadam — Non-existence; the metaphysical state of everything other than God. In Akbarian thought, creation has no independent reality but subsists through divine Being (*wujūd*).

Akbarian — Refers to the school of thought derived from the teachings of Ibn ʿArabi (d. 1240), known as *Shaykh al-Akbar* (the Greatest Shaykh), noted for their writings on *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Oneness of Being), divine self-disclosure (*tajallī*), and metaphysical unity.

ʿārif (pl. *ʿārifīn*) — Gnostic or knower of God; one who attains *maʿrifa* through experiential, unveiled knowledge of the Divine. *See also: maʿrifa.*

baqāʾ — Subsistence in God; the state that follows *fanāʾ*, in which the seeker endures through divine attributes. Hamzah conveys this through the imagery of *karam* (drowning, generosity) and *timbul* (surfacing). *See also: karam; timbul*.

barzakh — Interface and limit; in the Qurʾan, a barrier between two seas (Q.25:53; Q.55:19–20) or between death and resurrection (Q.23:100). In Ibn ʿArabi's metaphysics, the *barzakh* is a paradoxical reality that both separates and unites: it meets both sides with the same essence, serving as the interface between opposites such as finite and infinite, manifest (*ẓāhir*) and hidden (*bāṭin*). It is known but not perceived, the imaginal threshold where God's self-disclosure relates creation to the Real.

berahi — Radical love; intense, passionate longing that burns away the ego. In Hamzah's usage, it marks the highest station of love. *See also; ʿishq.*

bertemu — Meeting; in a mystical register, connotes *waṣl* or *wiṣāl*, the arrival or connection between the seeker and the Beloved. *See also: waṣl; wāṣil.*

dhāt — The divine Essence; utterly unknowable and transcendent. In Akbarian thought, only God's attributes are manifest, while His Essence remains in absolute non-manifestation, beyond all knowledge or conceptualization.

dhawq — 'Direct tasting' of the true realities behind the appearances, distinct from discursive reasoning. Without direct tasting there can be no gnosis. *See also: rasa; maʿrifa.*

fanāʾ — Annihilation or effacement; the extinction of ego-self that prepares the seeker for subsistence in God (*baqāʾ*). In Hamzah's Malay poetics it is rendered as *lenyap, hapus, hangus*. *See also: baqāʾ; karam; timbul.*

faqīr — A seeker who realizes their ontological poverty before God; one who, in renouncing all claims to independent existence, abides in complete dependence upon the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*).

ḥadīth (pl. aḥādīth) — Reports of the sayings, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad, constituting a primary source of guidance in Islamic law, theology, and ethics.

ḥadīth qudsī — A divine saying transmitted through the Prophet Muḥammad that conveys God's speech outside the Qurʾan. Often central in Sufi discourse.

al-Ḥaqq — The True or the Real; one of the divine names of God (*asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*), signifying ultimate Reality.

ḥubb — Pure, constant love; considered by Ibn ʿArabi the most elevated form of love. Derived from *ḥabbah* (seed), it conveys steadfastness, loyalty, and enduring affection. Distinguished from *ʿishq*, which denotes its overflowing intensity. *See also: kasih; ʿishq*.

ḥulūl — Incarnation or indwelling; the notion of God residing in a created being. In Akbarian metaphysics this view is rejected, since divine presence is understood instead through *tajallī* (self-disclosure). *See also: tajallī.*

ʿishq — Radical, passionate love; a consuming force that annihilates the ego and draws the seeker toward *waṣl* with the Beloved. Like a bindweed that entwines and conceals its support, it signifies love's overwhelming and transformative power. Often described as the excess of

ḥubb, it blinds the lover to all but the Beloved. In Hamzah's poetics, rendered in Malay as *berahi*. *See also: berahi; ḥubb; waṣl; wāṣil.*

ithbāt — Affirmation; the second half of the *shahāda* (*illā Allāh*), following *nafī* (*lā ilāha*). In Sufi usage, it signifies affirmation after negation: the realization of divine Oneness after the effacement of illusion. It also connotes constancy in remembrance, presence, and worship (*ʿibāda*). *See also: nafī.*

ittiḥād — Union, unification; literally the coming together of two things. In theology it is often deemed heretical, as it implies two independent beings and thus contradicts *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Oneness of Being), which affirms that only God truly exists.

junūn — Mystical madness; spiritual ecstasy so overwhelming it disrupts conventional perception. Often associated with divine intoxication (*sukr*).

kashf — The lifting of veils, an unveiling; a direct experience beyond rational inference in which God discloses divine reality to the seeker's heart. It unites knowledge and love, deepening recognition and intensifying yearning for God. *See also: dhawq; maʿrifa*,

kasih — Tender or constant love; a Malay analogue to *ḥubb*, conveying steadiness and affective care.

kekasih — Beloved or divine beloved; Malay equivalent of *maʿshūq* or *maḥbūb*, the object of love.

maʿrifa — Mystical knowledge of God; knowledge through direct recognition, beyond discursive learning. In Hamzah's poetics, often paired with *berahi* (ʿishq), indicating that only radical love can open the way to true recognition. *See also: ʿārif; kashf; dhawq.*

maʿshūq — The passionately loved; in Sufi and Persianate usage, the Beloved as the object of *ʿishq* (radical love). Often synonymous with *maḥbūb*. In Hamzah's poetics, rendered in Malay as *kekasih*. *See also: maḥbūb; kekasih.*

mabuk — Intoxication; being overwhelmed by divine presence, often experienced as ecstatic disorientation. Malay equivalent of *sukr*.

maḥbūb — Beloved; the one who is loved. In Sufism, typically refers to God as the ultimate object of longing. *See also: maʿshūq; kekasih*.

maqām (pl. ***maqāmāt***) — Spiritual station attained through discipline and effort, each to be perfected before progressing further. Distinguished from temporary states (*aḥwāl*). *See also: sulūk.*

nafī — Negation; the first step in *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, clearing the heart of all except God. *See also: ithbāt.*

nafs — The soul or self. In Hamzah's usage it denotes layered dimensions: the ego-bound lower self (*nafs al-ammāra*), the perfected self (*nafs al-kāmila*), and the divine Self (*nafs al-ḥaqq*). The Malay *diri* parallels *nafs* as 'self,' while *rūḥ* is rendered as 'spirit.'

padang — (Mal./OJv.) An open plain, treeless expanse, or luminous field. In Hamzah's poetics it functions as a *maẓhar* (locus of divine manifestation), a site of radiance and trial where divine presence is disclosed. *See also: tajallī.*

rasa — (Mal.) tasting, sensing, feeling, and perceiving; spiritual tasting or intuitive recognition, akin to *dhawq*.

sālik — Wayfarer; one who journeys along the Sufi path (*ṭarīqa*) toward realization of the divine.

sayang — Care and attachment; a tender form of love marked by emotional intimacy and protectiveness. In Hamzah's poetics, often negated ('*jangan sayang*') to signify the total surrender of selfhood required on the path of love.

sharīʿa — Islamic revealed law; the outer discipline within which the Sufi path unfolds. Distinguished from *ṭarīqa* and *ḥaqīqa*.

shawq — Yearning; love intensified by absence, often producing movement and transformation in the seeker.

sukr — Intoxication; ecstatic absorption in divine presence, marked by the loss of ordinary awareness. *See also: mabuk*.

sulūk — Spiritual wayfaring; the structured process of advancement through spiritual stations and states. *See also: maqam.*

tajallī — Theophany; divine self-disclosure. Central to Akbarian metaphysics as the means by which the divine becomes manifest. *See also: padang.*

tanzīh — Transcendence; the affirmation of God's absolute incomparability to creation. *See also: tashbīh.*

ṭarīqa — Path; a Sufi order or spiritual method guiding the seeker toward union with the divine.

tashbīh — Immanence; the resemblance or nearness of God to creation. Held in dialectical balance with *tanzīh*.

tawḥīd — Oneness of God; in Akbarian thought, the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), wherein only God truly exists and creation is His self-disclosure.

waḥdat al-wujūd — Oneness of Being; the metaphysical doctrine that all existence is unified in God. A central tenet of Akbarian thought.

waḥm — Estimation; mental representation or illusion. Contrasted with *khayāl*, the divine imagination.

wāṣil (pl. ***wāṣilūn, wāṣilīn***) — One who has arrived or attained mystical proximity; the seeker who reaches *waṣl* through *fanāʾ* and *baqāʾ*.

waṣl, wiṣāl — Union or arrival; the mystical connection of the lover with the Beloved. Malay equivalent: *bertemu*.

wujūd — Being or existence; in Akbarian metaphysics, true Being belongs only to God, while creation exists contingently through divine self-disclosure.

APPENDIX: CITED QUATRAINS OF HAMZAH FANSURI'S POEMS

Poem	**Quatrain, Lines (L.)**	**Incipit (first line)**	**Reference** Drewes and Brakel (1986)
I	6, L.4–5	*Qurʿān itu ambil akan dalīl*	Drewes and Brakel 1986, 42
I	13	*Hamzah nin asalnya Fansūrī*	Ibid., 44
II	7, L.1–2	*Jika telah kau turut sharīʿatnya*	Ibid., 46
II	14, L.3–4	*Aho segala kamu yang berhati*	Ibid., 46
II	15, L.2	*Hamzah Fansuri anak dagang*	Ibid., 46
III	2	*Kalām itu datangnya daripada Maʿshūq*	Ibid., 48
III	5	*Jika kau dapat haqīqat liqā'*	Ibid., 48
III	10, L.2	*Pada cahaya dan maqam tiada di sana amar*	Ibid., 50
III	11	*Sabda Allah pada sekalian sālikūn*	Ibid., 50
III	12, L.2	*Man ʿarafa nafsaha, sabda baginda rasul*	Ibid., 50
III	13	*Lī maʿa ʾllāhi waqtun qāla sayyid Aḥmad*	Ibid., 50
III	17, L.3–4	*Hamzah Fansuri terlalu murah*	Ibid., 50
IV	8	*Cahaya atharnya tiadakan padam*	Ibid., 52
IV	11	*Jikalau sini kamu tahu akan wujūd*	Ibid., 52
IV	13	*Jika belum tetap engkau seperti batu*	Ibid., 54
V	6	*Wa-huwa maʿa-kum inilah maʿnanya dalam*	Ibid., 56
V	7	*Man ʿarafa nafsahu ḥadīth daripada nabī*	Ibid., 56
V	10, L.1–2	*Ketahui olehmu hai anak dagang*	Ibid., 56
V	14, L. 4	*Laut itulah yang bernama sedia*	Ibid., 56
VI	7	*Arti ʿqāb qawsayn aw adnāʾ*	Ibid., 58
VI	8	*Qāb qawsayn itu suatu tamthīl*	Ibid., 58
VI	9	*Qāb qawsayn itu seperti kandang*	Ibid., 58
VI	14, L.2	*Tuhan kita itu Bernama Mujīb*	Ibid., 60
VII	1	*Aho! segala kita ummat rasūl*	Ibid., 60
VII	5, L.1–2	*Jika sungguh kamu sekalian ṭālibūn*	Ibid., 62
VII	8, L.4	*Kata ini daripada Naṣīḥat al-walad*	Ibid., 62
VII	17	*Hamzah gharīb terlalu miskīn*	Ibid., 64
VIII	2	*Maʿrifat itulah yang terlalu ʿajīb*	Ibid., 64
VIII	13, L.1–2	*Rahasia itu daripada khātim al-nabiyyīn*	Ibid., 66
IX	1	*Aho segala kamu yang ghāfilīn*	Ibid., 68

IX	9, L.3–4	*Ḥadīth ini daripada Nabī al-ḥabīb*	Ibid., 68
IX	14	*Takabbur dan ghurūr kerja shayṭānī*	Ibid., 70
X	2, L.4	*Menjadikan ʿālam dari al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*	Ibid., 70
X	4	*Raḥmān itulah yang bernama wujūd*	Ibid., 72
X	11, L.1	*Kenal dirimu hai anak ʿālim*	Ibid., 72
X	13	*Kullu man ʿalay-hā fānin āyat min Rabbihi*	Ibid., 72
X	14, L.1	*Situlah wujūd sekalian fanūn*	Ibid., 74
X	15, L.1	*Hamzah gharīb unggas quddūsī*	Ibid., 74
XI	2	*Membawa āyat inna Allāha yuḥibbu al-mutawakkilīn*	Ibid., 74
XII	10	*Rupa yang jadīd itu asalnya khayālāt*	Ibid., 78
XIII	8	*Wa-huwa maʿa-kum dengarkan pulang*	Ibid., 82
XIII	10	*Huwa al-awwalu wa al-ākhiru akan namanya*	Ibid., 82
XIII	15	*Sabda Rasulullah nabi kamu*	Ibid., 82
XIII	16	*Kata Bā Yazīd terlalu ʿālī*	Ibid., 82
XIII	17	*Kata Manṣūr penghulu ʿāshiq*	Ibid., 82
XIII	18	*Dengarkan oleh mu hai orang kāmil*	Ibid., 84
XIII	19	*Hamzah Fansuri terlalu karam*	Ibid., 84
XIV	3	*Bersunting bunga lagi bermalai*	Ibid., 84
XIV	6, L.1–2	*Jika sungguh kau ʿāshiq dan mabuk*	Ibid., 84
XIV	7, L.3–4	*Berjalan engkau rajin-rajin*	Ibid., 84
XIV	8, L.3–4	*Berahimu dāʾim akan orang kaya*	Ibid., 86
XIV	12, L.3–4	*Dunia nin jangan kau taruh*	Ibid., 86

XIV	13	*Hamzah miskin hina dan karam*	Ibid., 86
XV	7 L.3	*Anggamu itu asalnya ṭāhir*	Ibid., 88
XV	8	*Hunuskan mata tunukan sarung*	Ibid., 88
XV	9	*Rupanya ẓāhir kau sangka tanah*	Ibid., 88
XV	13	*Hamzah Shahrnawi ẓāhirnya Jāwī*	Ibid., 88
XVI	15	*Hamzah Fansuri sedia ẓāhir*	Ibid., 92
XVII	6	*Berdakap jangan kepalang*	Ibid., 94
XVII	8	*Rumahnya bertukar-tukar*	Ibid., 94
XVII	11	*Campurkan yang empat ʿālam*	Ibid., 94
XVII	112, L.3	*Dengarkan hai anak dagang*	Ibid., 94
XVII	15, L.2	*Hamzah nin ilmunya ẓāhir*	Ibid., 96
XVIII	1	*Raja Ḥaqq dengan adanya*	Ibid., 96
XVIII	6	*Sekali muda dan sopan*	Ibid., 96
XVIII	7	*Sekali menjadi ṣūfī*	Ibid., 96
XVIII	8	*Sekali pandai dan utus*	Ibid., 98
XVIII	9	*Sekali menjadi dagang*	Ibid., 98
XVIII	10	*Sekali bernama guruh*	Ibid., 98
XVIII	11	*Sekali menjadi qurbān*	Ibid., 98
XVIII	12	*Sekali menjadi ṭālib*	Ibid., 98
XIX	1	*Shurbat mulia dari tangan khāliq*	Ibid., 98
XIX	2, L.3	*Shurbat itu terlalz nyaman*	Ibid., 100
XIX	6, L.1–2	*Yogya kau tuntut pada shaykh al-ʿālim*	Ibid., 100
XIX	9, L.2	*Yogya kau tuntut shurbat yang bāqī*	Ibid., 100

XIX	11, L.1–2	*Hapuskan hendak sekalian laut*	Ibid., 100
XX	8	*Kekasih itu hendakkan nyawa*	Ibid., 104
XX	14, L.1–2	*Kata ini tamthīl dan pantun*	Ibid., 104
XXI,	3, L.4	*Minuman itu terlalu masak habis (khālis)*	Ibid., 106
XXII	2	*Kenal dirimu hai anak jamu*	Ibid., 108
XXII	13	*Hamzah miskin orang ʿuryānī*	Ibid., 106
XXIII	9, L.3–4	*Fawq al-markab yogya kau jālis*	Ibid., 112
XXIII	10	*Jika hendak engkau menjeling sawang*	Ibid., 112
XXIV	6	*Kitāb Allāh dipersandangnya*	Ibid., 114
XXIV	7, L.3–4	*Dhikr Allah kiri kanannya*	Ibid., 114
XXIV	15, L.3–4	*Tuhan kita itu yang [em]punya ʿālam*	Ibid., 116
XXV	3, L.3–4	*Sungai itu terlalu ʿālī*	Ibid., 118
XXV	12, L.3–4	*Kerjamu itu hai anak dagang*	Ibid., 118
XXVI	3, L.1	*Maẓhar Allah akan rupanya*	Ibid., 120
XXVI	11	*Sharīʿat akan tirainya*	Ibid., 122
XXVI	15	*Unggas pingai bukannya balam*	Ibid., 122
XXVIII	4	*ʿĀshiq dan maʿshūq dari ʿishqi rata,*	Ibid., 126
XXIX	2	*Kuntu kanzan mulanya nyata*	Ibid., 128
XXIX	3	*Dhāt dan sifāt bersama-sama*	Ibid., 130
XXIX	9, L.4	*Mūtū qabla an tamūtū*	Ibid., 130
XXIX	14, L.1	*Laut akbar tiada bersisi*	Ibid., 132
XXX	14, L.2	*Tuntuti laut yang bāqī*	Ibid., 136
XXX	16	*Hamzah nin jangan kau cahari*	Ibid., 136

XXXI	12	*Jalan mūtū yogia kau pakai*	Ibid., 138
XXXII	5	*Ādam ṣūfī diharu shayṭān*	Ibid., 140
XXXII	8, L.1–2	*Gajah mina terdāʾir-dāʾir*	Ibid., 140
XXXII	12	*Gajah mina terlalu wāṣil*	Ibid., 142
XXXII	13	*Hamzah Shahrnawi terlalu hapus*	Ibid., 142

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