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**JĀMĪ AND IBN ‘ARABĪ:
KHĀTAM AL-SHU‘ARĀ’ AND KHĀTAM AL-AWLIYĀ’**

Abundantly praised as a poet in his own lifetime and beyond, ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī earned designation by Persian anthologists as *khātam al-shu‘arā’*, “the Seal of the Poets.” This phrase has often been taken to mean that he was “the last of the great classical poets,” a judgement that is certainly open to question.¹ The title, “Seal of the Poets,” is nonetheless deserved as suggestive of Jāmī’s achievement in creating a summation of the traditions of Persian verse, by way of the skilled imitation of his predecessors and all the praise that implied; one function of a “seal” is, after all, the bestowal of authoritative approval.² This was in itself no mean achievement. At the same time, Jāmī’s vast poetic output is said to have served as a veil for the inward states that resulted from his engagement with Sufism. And at the heart of that engagement lay a profound and absolute devotion to another “seal,” Ibn ‘Arabī, *khātam al-awliyā’*, “the Seal of the Saints.”

I

Jāmī prided himself on being an autodidact, once proclaiming that the only teacher he ever had was his father, who had taught him how to read and write and the basics of Arabic. This claim is arrogant as well as exaggerated, for it suggests that his formal studies in Herat and Samarqand counted for nothing in his eyes. With respect, however, to Ibn ‘Arabī and his works, it appears that Jāmī

¹ Precisely when that appellation arose is unclear; it may have been as late as the neo-classical period of Qajar times known as *bāz-gasht* (“return”); see Najīb Māyil Hiravī, *Jāmī* (Tehran, 1377 Sh./1998), pp. 132–133. On Jāmī as “the last great classical poet,” see Dhabīḥullāh Šafā, *Tārīkh-i Adabiyāt-i Fārsī* (Tehran, 1346 Sh./1977), IV, p. 360; and A.J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature* (London, 1958), p. 425. E.G. Browne, however, explicitly declines “to regard him as the ‘last great classical poet of Persia’”; see his *Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge, 1964), III, p. 548.

² Jāmī reviews his predecessors in the seventh section of the *Bahārīstān*, ed. Ismā‘īl Ḥākīmī (Tehran, 1367 Sh./1988), pp. 89–109.

was indeed self-taught, driven by personal inclination rather than instruction. His studies first at the Nizāmiya madrasa in Herat and then at the Madrasa-yi Dilkash in the eastern part of the city were restricted to the sciences of the Arabic language and literature (*‘ulūm-i ‘arabiyyat*) and to *kalām*; his principal instructor in the latter field was Mawlānā Muḥammad Jājarmī, a pupil of Sa‘d ad-Dīn Taftāzānī who, far from endorsing the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī, had criticized certain of their aspects. Such was the precocious talent of Jāmī that, it is said, Jājarmī threw up his hands in despair at being unable to benefit so brilliant a student, and Jāmī proceeded to study by himself subjects beyond the *madrasa* curriculum, most importantly the concepts of Ibn ‘Arabī.³

This was no mean undertaking, even for such a gifted and industrious scholar as Jāmī. According to his own confession, he struggled unsuccessfully for ten or fifteen years to understand correctly certain of Ibn ‘Arabī’s writings, and for a while even entertained doubts on the key Akbarī concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.⁴ When, however, he encountered it in the utterances of Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/1419), he recalls, “my mind was freed from the shackles of anxiety and rushed to embrace this teaching.”⁵ This trust in Pārsā was due perhaps to the blessings he had received from him as a child when he was passing through Jām on his way to the Hajj in the year of his death. As for the reassuring utterances, they were presumably those Jāmī assembled in a brief treatise entitled *Sukhanān-i Khwāja Pārsā*.⁶

Far more substantial guidance was available in the works of Ibn ‘Arabī’s foremost pupil, Ṣadr ad-Dīn Qunavī (d. 673/1234); Jāmī’s disciple, ‘Abd al-Ghafūr Lārī (d. 912/1506), reports that once he embarked on their study, matters began to be clarified for him more fully. Again according to Lārī, Jāmī once vowed that “if this gate be opened for me, I will expound the meanings intended by this group [the Sufis of Ibn ‘Arabī’s school] in such a way that people will easily understand him.”⁷

Jāmī’s effort to understand Akbarī teachings as a prelude to expounding them was evidently long-lasting and not restricted to textual study, for on more than one recorded occasion he sought enlightenment on the subject from others. Foremost among those he consulted was the pre-eminent Naqshbandī shaykh of the age, Khwāja ‘Ubaydullāh Aḥrār (d. 895/1490), who resided primarily in Samarqand. Although Aḥrār was some twelve years senior to Jāmī, the two men

³ On Jāmī’s early life, see Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Alī Kāshifī, *Rashaḥāt-i ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt*, ed. ‘Alī Aṣghar Mu‘īniān (Tehran, 2536/1977), I, pp. 235–239.

⁴ ‘Abd al-Vāsi‘ Nizāmī Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt-i Jāmī*, ed. Najīb Māyil Hiravī (Tehran, 1371 Sh./1992), p. 90.

⁵ ‘Abd al-Ghafūr Lārī, *Takmila-yi Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, ed. Bashīr Hiravī (Kabul, 1343 Sh./1964), p. 17.

⁶ Text in “Quelques Traités Naqshbandīs,” ed. Marijan Molé, *Farhang-i Īrān-Zamīn*, 6 (1958), pp. 294–303.

⁷ Lārī, *Takmila-yi Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, p. 17.

seem to have regarded each other as equals; it is said that they guided and sought guidance (*irshād va istirshād*) from each other whenever they met.⁸ On the occasion of their fourth and last meeting, which took place at Tashkent in 884/1479 and stretched over fifteen days, Jāmī requested Aḥrār's help in understanding a problematic passage in Ibn 'Arabi's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, for, he confessed, study and reflection on his part had proved inadequate. Aḥrār thereupon ordered one of his close followers, Mawlānā Abū Sa'īd Ūbahī, to bring a copy of the *Futūḥāt* to the assembly, and Jāmī read aloud the passage in question. But instead of commenting on it forthwith, Aḥrār had the volume laid aside while he spoke on certain preliminary matters in a discourse full of "wondrous and remarkable utterances" (*sukhanān-i 'ajīb va gharīb*). When the book was opened again, the previously difficult passage was seen to be limpidly clear.⁹

It was in connection with Ibn 'Arabi's best known and most studied work, the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, that Jāmī corresponded with another contemporary Sufi, Amīr Aḥmad Bāb al-Abvābī (= Darbandī) Lāla of Tabriz (d. 947/1540), an adherent of the Dhahabī offshoot of the Kubraviyya. Like Jāmī, Lāla had encountered a number of difficulties in the text that none of its commentators had been able to solve, difficulties that Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turka (fl. 7th/13th cent.) was wont to describe as "the Mongolisms (*mughūlīhā*)" of Ibn 'Arabi.¹⁰ But Lāla persevered, weeping and wailing through the night as he continued to pore over the work. He was rewarded by a vision in which Ibn 'Arabi appeared to him in person to solve all the difficulties that were plaguing him. Tempted to divulge the inspiration he had thus received, Lāla considered writing his own commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, but he desisted, regarding concealment as the wiser course.¹¹ Jāmī made Lāla's acquaintance in 878/1473 while travelling through Azerbaijan on his way back from the Hajj. They instantly formed a bond of mutual affection so strong that Jāmī proclaimed that had he not met Lāla, his whole journey would have suffered a serious defect. For his part, Lāla presented Jāmī with one of his treatises, and he responded by inscribing in the volume three extemporaneous lines of laudatory verse. After Jāmī's return to Herat, they continued to correspond with each other, at least sporadically. In 896/1491, Jāmī wrote once more to Lāla, fulsomely praising him as one whose inner being acted as treasurer for the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (*bā'īnat khāzin-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*). He had completed the rough copy of his own commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* and was engaged in finalizing the text, a procedure he

⁸ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt-i Jāmī*, p. 115.

⁹ Kāshifī, *Rashaḥāt-i 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt*, I, pp. 249–250. This account does not specify which among the numerous problematic passages in the *Futūḥāt* was at issue and how Aḥrār resolved them with his introductory lecture.

¹⁰ By "Mongolisms," Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turka presumably meant "phrases or terms harshly yielding of meaning."

¹¹ Ḥāfiẓ Ḥusayn Karbalā'ī Tabrīzī (Ibn al-Karbalā'ī), *Rauḍāt al-Jinān va Jannāt al-Janān*, ed. Ja'far Sulṭān-al-Qurrā'ī (Tehran, 1349 Sh./1970), II, p. 153.

hoped soon to finish. He would then send Lāla a copy, presumably for him to evaluate.¹² Whether the book was actually delivered, and what estimate Lāla may have formed of its contents, is unknown.¹³

Despite Jāmī’s lifelong efforts fully to grasp the ideas and concepts of Ibn ‘Arabī, it seems that the gate of comprehension was never fully opened for him. For he once proclaimed that insofar as his understanding could encompass the words of the Shaykh al-Akbar, he became fully convinced of their truth; and insofar as his efforts fell short, he blamed himself for his inability to draw forth their meanings from the veil of concealment, while remaining utterly certain of their veracity.¹⁴ It is perhaps this profession of unconditional faith in Ibn ‘Arabī, which might reasonably be called a form of *taqlīd*, that bears witness to the depth of Jāmī’s devotion, even more than the writings we shall shortly review.

¹² Ibn al-Karbālā’ī, *Rauḍāt al-Jinān va Jannāt al-Janān*, II, pp. 149–150; Nūr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī, *Risāla-yi Munsha‘āt*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Alī Nūr Aḥrārī (Turbat-i Jām, 1383 Sh./2004), p. 184.

¹³ In his biography of Jāmī, Najīb Māyil Hiravī concludes from Jāmī’s promise to send Lāla a copy of his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* that at this relatively late point in his life, he still lacked real expertise in Akbarī matters and therefore turned to a scholar and Sufī with greater qualifications than his own (*‘Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī* [Tehran, 1377 Sh./1998], pp. 270–272). This cannot in any way be deduced from the sources Hiravī cites. It is at least equally plausible that Jāmī should have sent Lāla a copy of his work simply as a gesture of friendship and collegial respect. In addition, Lāla’s credentials can hardly be measured, given his decision to deprive posterity of the visionary enlightenment he received from Ibn ‘Arabī. Hiravī’s account of the matter seems inspired by the same hostility to Jāmī that frequently mars his otherwise useful and original work. He also attempts, in the face of considerable odds, to establish a Shi‘i identity for Lāla already in Jāmī’s lifetime, presumably in order to charge Jāmī, a ferocious enemy of the Shi‘a, with inconsistency or worse (p. 271, n. 1). The fact that numerous Sufis of undoubted Sunni affiliation frequented Lāla’s *khānaqāh* is surely an indication of his own sectarian loyalties; see *Rauḍāt al-Jinān va Jannāt al-Janān*, II, pp. 150–151. The branch of the Dhahabiyya that did ultimately switch to Shi‘ism was based in Khorasan, not in Azerbaijan; see Hamid Algar, “Dahabiyya,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, VI, pp. 578–581.

In his article, “Jāmī va Mashāyikh-i Shī‘ī-Madhhab,” (*Nāma-yi Farhangistān*, 2:1 [Spring 1375 Sh./1996], pp. 66–70), Hiravī adopts a slightly different approach. Taking it for granted that Lāla was definitely Shi‘ī, he wistfully entertains the possibility that Jāmī’s respect for him indicated a shift of sectarian loyalties in his waning years or at least a tempering of his lifelong hostility to Shi‘ism. But if any change of heart took place, it is more likely to have been on the part not of Jāmī but of Lāla; for despite Shah Ismā‘īl’s murderous enmity to Sunni notables, he appointed Lāla *ṣadr* of Tabriz after his conquest of the city in 1501, something difficult, although not impossible, to conceive if Lāla had remained fully loyal to Sunnism.

Finally, it is worth noting that Bākharzī’s biography of Jāmī makes no mention at all of a meeting or correspondence with Amīr Aḥmad Lāla, and that no notice of Lāla’s immediate initiatic forebears is to be found in Jāmī’s hagiographical compendium, the *Nafahāt al-Uns*, exclusions which can hardly be treated as accidental.

¹⁴ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt-i Jāmī*, p. 94.

II

Jāmī's interest in Ibn 'Arabī was well known in Herat, to the degree that he was known as a *wujūdī* (an adherent of *waḥdat al-wujūd*), a term that locally carried some opprobrium. He ascribed the attitudes of those who used it pejoratively to their deficient comprehension of what "certain well-known Sufis have said concerning the essence of being."¹⁵ There was, however, another aspect to the matter which may have reinforced hostility to Jāmī and other *wujūdīs*. 'Alīshīr Navā'ī attributes to Jāmī a "*tawḥīdī* temperament" by virtue of which "he continually witnessed the beauty of the Real in its metaphorical manifestations" and "insistently trod the path of external, metaphorical love, this being the bridge to the Real."¹⁶ This formulation alludes, of course, to the precept, "the metaphorical is the bridge to the Real" (*al-majāz qanṭarat al-ḥaqīqa*), that had been lovingly invoked since the time of Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī by Sufi devotees of *shāhid-bāzī*, the admiration of handsome, beardless young men as "witnesses" to the divine beauty. Jāmī's entry to the Sufi path was precipitated, at least in part, by a dream in which he beheld Sa'd al-Dīn Kāshgharī advising him to cure the pangs of separation from one such object of his love by taking as his beloved, God, the one indispensable (*nāguzīr*) companion.¹⁷ But Jāmī continued frequenting the bridge in question throughout his life, crossing it back and forth without cease. When asked in old age by an "exoterist" (*ahl-i zāhir*) whether he would not at long last abandon the love of young men, he responded that he would do so whenever the questioner renounced bread and water.¹⁸ Navā'ī confirms that certain superficial observers, unaware of Jāmī's true inward purpose, thought him absorbed entirely by "metaphorical love" and blamed him for it.¹⁹

It might be argued that *shāhid-bāzī* was an essentially Persian or even Khurasani phenomenon, but it was not entirely alien to Ibn 'Arabī and his school. In a rarely noticed passage in the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, he maintains that keeping the company of beardless youths (*al-aḥdāth wa hum al-murdān*) is a praiseworthy innovation (*tasnīn maḥmūd*) of the type permitted by the divine legislator. The accomplished gnostic gazes upon such youths because they are smooth-cheeked, just like a bare rock (*al-ṣakhrat al-lamsā'*) and a bare patch of ground where no vegetation grows; contemplation of them serves therefore to impel the gnostic to the station of utter detachment from other than God (*tajrīd*). The beardless youth (*al-ḥadath*) enjoys, moreover, a more recent connection with his Lord (*aḥdath*

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁶ 'Alīshīr Navā'ī, *Khamsat al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, ms. Fatih 4056, ff. 690–691. *Tawḥīdī* may be taken here as equivalent to *wujūdī*, without the negative connotations.

¹⁷ Kāshifī, *Rashaḥāt-i 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt*, I, pp. 239–240.

¹⁸ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt-i Jāmī*, p. 138.

¹⁹ Navā'ī, *Khamsat al-Mutaḥayyirīn*, f. 691.

‘ahdin bi rabbihi) than the fully adult male, and the closer something is to its origination, the greater it is in sanctity. Analogous is the case of rainfall, freshly descended from the heavens, for which reason the Prophet would bare his arm to be moistened by it.²⁰ Yet another implication of the designation *ḥadath* is createdness (*ḥudūth*), so that the youth serves as a living reminder of its antonym, the noncreatedness (*qidam*) of God; it is, after all, by their opposites that things are known. Finally, Ibn ‘Arabī invokes the authority of Qur’ān, 21:2, “Whenever there comes to them from their Lord a new (*muḥdath*) reminder, they listen to it full of mockery,” and 26:5–6, “Whenever there comes to them from the All-Merciful a new reminder, they turn away from it”; this invocation suggests that both the beardless youth and the innovative practice of gazing upon him constitute a “new reminder” of divine origin. Given all of this, looking upon him is correct and “a path leading to attainment” (*ṭarīq mūṣila*), although not for recent novitiates who are still subject to animal lust.²¹ It is to be noted that there is no mention here of beauty, human or divine; the argument is purely metaphysical. Jāmī must nonetheless have been aware of it and seen in it a further sign of congruence between his own temperament and the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī.

In addition to a *tawḥīdī* disposition, Jāmī’s interest in Ibn ‘Arabī also derived from a perception that his teachings were fully congruent with the precepts and practices of the Naqshbandī order, the other focus of Jāmī’s spiritual loyalties. Abū Naṣr Pārsā, son of the Muḥammad Pārsā who had gazed benevolently on Jāmī when he was a child, testified that for his father the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* had been like the spirit, and the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, like the heart; and that he had believed assiduous study of the *Fuṣūṣ* to result in a fuller adherence to the Sunna of the Prophet, one of the ideals proclaimed by the Naqshbandiyya.²² While Aḥrār was able to guide Jāmī in his efforts to understand the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, as noted above, Sa‘d al-Dīn Kāshgharī, his formal guide on the Naqshbandī path, showed little interest in Ibn ‘Arabī. He was, indeed, disturbed by Ibn ‘Arabī’s assertion that “whoever [in this world] remains in the sublunar realm, remains there [after death].” In an inversion of the preceptorial relationship, Jāmī then explained to him that most believers do indeed die while still in thrall to their selves. According to Ibn ‘Arabī, however, God has opened a fissure in that realm through which believers may ultimately slide their way to deliverance.²³ One of Kāshgharī’s disciples, Mawlānā Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūjī (d. 904/1499), did, however, manifest a devotion to Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings comparable in its intensity to that shown by Jāmī; he once asked for “the secret of the manifesta-

²⁰ The *ḥadīth* relating this practice is not cited here by Ibn ‘Arabī, but his allusion to it is unmistakable.

²¹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Beirut, n.d.), II, p. 190.

²² Hamid Algar, “Reflections of Ibn ‘Arabī in Early Naqshbandī Tradition,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society*, 10 (1991), p. 47.

²³ Kāshifī, *Rashaḥāt-i ‘Ayn al-Ḥayāt*, I, p. 316.

tion of the world” to be revealed to him, since Ibn ‘Arabī had maintained this to be possible.²⁴

As for Jāmī himself, he once explained the affinity between the Naqshbandiyya and Ibn ‘Arabī in terms of the method of *dhikr* both espoused: “Uttering the *dhikr* softly is the method of some shaykhs, including the Shaykh al-Akbar, Muḥyī’ al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī ... The method of most shaykhs is uttering the *dhikr* loudly (*bar sabīl-i jahr*), whereas the method of imagining (*takhayyul*), i.e., the silent *dhikr*, is the foundation of the path of the [Naqshbandī] masters.”²⁵ He was also of the opinion that engaging in that path “aids rational reflection (*ta’aqqu*) and strengthens the perceptive faculty,” a further trait held in common by the two traditions.²⁶ Naqshbandī and Akbarī themes are to be found intermingled in much of Jāmī’s poetic corpus.

III

Jāmī was well aware that the views of Ibn ‘Arabī had been a subject of controversy for some two hundred years; in his embrace of the Shaykh al-Akbar, he was not simply subscribing to an established consensus. In his notice of Ibn ‘Arabī in *Nafahāt al-Uns*, he lauds him as the foremost of those who affirm the unicity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), and regrets that many of the *fuqahā’* and the exoterist scholars (*‘ulamā’-yi zāhir*) have criticized him; only a small number of the *fuqahā’* and a certain group of Sufis have recognized his merits. The main reasons for opposition to him, Jāmī argued, were the vast range of distinctive terminology Ibn ‘Arabī deployed in his two principal works, the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*; the obscurity (*ghumūd*) of the topics he treated, especially in the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*; and the innate tendency of many scholars to obstinate and unthinking acceptance of received teachings (*taqlīd va ta’aṣṣub*).²⁷

Herat was no stranger to the controversies surrounding Ibn ‘Arabī. Although Jāmī is justly designated as forming, together with the Timurid ruler Ḥusayn Mirzā Bāyqarā and his minister Navā’ī, a triumvirate that dominated the life of the city, his views and preferences in matters religious and theological were not universally shared. He thus found it necessary to participate in the defense of Ibn ‘Arabī on more than one occasion. Once it came to Jāmī’s attention that Bāyqarā, himself favorably inclined to the Shaykh al-Akbar, had convened a meeting to discuss a particularly troublesome opinion of Ibn ‘Arabī: that contrary to majority opinion, the Pharaoh had died a believer in the divine unity.²⁸ In this, Bayqarā

²⁴ Algar, “Reflections of Ibn ‘Arabī in Early Naqshbandī Tradition,” p. 55.

²⁵ Lārī, *Takmila-yi Nafahāt al-Uns*, p. 28.

²⁶ Lārī, *Takmila-yi Nafahāt al-Uns*, p. 10.

²⁷ Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-Uns*, ed. Maḥmūd ‘Ābidī (Tehran, 1370 Sh./1991), pp. 545–547.

²⁸ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. Abū ‘l-Alā’ ‘Afīfī (reprint, Tehran, 1370 Sh./1991), pp. 201, 212. Given Jāmī’s own profession of unlimited trust in the veracity of Ibn ‘Arabī, the charge of blind and unquestioning faith he levels at the opposing camp is somewhat ironic.

may have been motivated either by a simple enjoyment of learned debate or by the wish to have Ibn ‘Arabī publicly vindicated. All the participants rejected the Pharaoh’s status as a believer, and when Bayqarā cited Ibn ‘Arabī’s contrary opinion, some of them proceeded to condemn him, too, as an unbeliever. Sayf al-Dīn Aḥmad Taftāzānī, the Shaykh al-Islam of Herat, dissented, not with detailed argument, but a simple confession of his own limitations, somewhat similar to Jāmī’s own position: “The rank of the shaykh is too lofty and exalted for the likes of us wretches to curse and condemn him ... The most that we may do is to recognize that we are fully incapable of comprehending such matters.” He then cited Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) to the effect that he had squandered the entirety of his life until he made the acquaintance of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunavī who planted in him the seed of love for Ibn ‘Arabī.²⁹

Informed of what had transpired, Jāmī drew a parallel with the case of Ḥallāj. As the agitation surrounding him was reaching a climax, the caliph’s vizier asked Ibn ‘Aṭā — a friend of Ḥallāj destined to share his fate — whether he should yield to the demand for his execution. He advised him to resist: “the ignorant of the age have ignited the fire of perdition — what do you have to do with Ḥusayn Manṣūr [Ḥallāj]?” Ibn ‘Arabī fared better than Ḥallāj, for “in the two hundred odd years that have passed since Ibn ‘Arabī’s death, many people have condemned him and spoken ill of him, but his repute has not suffered.”³⁰ “Those who intend to proclaim him an unbeliever,” Jāmī continued, “must first be capable of determining his mode of thought (*ta’yīn-i madhhab*); explain it to those competent in such matters (*arbāb-i vuqūf*); and then prove to all and sundry that it contravenes the principles of the *sharī‘a*. They should first put the matter in writing in order to prove their understanding of what they wish to refute.” The

²⁹ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt-i Jāmī*, pp. 92–93. Together with other prominent Sunnis, Sayf al-Dīn Taftāzānī was put to death by Shah Ismā‘īl the Safavid when he conquered Herat in 916/1510. In this humble and unquestioning endorsement of Ibn ‘Arabī, Sayf al-Dīn was at odds with his grandfather, Sa’d al-Dīn Taftāzānī (d. 793/1391), who had condemned certain aspects of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, primarily from the point of view of Mātūrīdī *kalām*; see Bakrī ‘Alā’ al-Dīn’s introduction to his edition of ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *al-Wujūd al-Ḥaqq* (Damascus, 1995), pp. 25–27, 45–46. The attribution to Sa’d al-Dīn Taftāzānī of *Fāḍīhat al-Mulḥidīn wa Naṣīhat al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, a truly ferocious denunciation of Ibn ‘Arabī, was, however, inaccurate although persistent; the actual author was a certain ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Bukhārī, one of Sa’d al-Dīn’s pupils, who incorporated extracts from his master’s writings into his own. For the reasons behind the misattribution, see İsmail Fenni Ertuğrul, *Vahdet-i Vücut ve İbn Arabî*, ed. Mustafa Kara (Istanbul, 2008), pp. 117–118, and ‘Alā’ al-Dīn, introduction to al-Nābulusī, *al-Wujūd al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 15–30. While correctly attributing *Fāḍīhat al-Mulḥidīn* to Bukhārī (without, he remarks, consulting the text itself), Alexander Knysh dubiously attributes to al-Taftāzānī a work entitled *Risāla fī Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, which appears from his summary of its contents to be identical with the same *Fāḍīhat al-Mulḥidīn*; see his *Ibn ‘Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (New York, 1999), pp. 141–165, 204–207.

³⁰ Or, as Jāmī remarked on another occasion, those two hundred years of hostility had even earned Ibn ‘Arabī additional reward in the hereafter (Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt-i Jāmī*, p. 14).

criterion in judging him must be conformity to Qur'ān and Hadith or lack thereof; it is not enough that he be found to have deviated from the doctrines of the Māturīdī or Ash'arī schools of *kalām*. Broadly contemptuous of his contemporaries among the scholars of Herat, Jāmī lamented by way of conclusion: "Where in this age is there a trustworthy *faqīh* capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood, and where a Sufī who can discern with inner vision the truths of religion?"³¹

Jāmī participated directly in another debate where again the contentious issue of Pharaoh's belief was discussed. Muḥammad Kūsū'ī Jāmī and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Asad Tabādakānī, described as "two jurist Sufis" (*ṣūfī-yi dānishmand*) of Herat, declared invalid the Pharaoh's profession of belief as he saw the waters of the Nile about to engulf him, related in Qur'ān, 10:90; it was, they maintained, an instance of *īmān-i ba's*, a belated declaration of faith induced by fear of torment in the hereafter. According to his biographer, Bākharzī, Jāmī silenced the two in short order by explaining that *īmān-i ba's* refers to a declaration of faith following on a "lifting of the veil of form" so that the events of the day of resurrection become visible before its occurrence; it does not relate to the fear of imminent destruction befalling in this world. One indication of this is that many unbelievers embraced Islam, at least outwardly, from "fear of the Prophet's sword" (*az khauf-i ṣadamāt-i tīgh-i nubuvvat*), and their conversion was never regarded by scholars as an instance of *īmān-i ba's*. There was, in any event, another verse in which the Pharaoh declared his belief in "the Lord of Moses and Aaron," and verses implying his persistence in unbelief can be brought into harmony with the two that negate it by hermeneutical means (*ta'vīl*).³² Far easier to refute was the calumnious attribution to Ibn 'Arabī of the view that the fast prescribed for Ramadan might equally well be observed in any month of the year. Jāmī was able to point to a section in the *Futūḥāt* where Ibn 'Arabī condemned an unnamed Egyptian *faqīh* who had delivered the erroneous opinion in question.³³

³¹ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt-i Jāmī*, pp. 93–94. In my translation, I have pruned some of Bākharzī's verbosity, for it is at variance with the relative concision of Jāmī's style, and the biographer's words are not to be taken as a verbatim account of what Jāmī actually said. Ibn 'Arabī's endorsement of the Pharaoh's status as believer was a frequent theme in the polemics surrounding him; see Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, pp. 158–161.

³² There is, in fact, no verse in the Qur'ān which has the Pharaoh proclaiming his belief "in the Lord of Moses and Aaron." Either Jāmī himself or his biographer Bākharzī must have been in mind of Qur'ān, 26:46–47, where the sorcerers proclaim such a belief and are upbraided by the Pharaoh for so doing. The error is compounded by Hīravī, the editor of Bākharzī's *Maqāmāt*; he points to Qur'ān, 26:13 as the source of confusion, although the verse mentions neither the Pharaoh nor his sorcerers (footnote on p. 97).

³³ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt*, p. 254; Kāshifī, *Rashaḥāt-i 'Ayn al-Hayāt*, I, pp. 280–281.

IV

It was not only in Herat that Jāmī went to war on behalf of Ibn ‘Arabī. While passing through Hilla on his way to the Hajj in 877/1472, Jāmī came across a commentary by a certain Shi‘ī scholar on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* that was critical of the work in a number of respects, especially Ibn ‘Arabī’s claim to have received the book from the Prophet as seen in a true vision (*vāqī‘a*). Jāmī responded to him — either in person or in his own imagination; Bākharzī’s account is not clear — using the second person singular, by way of deliberate insult; the impropriety reflected Jāmī’s bitter hatred of Shi‘is as well as his combative loyalty to Ibn ‘Arabī. If, he said, the book had indeed been handed to Ibn ‘Arabī by the Prophet, then any objection to its contents should fall away; and if not, a book predicated on a lie would not be worth reading, let alone being made the subject of a commentary.³⁴

On a more elevated level, Jāmī took issue in writing with criticisms of *waḥdat al-wujūd* made by the Kubravī, ‘Alā’ al-Dawla Simnānī (d. 736/1336), to whom is often attributed the origin of the alternative theory, *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (unity of witnessing). Simnānī had taken exception to Ibn ‘Arabī’s designation of God as “absolute being” (*wujūd muṭlaq*), going so far as to call it “the most disgraceful utterance ever to have emerged among all religions and sects” and to denounce Ibn ‘Arabī as “an incorrigible antinomian.” This was because those who like him asserted the equivalence of “absolute being” with the divine essence maintained that “absolute being can have no external existence without individual existents (*afrād*).”³⁵ In later pronouncements, Simnānī modified his tone considerably: despite his error, Ibn ‘Arabī had been “a man of great spiritual stature” (*mardī ‘azīm al-sha‘n*). “I am aware,” he said, “that Ibn ‘Arabī intended by [the designation of God as] ‘absolute being’ to prove the unity of God within multiplicity; this represents the second ascension (*mi‘rāj*). For there are two ascensions: one, ‘God was, and there was nothing with Him,’ this being easy to comprehend, and the other, ‘He is now as He was,’ which is more difficult to grasp. [The expression] ‘absolute being’ occurred to him as a way of proving that the multiplicity of created beings does not occasion any plurality in the divine unity. Since this sense of the matter is indeed true, he was content with that expression, and neglected the other sense, which implies deficiency. Because his purpose was to affirm the divine unity, God Almighty will have forgiven him, for in my view

³⁴ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt*, pp. 173–174.

³⁵ ‘Alā’ al-Dawla Simnānī, *al-‘Urwa li Ahl al-Khalwa wa ‘l-Jalwa*, ed. Najīb Māyil Hiravī (Tehran, 1362 Sh./1983), pp. 276–277. In more measured tones, Sa‘d al-Dīn Taftāzānī had also criticized the identification of the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) with absolute being as similar to the twin errors of *ḥulūl* (incarnationism) and *ittiḥād* (the substantial union of the Creator with creation), although ultimately distinct from them; it was, in any event, repugnant to both intelligence and revelation (*Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, cited by ‘Alā’ al-Dīn, introduction to al-Nābulusī, *al-Wujūd al-Ḥaqq*, pp. 26–27).

whoever among the people of the *qibla* engages in *ijtihād* with respect to the divine perfection, even if he falls into error ... will be among the saved.”³⁶

In his *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, Jāmī first refutes these objections of Simnānī to Ibn 'Arabī and then cites the words in which he expressed them, a somewhat illogical procedure. Simnānī had failed, Jāmī claimed, to distinguish three aspects or concepts (*i'tibār*) of being: limited being (*wujūd muqayyad*), that is conditional on something; general being (*wujūd 'āmm*), that is conditional on nothing; and absolute being, that is not conditional on anything. Simnānī had confused the third with the second, although Ibn 'Arabī had made clear that absolute being was conditional neither on limitation (*taqayyud*) nor generality (*'umūm*); the absoluteness of God's being is not to be understood as dependent on its opposite, limitation.³⁷ If Jāmī was aware of the severity of Simnānī's initial denunciation of Ibn 'Arabī, he chose to overlook it, for he included a respectful notice of him in the *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, sparing him the discourtesy to which he had subjected the anonymous Shi'ī of Hilla.³⁸

V

So much for the polemics, oral and written, in which Jāmī defended Ibn 'Arabī and fulminated against his detractors. Of greater long-term effect were, of course, the numerous writings in which he expounded the teachings of al-Shaykh al-Akbar, a fulfillment of his vow to bring them within reach of a broader readership. The earliest such venture was *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Naqsh al-Nuṣūṣ*, a commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's own digest of the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*; some seventy-five manuscript copies of this work are extant in various libraries in Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India, testimony surely to the lasting popularity of Jāmī's commentary and its superiority to ten or so competing works of similar content.³⁹ *Naqd*

³⁶ Remarks reported by Iqbāl Shāh Sijistānī in his *Chihil Majlis yā Risāla-yi Iqbāliyya*, ed. Najīb Māyil Hiravī (Tehran, 1366 Sh./1987), pp. 189, 191–192. Concerning Simnānī's views on *waḥdat al-wujūd*, see Hermann Landolt, “Der Briefwechsel zwischen Kāshānī und Simnānī über Waḥdat al-Wujūd,” *Der Islam*, 50 (1973), pp. 29–81, and Seyed Shahabedin Mesbahī, *The Reception of Ibn 'Arabī's School of Thought by Kubrawī Sufīs*, PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2009, pp. 107–149.

³⁷ Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, pp. 553–554. By way of supplementing this somewhat laconic refutation of Simnānī's objections, reference may be made to the following entry by 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī in his book of definitions: “the essence of the Real (*al-Ḥaqq* = God) is being *qua* being; if you consider It thus, then It is the absolute; i.e., the reality that is with everything, not by way of conjunction, for other than pure being is sheer non-being, and how might there be conjoined to pure being that which depends upon it for its being and without which it is non-being?” (*Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. Muḥamad Kamāl Ibrāhīm Ja'far [Cairo, 1981], pp. 48–49).

³⁸ Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, pp. 441–445.

³⁹ Osman Yahia, *Histoire et Classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn 'Arabī* (Damascus, 1964), I, pp. 255–256; William Chittick's English introduction to his edition of *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Naqsh al-Nuṣūṣ* (Tehran, 1977), p. xxii.

al-Nuṣūṣ is essentially an anthology of comments and clarifications made by illustrious predecessors of Jāmī in the study of Ibn ‘Arabī such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunavī, Sa‘īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. ca. 699/1299–1300), ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (d. 736/1335), and Dā‘ūd Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), as well as citations from both the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and the *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. Less expected, perhaps, is the occurrence of citations from poets and others not directly linked to Ibn ‘Arabī and his school: Sanā‘ī, ‘Aṭṭār, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, and Sulṭān Valad, among others. The purpose was, perhaps, implicitly to present Ibn ‘Arabī as a culminating figure in the Sufī tradition, one who integrated into a single complex whole the fragmented insights of those who had preceded him.⁴⁰ Jāmī modestly and charmingly describes *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ* as a *muraqqa’*, a patched cloak worn by some Sufis as an outward token of their devotion to poverty.⁴¹ The patchwork effect of the book is enhanced by the retention of the textual “scraps” it comprises for the most part in their original language, be it Arabic or Persian. Jāmī prefaces his work with a systematic discussion of eight key topics: the degrees and modes of existence; the first and second individuations (*ta‘ayyunāt*); the fixed archetypes; the world of the spirits; the imaginal world; the world of bodies; the Perfect Man; and the unicity of being.⁴² It is no derogation of the *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ* to describe it as simultaneously autodidactic and pedagogical in nature: first Jāmī conveniently assembled in one volume material he had found useful in understanding the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and then he made it available to others aspiring to a fuller comprehension of that challenging text.⁴³

It was not until much later, some two years before his death, that Jāmī composed his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* itself, the same that he promised to send Aḥmad Lāla in Darvīshābād.⁴⁴ He recounts in his prologue that he had

⁴⁰ In somewhat similar vein, Jāmī affirmed on another occasion that had Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī come later than Ibn ‘Arabī, he would have adhered to his views, for he, too, was a proponent of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (Lārī, *Takmila-yi Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, p. 17).

For a fuller analysis of Jāmī’s sources and the way in which he deploys them, see William Chittick’s English introduction to his edition of *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Naqsh al-Nuṣūṣ* (Tehran, 1977), pp. xxiv–xxvii. It is worth remarking that the commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* attributed to Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā (*Sharḥ-i Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. Jalīl Misgarnizhād [Tehran, 1366 Sh./1987]) does not figure among the sources used by Jāmī for the *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ*, an absence which may serve as evidence for the falsity of the attribution. See Najīb Māyil Hiravī’s introduction to *Rasā‘il-i Ibn ‘Arabī: Dah Risāla-yi Fārsī-shuda* (Tehran, 1367 Sh./1988), pp. xxi–xxviii, and Misgarnizhād’s rejoinder, reasserting the attribution, “Barraṣī-yi Shurūḥ-i Fārsī-yi *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* va Ta‘ammul dar Ṣiḥḥat-i Intisāb-i Shurūḥ ba Shāriḥīn,” *Ma‘ārif*, 8:2 (Murdād-Ābān 1370/August–November, 1991), pp. 41–49.

⁴¹ Text of *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Naqsh al-Nuṣūṣ*, p. 18.

⁴² William Chittick summarizes Jāmī’s exposition in this work of the *insān al-kāmil* in his article, “The Perfect Man as the Prototype of the Self in the Sufism of Jāmī,” *Studia Islamica*, 49 (1979), pp. 135–157.

⁴³ Lārī was perhaps the first to benefit from the work; he recalls that Jāmī had him study it and prepare his own copy for Jāmī to certify (*Takmila-yi Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, p. 1).

⁴⁴ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. ‘Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Darqāwī (Beirut, 2004).

never found a master able fully to explain the difficulties of the text; he therefore continued to study all the available commentaries, reverting to them time and again in order to choose from the possibilities they offered that which seemed most satisfactory. His own commentary, then, represented a judicious digest of the views of his predecessors, enriched by insights received in moments of spiritual inspiration.⁴⁵ The method he followed was then essentially the same as that employed in *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Naqsh al-Nuṣūṣ*, the chief point of difference being an avoidance of theoretical digressions and a primary concern with elucidating the immediate meaning of each sentence in the original text. Although dependent on its predecessors to a considerable degree, this late work of Jāmī succeeded in establishing itself among the most authoritative commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. It is a significant measure of Jāmī's lifelong dedication to Ibn 'Arabī that his final, as well as his earliest, work in prose was devoted to the analysis of *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*.

A further exposition of the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, this time in a comparative setting, is to be found in Jāmī's *al-Durrat al-Fākhira fī Taḥqīq Madhāhib al-Ṣūfiyya wa al-Mutakallimīn wa al-Ḥukamā' al-Mutaqaddimīn*.⁴⁶ He wrote this concise treatise in response to a request from Fatih Sultan Mehmed for an adjudication (*muḥākama*) of the partially conflicting views on eleven key matters of doctrine espoused by the Sufis, the theologians, and the philosophers; he completed it in 886/1481, but by the time a copy arrived in Istanbul, the learned Ottoman conqueror had died.⁴⁷ Somewhat reminiscent of Jāmī's *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ*, much of the material contained in *al-Durrat al-Fākhira* consists of quotations from or paraphrases of works representing each of the three tendencies; a reasonable procedure, given that Jāmī's task was *muḥākama*. The principal theological texts cited are the *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif* of Sharif al-Dīn Jurjānī and the *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid* of Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī, while the philosophers are represented by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī with his *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*. The Sufis called to witness include not only Ibn 'Arabī himself, with citations from *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, but also two prominent representatives of his school: Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunavī, represented by

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

⁴⁶ Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *al-Durrat al-Fākhira fī Taḥqīq Madhāhib al-Ṣūfiyya wa al-Mutakallimīn wa al-Ḥukamā' al-Mutaqaddimīn*, ed. Nicholas Heer and 'Alī Mūsavī Bihbahānī (Tehran, 1358 Sh./1979); translated by Nicholas Heer as *The Precious Pearl* (Albany, NY, 1979). Lārī loyally wrote a commentary on this work; text in *al-Durrat al-Fākhira*, pp. 67–113; translation in *The Precious Pearl*, pp. 115–151.

⁴⁷ See Ṭāshkubrīzāda (= Taṣköprüzade), *al-Shaqā'iq al-Nu'māniyya fī 'Ulamā' al-Daulat al-Uthmāniyya* (Beirut, 1395/1975), pp. 159–160. Ṭāshkubrīzāda writes that only six questions were at issue, but if five other matters derived from the six be added, the total is indeed eleven; see Heer's introduction to *The Precious Pearl*, p. 27, notes 2 and 4. Although Jāmī's principal courtly affiliations were with the Timurids of Herat, the respect shown him by the Ottomans was equally significant, for it outlasted both his life and that of the Timurids, and much of his legacy became permanently integrated into the curriculum of Ottoman scholarship.

quotations from his *Kitāb al-Nuṣūṣ fī Taḥqīq al-Ṭawr al-Makhṣūṣ*, a dense work in twenty-two short chapters on *waḥdat al-wujūd*; and Dā‘ūd Qayṣarī, with extracts from *Maṭla‘ Khuṣūṣ al-Kilām fī Ma‘ānī Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. From this choice of material, it is plain that for Jāmī — at least in this context — the term *al-Ṣūfiyya* was essentially identical with the school of Ibn ‘Arabī. At issue in the work is primarily the question of being: whether identical to the divine essence or superadded to it. From this ineluctably derive further questions such as the nature of the divine attributes and their relation to the essence; the nature of God’s knowledge, will, power, and speech; and the degree to which the voluntary acts of humans occur through their own power. Although adherence to the ordering of the three groups mentioned in the title of the work would have mandated otherwise, Jāmī first reviews the opinions of the theologians and the philosophers before expounding the position of the Sufis; this he presents as rationally superior to the competing doctrines, even while deriving ultimately from “disclosure and direct vision” (*al-kashf wa al-‘ayān*), a decisive and autonomous source of knowledge.⁴⁸

Jāmī also takes issue with the theologians — primarily Sa‘d al-Dīn Taftāzānī and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, although neither of them is named — in a brief treatise entitled *Risāla fī al-Wujūd*. He uses purely rational argumentation to demonstrate that were absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) not to exist externally as well as in the mind, nothing would exist at all; that consequent being manifestly false, the antecedent must also be false.⁴⁹

Among Jāmī’s scholarly writings devoted to the exposition and vindication of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teachings, mention may finally be made of his commentary on *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*. Incomplete, and dating therefore probably from the closing months of his life, it consists essentially of an analysis of the cognate divine names, *al-rahmān* and *al-rahīm*, as they occur not only in the *basmala* but also in the third *āya* of the *sūra*. Jāmī suggests that God is *al-rahmān* with respect to His self-manifestation in the forms of the archetypes, described by Ibn ‘Arabī as “the most holy overflowing” (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*); while with respect to the individuation (*ta‘ayyun*) of other entities, He is *al-rahīm*.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See, for example, the demonstration that God’s existence is identical with His essence (*al-Durrat al-Fākhira*, pp. 2–26).

⁴⁹ *Risāla fī al-Wujūd*, ed. by Nicholas Heer and translated by him as “Al-Jāmī’s Treatise on Existence”, in Parviz Morewedge, ed., *Islamic Philosophical Theology* (Albany, NY, 1975), pp. 223–256.

⁵⁰ Sajjad Rizvi, “The Existential Breath of *al-rahmān* and the Munificent Grace of *al-rahīm*: The *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* of Jāmī and the School of Ibn ‘Arabī,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies*, 8:1 (2006), pp. 75–76.

VI

More generally accessible and aesthetically attractive than these products of pure erudition are the writings in which Jāmī deploys his literary and poetic genius in expounding the teachings and concepts of Ibn 'Arabī. Foremost among those works is the *Lavāyih* ("Flashes"), written perhaps in 870/1465 and dedicated to a ruler or governor of Hamadan.⁵¹ As implied by the title, the work comprises a series of thirty-six discrete meditations of varying length, expressed in a mixture of rhymed prose and verse. It treats of topics such as the relation of the divine attributes to the Essence (no. 15), the plurality of the modes of the Essence and their "inclusion" (*indirāj*) within Its unity (no. 19), and the connection between degrees of existence and degrees of knowledge (no. 33). As in *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ*, Jāmī cites previous authorities on the doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī, above all Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunavī, as well as Ibn 'Arabī himself; and as in *al-Durraṭ al-Fākhirā*, Jāmī finds occasion to criticize both the theologians and the philosophers, finding their views inferior to the insights of the Sufis. The tone and method of the *Lavāyih* are, however, distinctly poetic and emotive, not didactic or polemical.

The quatrains that make up the poetic component of the *Lavāyih* are generally appended to the end of each section and serve to summarize it. The relationship between poetry and prose is the exact opposite in the case of his *Sharḥ-i Rubā'iyāt*: here, the quatrains come first, forty-eight in number, and they are each followed by an average of one page of commentary. Jāmī explains at the outset that insights obtained by "disclosure" (*kashf*) and "taste" (*dhawq*) cannot be adequately conveyed in verse, given the restraints imposed by the demands of metre and rhyme; hence the need for elucidation in prose.⁵² Given this insufficiency of the quatrains, it may be supposed that they are primarily mnemonic in purpose. As in the case of the *Lavāyih*, the prose component of the *Sharḥ-i Rubā'iyāt* is of artistic rather than scholarly nature. Each quatrain expresses concisely some theme of gnosticism or metaphysics, the point of departure being *wahdat al-wujūd*.

Similarly compounded of prose and verse are two commentaries Jāmī wrote on the works of others: *Lavāmi'* ("Gleams"), on the celebrated wine poem of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 633/1235),⁵³ and *Ashī'at al-Lama'āt* ("Rays from the Flashes"), on the *Lama'āt* of Fakhr al-Dīn Irāqī (d. 688/1289). Both of these address themselves primarily to the theme of love (*'ishq*) as articulated by Ibn 'Arabī and his

⁵¹ *Lavāyih*, ed. and translated by Yann Richard as *Les Jaillissements de Lumière* (Paris, 1982).

⁵² 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Sharḥ-i Rubā'iyāt*, in *Majmū'a-yi Munlā Jāmī* (Istanbul, 1309/1891), reprinted as *Seh Risāla dar Taṣavvuf* with an introduction by İraj Afshār (Tehran, 1360 Sh./1981), p. 43.

⁵³ Contained in *Majmū'a-yi Munlā Jāmī*, pp. 103–189.

school, but the connection to him is closer in the latter work. For, as Jāmī reminds the reader in his introduction, ‘Irāqī studied the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* with none other than Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunavī; the *Lama‘āt*, “a mound of jewels in verse and in prose, subtleties conveyed in Arabic and Persian,” are a summary of what he was able to learn from him. The work had earned ‘Irāqī a widespread condemnation that initially dissuaded Jāmī from studying it, he admits, until he was persuaded to compare the available manuscripts and weed out erroneous matter. It was then that he realized that each page was inscribed with subtle truths, many of which he could not fully comprehend. He turned to the commentaries that had been written on the *Lama‘āt*, but none was of any assistance. He therefore decided to compile his own commentary on the work, “in order to correct its phrases and clarify its allusions,” drawing for the purpose on the writings of both Qunavī and Ibn ‘Arabī. And, insofar as those textual sources were supplemented by the enlightenment he derived from the luminous words of ‘Irāqī, he decided to entitle his work, “Rays from the Flashes.”⁵⁴ This statement of purpose is reminiscent of Jāmī’s goal and method in *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Naqsh al-Nuṣūṣ*: the aim in both cases is to instruct first himself and then others. The style of the *Ashī‘at al-Lama‘āt* is, however, markedly different, reflecting the poetic, and occasionally ecstatic, temperament of ‘Irāqī.

The bulkiest component of Jāmī’s prodigious output consists of his poetry: hundreds of *ghazals*, organized in three successive *dīvāns*, and seven *masnavīs*, grouped together under the title of *Haft Awrang*. Given the nature and purpose of the *ghazal*, it is naturally ‘*ishq* in its two varieties, *ḥaqīqī* and *majāzī*, that predominates among the themes expressed in Jāmī’s *dīvāns*. But ‘*ishq* is also invoked as the ultimate cause of creation, as in the *ghazal* that begins:

O Eternal One, appearing in the form of the [fixed] archetypes / sometimes
The manifest, at others, the locus of manifestation.

In essence, the manifest and the locus of manifestation are one/ but the
mind deems each separate from the other.

Love is without form, but, enamored of form, / it overpowered it and took
on the garment of form.⁵⁵

Noteworthy here is the invocation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s “fixed archetypes” (*al-a‘yān al-thābita*), the first form in which the Divine Reality impelled by ‘*ishq* manifests Itself.

Also replete with the concepts of Ibn ‘Arabī are the first three lines of the following *ghazal*:

⁵⁴ *Ashī‘at al-Lama‘āt*, ed. Hādī Rastigār Muqaddam Gawharī (Qum, 1383 Sh./2004), pp. 26–27. Jāmī reveals himself here to be an editor — perhaps even a censor — as well as a commentator, entitled to delete matter he found objectionable.

⁵⁵ Jāmī, *Fātiḥat al-Shabāb in Divānhā-yi Sehāna*, ed. A‘lā Khān Afshāh-zād (Tehran, 1378 Sh./1999), I, p. 724.

God/Reality (*Ḥaqq*) is the sun and the world like unto a shadow, o heart / "Have you not looked unto your Lord, how He lengthens the shadow?" (Qur'ān, 25:45).

The existence of the shadow and sun is one in reality / although the mind may not grasp this.

Yes, the sun is titled shadow / when from the realm of pure luminosity it begins its descent.⁵⁶

All three lines reflect Akbarī themes. The first line describes the cosmos as a mere shadow (*ẓill*) of the divine sun; the second is a concise expression of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, using the same imagery as the first; and the third alludes to the degrees of existence (*marātib al-wujūd*) that result from the "descent" (*nuzūl*) of God/Reality from the realm of the absolute.

As for Jāmī's *masnavīs*, it is primarily in the longest and most heavily didactic of them, *Silsilat al-Dhahab*, that the concepts and terminology of Ibn 'Arabī are to be encountered. Among numerous instances, the following lines of intermingled Persian and Arabic verse expounding *waḥdat al-wujūd* may be noted:

O clearly manifest and luminous One / who is present other than You in men's souls and upon the horizons [an allusion to Qur'ān, 41:53]?

Nothing exists in the cosmos other than You / You are the sun of early morning, and other than You, the shadow of afternoon.

When light descends from its absolute state / "shadow" or "shade" is the name given to it.

The two worlds are a shadow, You are the light / You it is that gives the shadow appearance.

Both this world and the next are pure form; You are the meaning / without You, no form has existence.⁵⁷

Jāmī rarely mentions Ibn 'Arabī by name in his poetry. Two exceptions are to be found in *Silsilat al-Dhahab*. The first describes his experience while traveling eastwards of an overwhelming love that lacked a particular object and was therefore universal in scope:

The elder of *tawḥīd* [i.e., *waḥdat al-wujūd*], Shaykh Muḥyi al-Dīn / sun in the firmament of unveiling and certainty,

Relating what he experienced by way of taste (*dhawq*) / and set forth in the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*

Declares that "when travelling from Morocco to Damascus / a powerful onset of love (*jadhba-yi 'ishq*) grasped the breast of my soul.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 547.

⁵⁷ Nūr al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad Jāmī, *Masnavī-yi Haft Awrang*, eds. Jābulqā Dād-'Alī Shāh, Aṣghar Jānfidā, Ṭāhir Aḥrārī, and Ḥusayn Aḥmad Tarbiyat (Tehran, 1378 Sh./1999), I, p. 179.

Love kindled a fire in my heart / so that smoke arose from my whole being.

But in no way at all / did it point in a given direction.

Love raised its banner unto the Pleiades / but of a beloved, no name and no trace!”⁵⁸

Jāmī also includes in *Silsilat al-Dhahab* a lengthy paraphrase of one of Ibn ‘Arabī’s treatises, *Ḥilyat al-Abdāl wa mā yazharu ‘anhā min al-ma‘ārif wa al-aḥwāl*.⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī recounts that a certain ‘Abd al-Majīd b. Salama once miraculously inserted himself through a closed door in order to enjoin on him four practices deemed necessary for spiritual progress: silence (*al-ṣamt*); isolation (*al-‘uzla*); hunger (*al-jū’*); and the keeping of night vigils (*al-sahar*); they were all to be found, the visitor informed him, in the *Qūt al-Qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī.⁶⁰ After delivering his message, he exited by the same miraculous means. Jāmī changes the arrangement by first discussing isolation at considerable length, describing three categories of recluses, in ascending order of excellence: those who wish to shield themselves from the evil of their fellow beings, elite and commonalty alike; those who desire on the contrary to protect others from the evil they might inflict on them; and those whose desire is to enjoy the undisturbed company of God.⁶¹ He then invokes Ibn ‘Arabī as “the leader of those aware of the mystery of non-being / the pole of the truth, the author of *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*,” before proceeding to an exposition, at very great length, of silence, hunger and night vigils, interspersed with Hadith, anecdotes of Sufis past and present, criticisms of contemporary society, and doctrinal digressions.⁶²

⁵⁸ Jāmī, *Masnavī-yi Haft Awrang*, I, p. 288.

⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Ḥilyat al-Abdāl*, edited and translated as *The Four Pillars of Spiritual Transformation* by Stephen Hirtenstein (Oxford, 2008).

⁶⁰ *Ḥilyat al-Abdāl*, text, p. 4; translation, pp. 31–32. See Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb fī Mu‘āmalāt al-Maḥbūb* (Cairo, 1381/1961), I, pp. 194–205. An earlier author, the Kubravī Shaykh Abū al-Mafākhīr Yaḥyā Bākharzī (d. 736/1335), acknowledged *Ḥilyat al-Abdāl* as a source for his Persian handbook of Sufi practices, *Awrad al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb* (ed. Īraj Afshār [Tehran, 1358 Sh./1979], p. 357). Somewhat later, a complete translation of the treatise was made by an anonymous scholar (included by Najīb Māyil Hiravī in his collection, *Rasā’il-i Ibn ‘Arabī: Dah Risāla-yi Fārsī-shuda* [Tehran, 1367 Sh./1988], pp. 3–19). Awareness of these antecedents may have prompted Jāmī to incorporate the contents of the *Ḥilyat al-Abdāl* in his *Silsilat al-Dhahab*.

⁶¹ Jāmī, *Masnavī-yi Haft Awrang*, I, pp. 159–167.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 167–201. For a systematic examination of Akbarī themes in Jāmī’s poetry, see Sūsan Āl-i Rasūl, *‘Irfān-i Jāmī dar Majmū‘a-yi Āsārash* (Tehran, 1383 Sh./2004), a most useful work. Less helpful is Muḥammad Ismā‘īl Muballigh’s *Jāmī va Ibn ‘Arabī* (Kabul, 1343 Sh./1964), for the author is at pains throughout to find parallels with European philosophers.

VII

Jāmī once compared the stature of Ibn 'Arabī among the Arabs to that of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī among the Persians ('*ajam*); both were culminating figures whose writings, inspired by mystical states, presented challenges to the conscientious reader.⁶³ The ethno-linguistic dichotomy this suggests is, however, questionable, for if the legacy of Rūmī was confined essentially to the Turkic and Persian worlds, that of Ibn Arabī became universal in a process of diffusion that was due in large part to Jāmī himself. He was by no means the first commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* in the Persianate world, and he acknowledges a debt to his predecessors both in the *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ* and in the *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. Nonetheless, the large number of manuscripts of both works preserved in the libraries of Bosnia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India and elsewhere, is testimony to their lasting influence and to Jāmī's posthumous success in fulfilling the pedagogical goals he had set himself.⁶⁴ In his own lifetime, he taught the *Risālat al-Wujūd* to his nephew, Mullā Muḥammad Amīn, and from him went forth a chain of authorizations (*ijāzāt*) to teach it that reached Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690) in Mecca.⁶⁵ Treatises such as the *Lavāyih* were frequently copied and made the object of commentaries. The *Nafahāt al-Uns*, with its exaltation of Ibn 'Arabī and criticisms of his adversaries, became the basis for later hagiographical compositions, especially in Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent, and it was translated into both Ottoman and Chaghatay Turkish as well as Arabic. And as for his poetic corpus, suffused as it was with prominent themes of Ibn 'Arabī's teaching, it remained an object of study, admiration and imitation for many centuries, most particularly in the Ottoman realm; significant in particular is the case of Lāmī'ī (d. 939/1531) often designated as the "Jāmī of the Ottomans"; he, too, was a Naqshbandī. Relevant, too, is that when printing presses began operating in the Muslim world, first with the use of lithography and then with fixed type, the works of Jāmī were often among those chosen for publication, both in the Indian Subcontinent and the Ottoman realm.

Such, indeed, was the reach of Jāmī's lasting influence that it extended even to China and the Malay world, mediated to the former via Central Asia and to the latter via India and Thailand. Some time in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, the Chinese scholar P'o Na-chi'h (otherwise known as She Yün-shan), produced a translation of the *Ashi 'at al-Lama 'āt* under the title *Chao-yüan pi-chüeh* ("The mysterious secret of the original display"), deleting matters deemed not relevant to Chinese readers.⁶⁶ Possibly in the middle of the eighteenth century, another Chinese scholar, Liu Chih, produced a version of the *Lavāyih* under the

⁶³ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt*, p. 90.

⁶⁴ For a partial list of manuscripts, see Osman Yahia, *Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn 'Arabī*, I, p. 247.

⁶⁵ Nicholas Heer's introduction to *Risāla fī al-Wujūd*, p. 232.

⁶⁶ Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light* (Albany, NY, 2000), p. 33.

title *Chen-ching chao-wei* (“Displaying the concealment of the real realm”); for whatever reason, he chose to omit the poems that are an important component of the original text.⁶⁷ Some time in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, Hamza Fansuri, commonly regarded as the foremost Malay Sufi poet, is said to have learned Persian directly from Iranian merchants resident in Ayutya, capital of Thailand at the time. His works are replete with allusions or direct references to Persian Sufi texts, including the *Lavāyih* of Jāmī.⁶⁸ Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī (d. 1068/1658), a Malay Sufi who took issue with Hamza Fansuri on several matters, was no less indebted to Jāmī than his opponent; he included in his *Jawāhir al-‘ulūm fī Kashf al-Ma‘lūm* citations from no fewer than six of his works.⁶⁹

VIII

Some two hundred years after the death of Jāmī, ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731), one of the principal devotees of Ibn ‘Arabī in the Ottoman world, declared in a line of verse that “He [Ibn ‘Arabī] was the Seal of the Saints for his age / this, you can confirm if you read the *Fuṣūṣ*.”⁷⁰ Far more recently, an Iranian scholar at the University of Mashhad proposed in somewhat similar vein that if Ibn ‘Arabī is to be regarded at all as “Seal of the Saints,” it is only in a provisional, not a terminal sense, for the perpetuation of *vilāyat* (“sainthood”) is a condition for the continued existence of the universe. The ultimate seal, the one in whose person *vilāyat* will be brought to an end and with it all the worlds, can therefore be only the Ṣāhib al-Zamān, the Twelfth Imam of the Prophet’s household whose emergence from occultation is awaited.⁷¹ Ibn ‘Arabī himself lends

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 33, 121–126. For Murata’s English rendering of his Chinese version, see pp. 128–210 of the same work.

⁶⁸ See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fansūrī* (Kuala Lumpur, 1970), pp. 14, 40, 462, and Haji Muhammad Bukhari Lubis, *The Ocean of Unity: Waḥdat al-Wujūd in Persian, Turkish and Malay Poetry* (Kuala Lumpur, 1993), pp. 274–279.

⁶⁹ Rānīrī originated in Gujarat and it was no doubt there that he acquired his knowledge of Persian. However, he resided in Aceh and Pahang for roughly twenty years and wrote his most important works in Malay; he may therefore count as a Malay Sufi. The works of Jāmī on which he drew were: *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*; *Sharḥ-i Rubā‘iyyāt*; *Lavāyih*; *Ashī‘at al-Lama‘āt*; *Naqd al-Nuṣūṣ*; and *al-Durrat al-Fākhira*. See Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *A Commentary on the Ḥujjat al-Siddīq of Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī* (Kuala Lumpur, 1986), pp. 19–20.

⁷⁰ Cited by Kāmīl Muṣṭafā al-Shībī, *al-Ṣila bayn al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Tashayyū‘* (Beirut, 1982), I, p. 503, on the basis of a manuscript anthology of Sufi verse (British Library, or. 3684, f. 107a). The poem from which this line is taken does not, however, appear in al-Nābulusī’s *Dīwān al-Ḥaqā‘iq wa Majmū‘ al-Raqā‘iq* (Bulaq, 1270/1853), which may cast doubt on the accuracy of the attribution.

⁷¹ Sayyid Ḥusayn Sayyid Mūsavī, “Khātām al-Awliyā’,” *Majalla-yi Dānishkada-yi Adabiyyāt va ‘Ulūm-i Insāni-yi Mashhad*, 32:124–25 (Spring & Summer, 1378 Sh./1999), pp. 73–106. Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. late 8th/14th century), an early Shi‘ī commentator on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, had already denied Ibn ‘Arabī’s claim to be the *khātām al-awliyā’*, without allowing for the possibility that he may have exercised that function even temporarily; see his *Kitāb Naṣṣ al-Nuṣṣ fī Sharḥ al-Fuṣūṣ*, ed. Henry Corbin (Paris–Tehran, 1975), p. 175.

credibility to this theory, for he proposes at least three claimants to the title of "Seal," each with a different quality — Jesus, who will descend anew to the terrestrial sphere at the end of time and to whom belongs *al-wilāyat al-muṭlaqa* ("absolute saintship"); an unnamed person he met in Fez in 595/1199; and himself, as the possessor of *al-wilāyat al-khāṣṣa* ("particular saintship").⁷² The claimants cannot always be reconciled, however, for Ibn 'Arabī seems at times to claim absolute finality for himself.⁷³ From a purely historical point of view, this is unimportant, for one form of finality can definitely be assigned to him, in that his work represents the culmination of theoretical or metaphysical Sufism; all that remained for later generations was to interpret and elaborate upon it, or occasionally contest some of its particulars.

As for Jāmī's status as "Seal of the Poets," it is plain that the title — whenever and by whomever coined — cannot be taken to mean that Persian poetry began a process of decline once he had composed his last *ghazal*. This interpretation, favored by numerous historians of Persian literature, Iranian and European like, derives from a sterile tendency to perceive everywhere in cultural and literary history a more or less uniform pattern of maturity followed by inevitable decadence. Numerous gifted and influential poets came after Jāmī, Mirzā 'Abd al-Qādir Bīdīl being a case in point. It is more reasonable to regard Jāmī — like Ibn 'Arabī, in his own distinct sphere — as a provisional Seal. He brought to culmination the traditions of Persian poetry in a vast and varied corpus that was transmitted to the new configuration of the Persianate world that began shortly after his demise. That legacy was preserved and honored, even as new modes of poetic expression emerged. Jāmī's biographer, 'Abd al-Vāsi' Bākharzī, presents him as the *mujaddid* of the eighth century of the Islamic era, the *mujaddid* being a divinely appointed figure who renews or restores religion at the turn of every century.⁷⁴ None among Bākharzī's contemporaries seems to have shared his view, and the identification of a *mujaddid* has never been a matter left to individual perception. The application of the title to Jāmī is nonetheless instructive, for the function of the *mujaddid* is necessarily provisional: he "renews" religion for a given century before passing it on to his successors. An analogous provisionality can be proposed for Jāmī's role as "Seal of the Poets."

However their respective epithets be interpreted, the conjunction of the two Seals — provisional though both may have been — in the life and work of 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī left a deep and lasting imprint on the cultural and spiritual life of the Muslim world for close to five centuries.

⁷² On Jesus as "Seal of the Saints," see *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* (Beirut, I, p. 151, II, p. 9); on the anonymous Seal encountered in Fez, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, II, p. 49; and on Ibn 'Arabī's own claim, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, I, p. 244.

⁷³ See, however, Michel Chodkiewicz's attempts to clear a path through the thicket of Ibn 'Arabī's pronouncements on the subject of the Seals, in his *Le Sceau des saints: prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabī* (Paris, 1986), pp. 145–179.

⁷⁴ Bākharzī, *Maqāmāt*, p. 38.