



**ISLAMICISATION OF
KNOWLEDGE AND
ENGLISH LITERARY STUDIES**

In the Age of Islamophobia and Westernophobia

Edited by

**NOR FARIDAH ABDUL MANAF
AIMILLIA MOHD RAMLI**

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

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CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>Foreward</i>	viii
<i>Editors' Introduction</i>	x

PART 1

Islamicisation of Knowledge, Language and Literature in Islam

An Introduction to Islamicisation of Knowledge <i>Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf</i>	2
The Position of Language and Literature in Islam <i>Akmal Khuzairi Abdul Rahman</i>	14

PART 2

Making Connections: English Literary Studies, Islam and Islamic Literature

An Overview of English Literary Tradition from <i>Beowulf</i> to the Twentieth Century <i>Qurat-ul-Ain Shirazi</i>	34
The Image of Muslims in the Elizabethan Literature <i>Mohammad Makram</i>	54
Edgar Allan Poe's Islamic References and Possible Influences <i>Faatimah Salmiyah Raheem</i>	75
Free-will as Self-Assertion: A Comparative Study of Selected Poems by Muhammad Iqbal and Robert Browning <i>Aimillia Mohd Ramli</i>	92

Kipling and Islam in the Imperialist Age <i>Farizah Jaafar</i>	112
The Portrayal of Man in Western and Islamic Literatures <i>Umar Abdurrahman</i>	129
Islamic Literature: An Introduction to Form and Content with Special Reference to Poetry <i>Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof</i>	153
A Geography of Knowledge : The <i>Kampung</i> and the Journey Towards Knowledge in Awang Goneng's <i>Growing up in Trengganu</i> and Riri Riza's <i>Laskar Pelangi</i> <i>Siti Nuraisah Ahmad</i>	174
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	191

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May Allah reward all of us with His *rahmah* and that this book will benefit those who read it.

FOREWORD

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), East and South East Asia office has a great pleasure in presenting Nor Faridah and Aimillia's edited book, *Islamicisation of Knowledge and English Literary Studies in the Age of Islamophobia and Westernophobia*. In a world where people are still being judged by their skin colour, what they wear and what language they speak, it becomes increasingly impossible to celebrate differences and the richness of living in diverse cultures and worldviews. The East accuses the West as being xenophobic and secular. The West accuses the East specially Islam and Muslims, as going against all forms of freedom – from freedom of expression to freedom of conscience to even sexual freedom. The common perception of Islam (or any religion for that matter) is that it fuels more hatred than love and collaboration between Muslims and others is impossible.

The three Abrahamic religions in the past worked well together. A person cannot be religious if his/her heart is filled with hatred and lack compassion and does not observe justice. A truly enlightened religious person is always inclusive of others and respects their rights to think and believe differently. It is in this spirit that we celebrate this book because it provides that space to relook and reconsider common and shared grounds between “us” and “them”. In an age in which trust is fast diminishing and in its place is fear and a sense of insecurity, it is important that we retain some hope and bridge that gap between trusting and fearing. We applaud the effort given by Nor Faridah and Aimillia as editors of this book and their list of contributors who have provided us an insight of both worlds where English literature and its connections to Islamic worldview and world literature are concerned.

The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major centre to facilitate sincere and serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. Its programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last thirty years have resulted in the publication

of more than four hundred titles in English and Arabic, many of which have been translated into several other languages.

Our sincere wish is that this book will be read by those in the East and West so that we will continue to celebrate each other's strengths and not fear each other's differences.

Dato' Wira Dr. Jamil Osman
Regional Representative
IIIT East and South East Asia Office
September 2016

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This book was conceptualized a couple of years ago but like many good things, there were challenges and setbacks which delayed its completion. However, we were fortunate to have great contributors who were willing to submit their articles for the book. For them, our sincerest gratitude. We believe that this book will be a good reference for those who wish to learn more of Islamicisation of Knowledge and its relevance in English Literary Studies. Many would think both are strange bedfellows but as reminded by Allah in Surah Al-Hujarat (verse 13), "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." In understanding our differences, we may also find how similar we are where human nature is concerned. This is reflected in many of the articles in this book.

In her introductory article on Islamicisation of Knowledge, Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf gives a brief outline of thoughts of some prominent scholars of Islamicisation of Knowledge. The list of names does not represent the vastness of the topic and the dynamic movement of IOK in terms of its research and progress. It is indeed an on-going intellectual movement which moves with time and quite difficult to capture.

Akmal Khusairi Abdul Rahman in his article "The Position of Language and Literature in Islam" looks at the Islamic views and thoughts on language and literature which include examining the origin of language, the definition of language in Islam, the relation between language and virtue as well as looking at the sociological aspects of language. Khusairi argues that it is not a Godless area.

Part 2 of this book looks at the connection between English Literary Studies and Islam. Articles by Umar Abdurrahman and Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof compare and highlight elements of Islamic Literature. Both examine how ideas, thoughts and forms overlap or influence literary domains of both East and West.

Qurat-ul-Ain Shirazi's article "An Overview of English Literary Tradition from *Beowulf* to the Twentieth Century" offers a quick study of English literary tradition as well as connects to its relevance where post-colonial and Islamic perspectives are concerned. She argues for the importance of studying and understanding the English language and literature tradition for Muslims given the important position English has globally. Makram's article "The Image of Muslims in the Elizabethan Literature" further endorses the influence one has over the other. Makram details the historical and political background to the demonization of Muslims in some Elizabethan literary texts specifically those written by Christopher Marlow and Shakespeare. His use of the IOK perspective gives a different dimension to reading English Literature especially to Muslim readers. Reading English texts this way does not alienate Muslims from their history, values and such a reading helps a better understanding of the dynamic ties Europe had with the Muslim world in the past.

In addition, "Edgar Allen Poe's Islamic Influences" by Faatimah Salmyyah Raheem shows the great amount of debt that American nineteenth-century literature owed to Islam and the Islamic cultures and civilizations. Concentrating on the poems of the renowned gothic writer, Edgar Allen Poe, it shows how Poe's poems are littered with Islamic references that come from many written sources, such as the Qur'an, *The Arabian Nights*, orientalist literary writings by many other American and British authors, as well as personal narrations by his own brother, William Henry.

Aimilia Mohd Ramli's article "Free-will as Self-Assertion: A Comparative Study of Selected Poems by Muhammad Iqbal and Robert Browning" focuses on the topic of free-will and its treatment in the works of the nineteenth-century British poet, Robert Browning, and the renowned Muslim poet, Muhammad Iqbal. It highlights the stark contrasts that exist between the two poets' conceptions of "free-will" as reflected in their poems. Bereft of any guiding principle, the protagonists of Browning's poems who exercises his unbounded freedom to act as he pleases are shown to undergo at the end of the works either a deep emotional crisis or simply become immoral and corrupt. The narrator of Iqbal's poems, however, overcomes these problems simply by viewing a human being's freedom to choose as a divine gift

that should be used within the limitations set up by Islam so that he or she could serve Allah (s.w.t.).

Farizah Jaafar's "Kipling and Islam in the Imperialist Age" is a counter-attack on critics of Kipling who accuse him of racism, amongst other allegations. Farizah argues that such actions are shortsighted because it neglects the way some of his poems project an understanding of "the Other" (Islam and Muslims).

The final article "A Geography of Knowledge: The *Kampung* and the Journey Towards Knowledge in Awang Goneng's *Growing Up in Trengganu* and Riri Riza's *Laskar Pelangi*" by Siti Nuraishah Ahamd is a bonus article to the book since Nuraishah incorporates Southeast Asian images through memoirs written by a diasporic Malaysian writer living in London and film images of the *Kampung* (village) as projected in Indonesian filmmaker Riri Riza's adaptation of Andrea Hirata's bestselling novel *Laskar Pelangi*. The inclusion of this article in this book marks the changing time in which literary studies does not limit itself to the study of printed texts or the traditional genres but goes beyond other disciplines: film studies and memoirs. Very often translations in English of works written outside the "centre" are important and this is captured in Nuraishah's article as she shares her Southeast Asian Islamic world with a wider audience in the English-speaking world.

We hope this book will enlighten you in many ways.

Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf

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Ramadan, 2016.

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