

# The Literarium

*An Annual Journal of Book Recommendations*

*Dhul Hijjah 1447/May 2026*

## *Featuring*

*Why History Matters?  
Reviving Faith Through the  
Lens of History.*

*Abdelwahab El-Messiri and  
His Encyclopedia of Jews,  
Judaism and Zionism.*

*Reading Slice-of-Life Literature.*

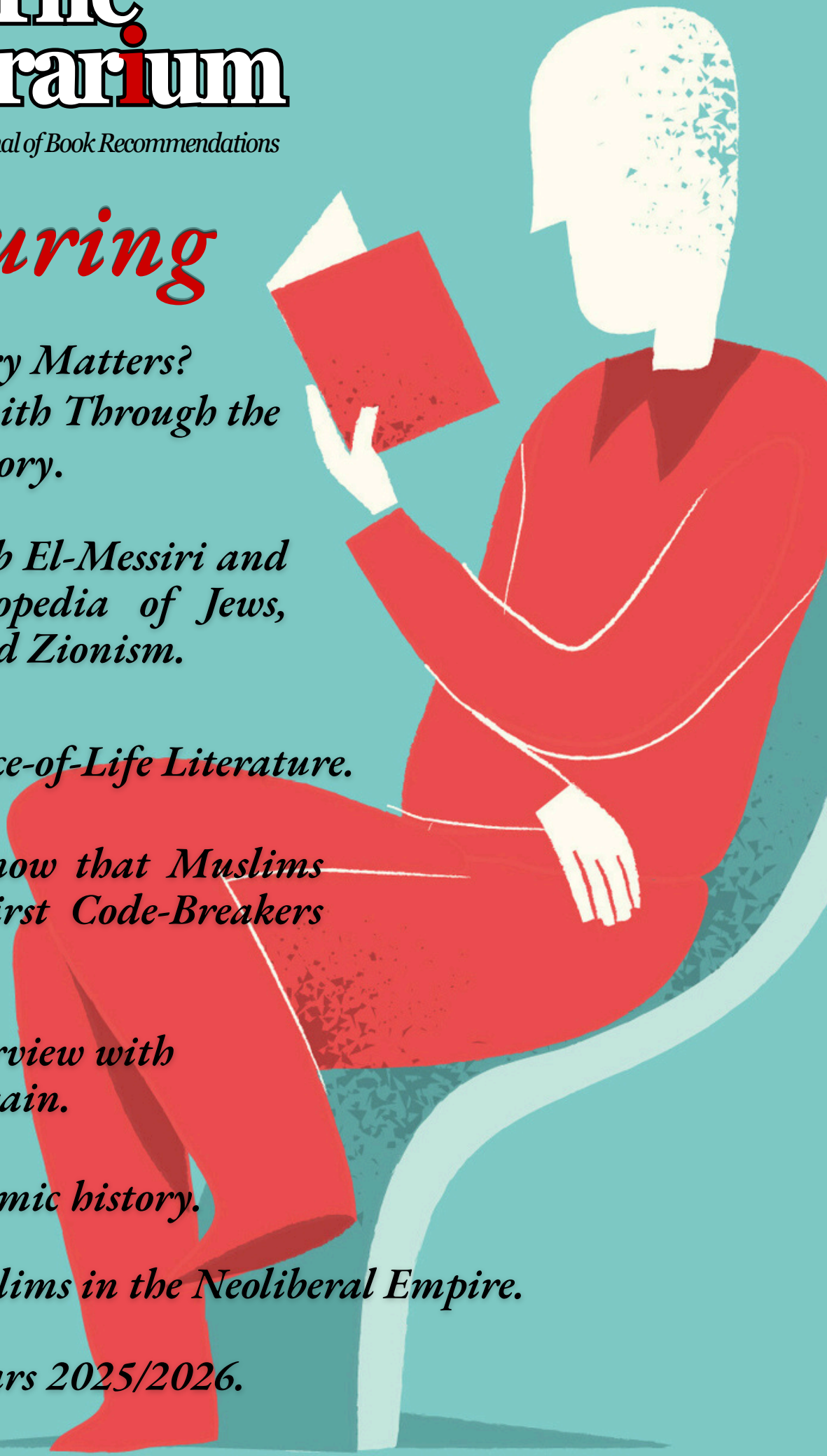
*Did You Know that Muslims  
Were the First Code-Breakers  
in History?*

*Author interview with  
Tharik Hussain.*

*General Islamic history.*

*British Muslims in the Neoliberal Empire.*

*Reading Years 2025/2026.*



# The Literarium

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Editor**

*Preface*

**Dr. Shamim Miah**

*Introduction*

**Prof. Khairudin Aljunied**

*General Islamic History*

**Dr. Yakoob Ahmed**

*Insight into Why History Matters?  
Reviving Faith Through the  
Lens of History*

**Abdul Hai**

*A Glimpse into the Life and Work  
of Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri*

**Halema Bibi**

*Reading Slice-of-Life Literature*

**Tharik Hussain**

*An Interview on His Latest Book:  
Muslim Europe*

**Dr. Shamim Miah**

*Reading Years*

**Dr. William Barylo**

*Looking into British Muslims  
in the Neoliberal Empire*

**Mufti Khalidul Haq**

*Reading in Coolness*



# The Literarium

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# Preface

When I offered a book to someone at a community fair some years ago, their response was, “*I don’t read, brother.*” I reflected on this and questioned how such a situation could arise, given that the first revelation to the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the command to “read.” Historical accounts indicate that prisoners captured during the Battle of Badr were ransomed in exchange for teaching Muslims literacy. This clearly underscores the importance that Islam places on reading and education.

Culture and traditions are preserved primarily through the act of reading. In an age dominated by rapid digital consumption, not cultivating the habit of reading may cause a Muslim generation with the risk of losing its Islamic history, culture, and traditions to emerge. This concern is particularly pressing for Muslims living in Western societies, who often face continuous pressure to assimilate and adopt Western cultural norms. This can subtly create the impression that Islamic heritage is outdated.

It is, therefore, especially vital for Muslims in the diaspora to reconnect with their Islamic heritage and reclaim their narrative. Otherwise, as Chinua Achebe observed, “*Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.*” This statement highlights the urgency of self-representation and sustained intellectual engagement. Now, more than ever, it is imperative for Muslims to fulfill their intellectual and religious responsibilities by engaging with their history, notable personalities, and social and political heritage. Such engagement is essential for developing a grounded and confident understanding of the world through an Islamic perspective.

In this regard, the Islamic Literary Society has been at the forefront of providing avenues for reconnecting with the rich Islamic literary tradition through a range of initiatives. This latest publication, *The Literarium*, offers Muslims a constructive and curated reading programme, with recommendations from subject experts and enthusiastic readers. It serves as a valuable stepping stone towards viewing the world through an Islamic lens. As an annual publication, it allows readers sufficient time to select and engage meaningfully with their chosen books.

It is hoped that this publication will present carefully selected works that make the reading experience both enjoyable and, more importantly, beneficial not only for the individual, but for the wider Ummah.

Editor  
Abdul Hai  
2026



# Introduction

The Islamic history bears testimony to the strong and enduring tradition of the love of books. Not only did scholars dedicate time and effort to the craft of written text, but books were also frequently bought, sold, and exchanged in the open market. *Kitab al-Fihrist* or the Book Catalogue compiled by Ibn al-Nadim provides insight into the rich tapestry of culture of books in the tenth century. It provides an account of the complex intellectual culture which revolved around books, ideas, and scholarship. *Al-Fihrist*, available in the English language as a two-volume set by Bayard Dudge, references approximately 10,000 books and over 3,500 authors. It covers a range of topics and disciplines, including Quran, Hadith, Islamic law, poetry, and Islamic philosophy.

As a devoted book collector, Ibn al-Nadim provides a partial glimpse into the critical role books played in shaping and nurturing the Islamic civilisation. It is well established that *al-Fihrist* is an incomplete catalogue of books and it partly illustrates the literary culture in the tenth century. Nevertheless, it provides a sociological account of the reciprocal relationship between Baghdad and its written intellectual heritage. Ibn al-Nadim shows how Baghdad shaped its books, and how books, in turn, shaped the city.

In fact, tenth-century Baghdad was not the only Muslim city that was famous for its book culture. As early as the fifteenth-century, the west African city of Timbuktu, famous for its Islamic learning, especially Quranic sciences, came to be associated with its prestigious centres of learning and libraries. In *Writing Timbuktu: The Book in West African History*, Shamil Jeppie explores the rich culture associated with the ‘manuscript-book’ tradition revolving around the unbounded pages held together between beautifully crafted leather covers.

The ‘manuscript-book’ tradition played a central role in the scholarly debates around finer points of theological and legal discourses and created a society rooted in book culture. Indeed, the book culture contributed immensely to the shaping of the intellectual landscape of Islam, and this observation is captured succinctly in *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* by Francis Rosenthal.

Rosenthal noted the problematic nature of translating “ilm” as “knowledge,” because it failed to capture the factual and emotional expression embodied within the concept of ilm, especially given that ilm is one of the concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilisation its distinctive shape and complexion. In fact, there is no other concept that has been more critical in determining the direction of Muslim civilisation in all its aspects than the pursuit and dissemination of ilm. Indeed, some scholars were bold enough to make the claim that there are very few ideas within Islam which carry more depth of meaning and have a wider range of uses than ilm. This led many among the ulama to conclude that ‘ilm is Islam and Islam is ilm.’ As Rosenthal notes, there is ‘no branch of Muslim intellectual life, of Muslim religious and political life, and of the daily life of the average Muslim that remained untouched by the all-pervasive attitude toward “knowledge” as something of supreme value for Muslim being.’

The above historical context demands the following question about the current Muslim condition: what now constitutes supreme value for Muslim being? If we take the pre-modern intellectual heritage outlined earlier, the centrality of the written word, the pursuit of knowledge, and the culture of books not only stood at the centre of Muslim societies but also defined the very essence of Muslim civilisation. It will be difficult to argue that the above passion, virtue, and quest occupy the central position in current Muslim societies.

The launch and publication of *The Literarium: An Annual Journal of Book Recommendations* by the ILS Press, hopes to recentre the Muslim popular culture towards reading, thinking, and nourishing the appetite for books. This inaugural edition brings together a diverse range of voices of academics, writers, historians, and literary enthusiasts. *The Literarium* complements and adds more value to its existing projects, such as the *ILS Digest* and *Other Words: An International Journal of Creative Writing*. It further explores and examines the power of literature to shape moral imagination and nurture a collective scholarly and literary consciousness. *The Literarium* offers book reviews, author interviews, and reflective essays that guide readers toward meaningful engagement with both classical and contemporary works. As an annual publication, it aims to nurture a thoughtful reading habit, giving individuals the critical space and time to use the craft of written word to enrich personal faith whilst reviving the wider Ummah.

Dr. Shamim Miah



“لَيْسَ الْيَتِيمُ الَّذِي قَدْ مَاتَ وَالِدُهُ  
إِنَّ الْيَتِيمَ يَتِيمُ الْعِلْمِ وَالْأَدَبِ”

“He is not an orphan whose father has passed away; rather, the true orphan is the one bereft of knowledge and literature”

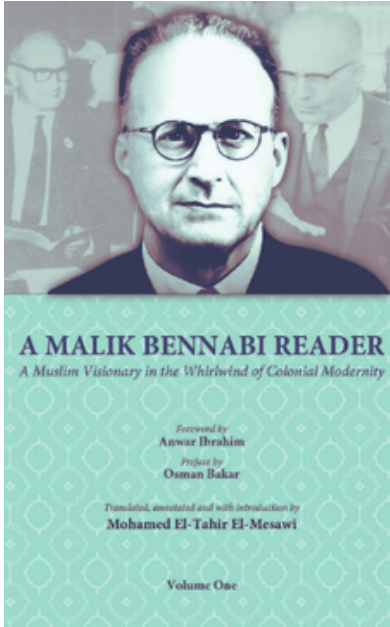
*Ali bin Abi Talib*



# General Islamic History

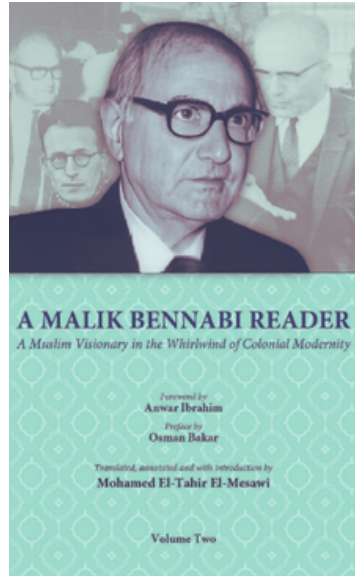
## Khairudin Aljunied

Dr. Khairudin Aljunied (PhD SOAS, London) is a professor of Islam in Southeast Asia at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM). He is concurrently an associate professor at the National University of Singapore and a senior fellow (formerly a professor) as well as the Malaysia Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia at the Alwaleed Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University.

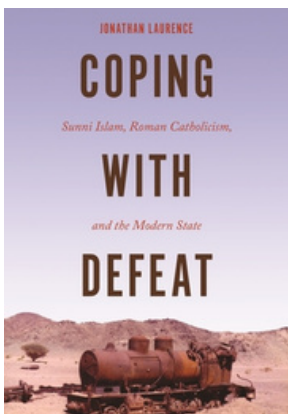


*A Malek Bennabi Reader* (2025) is a curated introduction to the thought of Malek Bennabi (1905–1973), one of the most influential modern Muslim intellectuals from North Africa. The volume gathers key selections from his major writings, presenting his lifelong effort to diagnose the causes of civilizational decline in the Muslim world and to articulate a path toward renewal.

At the heart of Bennabi’s work is his celebrated concept of “colonizability,” the internal cultural, intellectual, and moral conditions that make a society vulnerable to external domination. For Bennabi, external colonialism is only possible when a society has already fallen into a state of intellectual stagnation, loss of creativity, and social disorganization.



*Coping with Defeat: Sunni Islam, Roman Catholicism, and the Modern State* by Jonathan Laurence (2021) traces parallels between the institutional trajectories of Sunni Islam and Roman Catholicism under the rise of the modern nation-state. Three major ‘defeats’ (empire, state formation, migration) reshape their roles. He argues that religious institutions adapt by shifting from direct governance to spiritual authority and global networks rather than mere disestablishment.



## Call for Submissions

### Ihya’ Journal of Islamic Thought

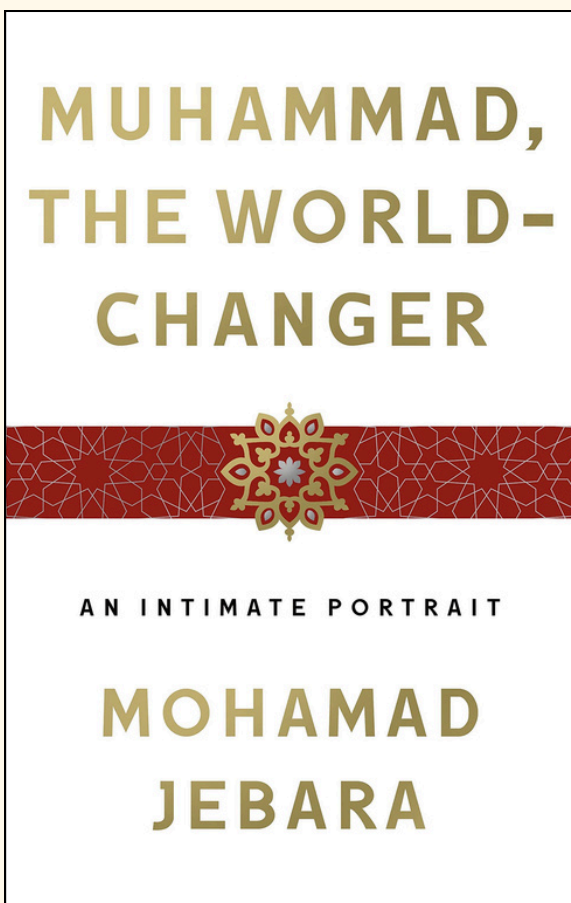
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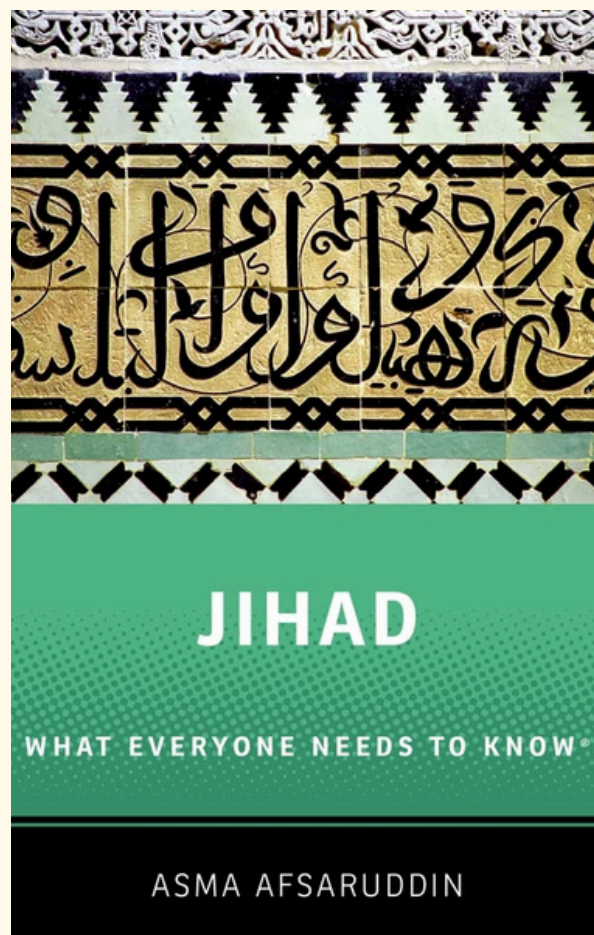
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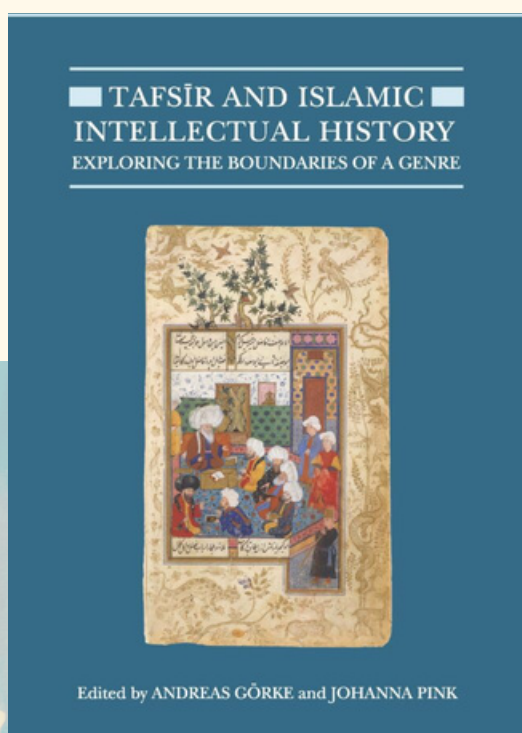


This biography of the Prophet Muhammad offers more than life-narrative; it highlights how his moral, spiritual, and political persona shaped the early Islamic worldview. Mohamad Jebara portrays Muhammad in human terms—his decisions, strategies, values—and draws lines between prophetic action and modern Muslim ethical/political questions. A great way to bring ideas alive for general readers.



*Jihad: What Everyone Needs to Know* by Asma Afsaruddin (2022) provides a clear Q&A style survey of jihad, peeling back common misunderstandings. She shows the term's layered meanings—spiritual striving, moral effort, defensive warfare—across Islamic tradition and contrasts how modern militant, political, and popular uses diverge from classical ethical frameworks. It is aimed at general readers.

*Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre* (2015) treats Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr) as a site of intellectual history, showing how commentators over time, across regions, transformed their methods in response to changing intellectual, social, and political contexts—therefore unpacking how a core Islamic genre engages thinking, transmission, and innovation.

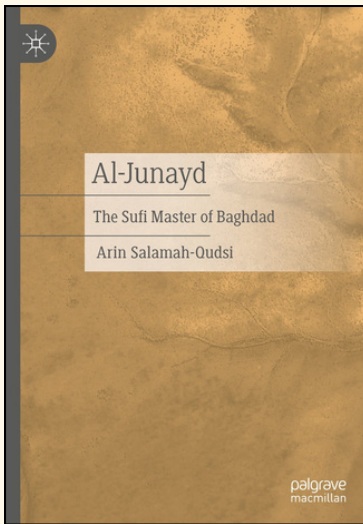


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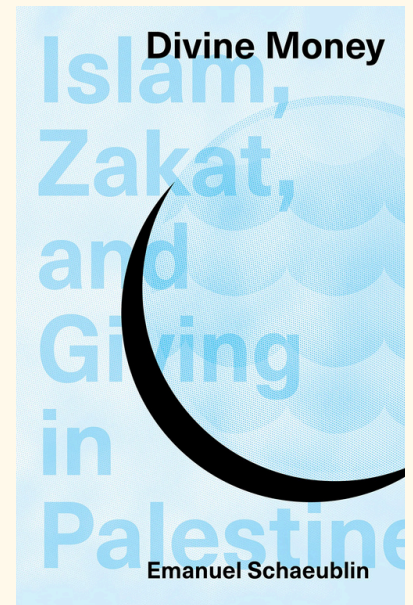
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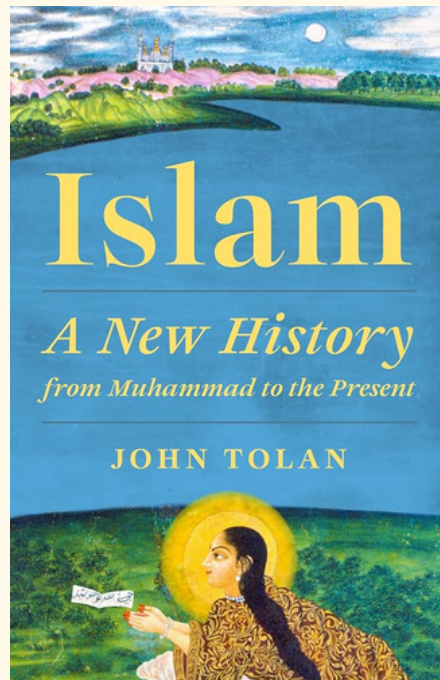


*Al-Junayd: The Sufi Master of Baghdad* by Arin Salamah-Qudsi (2025) is a monograph that reconstructs the life, thought, and legacy of Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 910 CE), a pivotal figure in early Sufism. Using his correspondence and treatises, the author situates Junayd’s ideas within the intellectual, social, and spiritual settings of the ninth-century Baghdad and traces their reception in the modern media age as well.

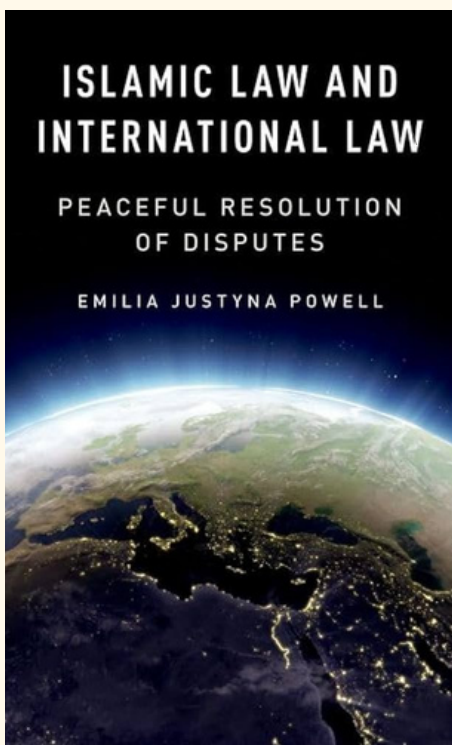


*Divine Money: Islam, Zakat and Giving in Palestine* by Emanuel Schaeublin (2023) presents an ethnographic study of zakāt and charitable giving in contemporary Palestine, showing how Islamic norms of mutual aid function under military occupation and institutional fragility. He argues that zakāt flows act as informal social security for households in Nablus and beyond, revealing how religious obligation, politics, and survival intertwine in the Muslim philanthropic landscape.

*Islam: A New History from Muhammad to the Present* by John Tolan (2023) is a monograph that proposes a “new history” of Islam that re-frames the narrative away from decline models. It highlights dynamic intellectual, social, and cultural networks across regions, emphasising how Muslims have engaged with change, reform, and global exchange. Its accessible tone makes it well suited for adaptation into public-facing writing.



*Islamic Law and International Law: Peaceful Settlement of Disputes* by Emilia Justyna Powell (2020) explores how states rooted in the Islamic legal tradition engage with the global order of international law, especially in resolving disputes. Drawing on empirical data and interviews, she argues that Islamic law-states do not inherently reject international dispute resolution but respond in context-specific ways shaped by domestic legal systems and historical legacies.



# *Why History Matters? Reviving Faith Through the Lens of History*

## *Dr. Yakooab Ahmed*

Dr. Yakooab Ahmed is an assistant professor in the Ilahiyat Department at Istanbul University and a researcher at ISAMER. He holds a PhD from SOAS, University of London, where he also completed his master's in Near and Middle Eastern Studies. His work focuses on Late Ottoman history, Muslim intellectual thought, and identity formation. He also writes for Middle East Eye and TRT World.



### *A Strange Beginning*

This book began almost by accident. I was fully absorbed in writing my first academic study on the Ottoman Empire when Ömer Faruk from Ketebe Publishing reached out with a suggestion I had never considered:

“Would you write a book explaining why Muslims should study history?”

His question caught me completely off guard. I doubted whether I was the right person for such a project and whether anyone in the Muslim community would be interested in reading it. Previous pushback from some within the academic world had already made me cautious. Yet Ömer remained certain of the idea and strangely, certain of me. His confidence steadied me when my own was wavering.

My first attempt at writing the book was chaotic, a collection of scattered thoughts and reflections. Still, Ömer reassured me: “Write it, and let Allah take care of the rest.”

Those words lingered with me long after our meeting.

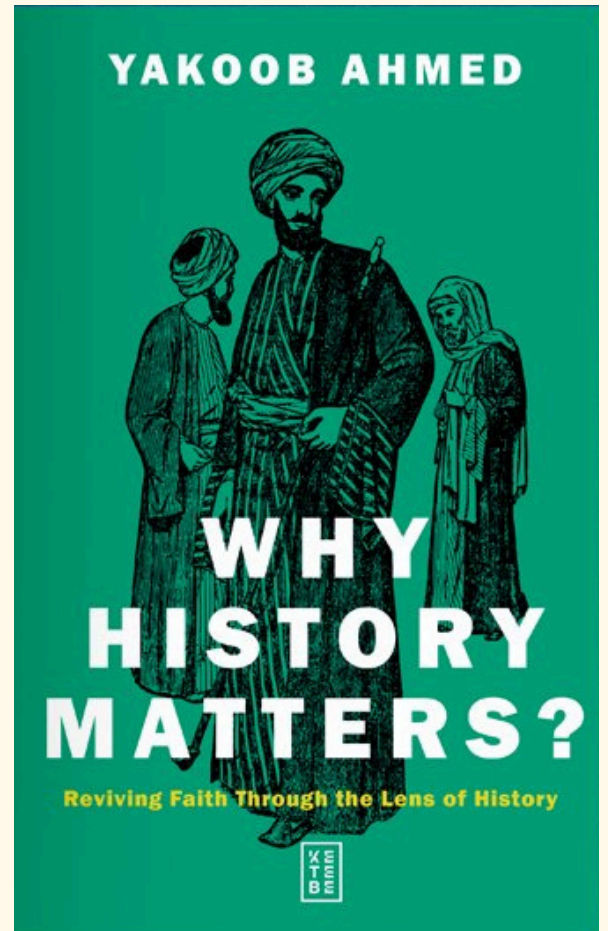
### *Finding Purpose Through Du‘a*

That evening, I thought deeply about his advice. I remembered something I often tell my students about du‘a: it isn’t a transaction. It’s not measured by what we receive. The very desire to turn to Allah is itself a sign of His attention and mercy. That realisation brought me calm, and with it, a renewed sense of direction.

### *Writing as a Muslim Historian*

One of the driving forces behind this book was a growing tension I felt while working in academic spaces. Although I studied Islamic history, I wasn’t allowed to use the Qur’an, Sunnah, or the perspectives of our scholars as part of my analytical framework. Meanwhile, the Ottoman scholars I researched did use revelation as a central intellectual tool.

*“Write it, and let Allah take care of the rest.”*



*“I wrote it as an act of sadaqah jariyah”*

This gap made me ask a simple but significant question:

Can I write not only as a historian who is Muslim but as a Muslim historian?

This book became an attempt to do exactly that to write history that is guided by faith rather than stripped of it. Friends encouraged me, reminding me that the point was not to craft a perfect argument but to begin a much-needed conversation.

### *Revisiting Our Tradition*

In these pages, I aimed to show that our sacred sources are more than devotional texts; they offer ways of thinking about the past. I revisited classical Muslim ideas such as cyclical theories of history, and I explored the richness of Islamic civilisation beyond its artistic achievements, including politics, ethics, scholarship, and communal life.

I also reflected on the relationship between history and imagination. I believe Muslim writers should create stories inspired by our own tradition rather than mimic popular Western narratives, while historians can learn from the storytelling craft of fiction writers. Each discipline strengthens the other.

### *A Beginning, Not an Ending*

This book is a starting point. It isn't meant to be polished or final. Its conversational style mirrors the way I teach and engage with students honest, reflective, and heartfelt. I wrote it as an act of sadaqah jariyah, hoping it benefits those who read it.

## *Support the Islamic Literary Society.*

*For centuries, Islamic civilisation produced a rich legacy of literature—works of knowledge, wisdom, and culture that shaped the world. The Islamic Literary Society is dedicated to reviving this tradition by promoting Islamic books, writers, and intellectual discussion.*

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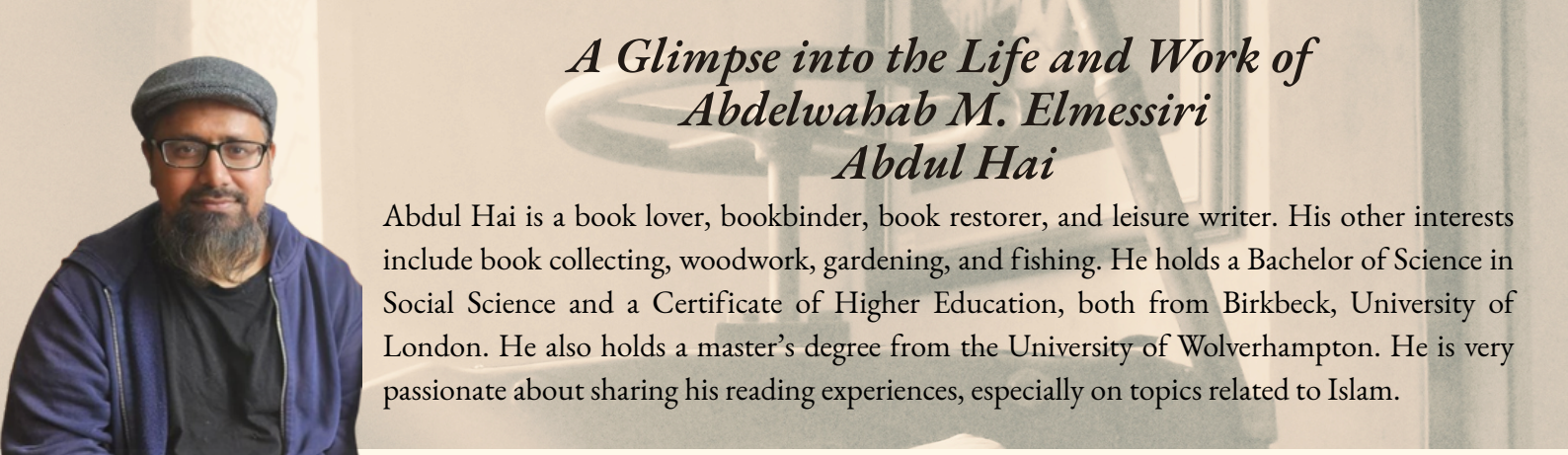


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## *A Glimpse into the Life and Work of Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri Abdul Hai*

Abdul Hai is a book lover, bookbinder, book restorer, and leisure writer. His other interests include book collecting, woodworking, gardening, and fishing. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Science and a Certificate of Higher Education, both from Birkbeck, University of London. He also holds a master's degree from the University of Wolverhampton. He is very passionate about sharing his reading experiences, especially on topics related to Islam.



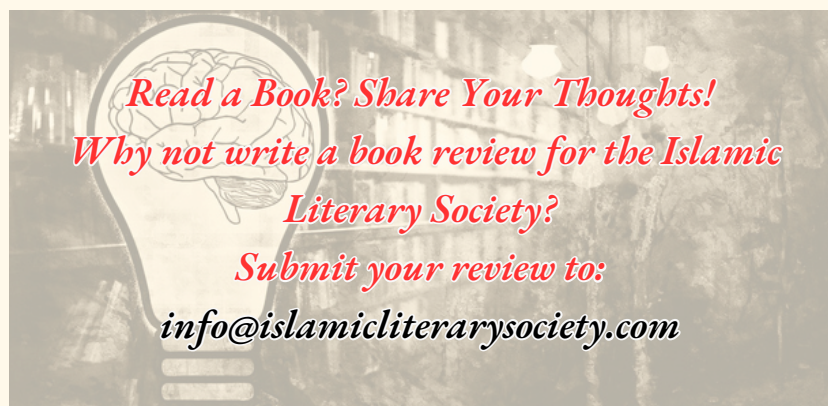
*Prof. Abdelwahab Elmessiri was born in Damanbur, Egypt and graduated with a BA in English Literature from Alexandria University in 1959. He went on to receive an MA in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University in 1964, followed by a PhD in the same field from Rutgers University in 1969. From 1988, Elmessiri served as Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Ain Shams University, Egypt. In addition, he held positions as a university professor at King Saud University, Saudi Arabia (1983–1988) and Kuwait University, Kuwait (1988–1989) and as a visiting professor at the International Islamic University Malaysia.*

### **PICK OF THE YEAR**

While battling a terminal illness at the Palestine Hospital in Cairo, Prof. Abdelwahab Elmessiri did not allow his condition to impede his intellectual work and clarity of thought. Sadly, he passed away on Thursday, 3 July 2008, at the age of 70. Prof. Elmessiri was perhaps one of the last Egyptian intellectuals capable of transcending orientalist perspectives, particularly with regard to the Muslim world.

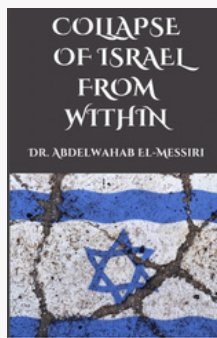
He began his intellectual journey as a Marxist at the age of sixteen but soon embraced the pure Islamic doctrine following the birth of his daughter, an experience that profoundly reshaped his outlook on life. His voice then became a powerful instrument in the struggle against colonial structures, with a particular emphasis on the Zionist and Jewish colonial presence in Palestine. For the subsequent thirty years, Prof. Elmessiri dedicated himself to writing and lecturing on the Palestinian cause and, more broadly, on Western hegemony over the Muslim world.

Elmessiri authored over fifty books across a wide range of subjects, including postmodernism, secularism, Muslim political thought, Palestinian liberation movements, the Intifada, Palestinian poetry, and English literature. Perhaps his most notable achievement is the eight-volume *Mūsū‘at al-Yahūd wa-l-Yahūdiyya wa-l-Şihyūniyya: Namūdhaj Tafsīri Jadīd* (Encyclopaedia of Jews, Judaism and Zionism).



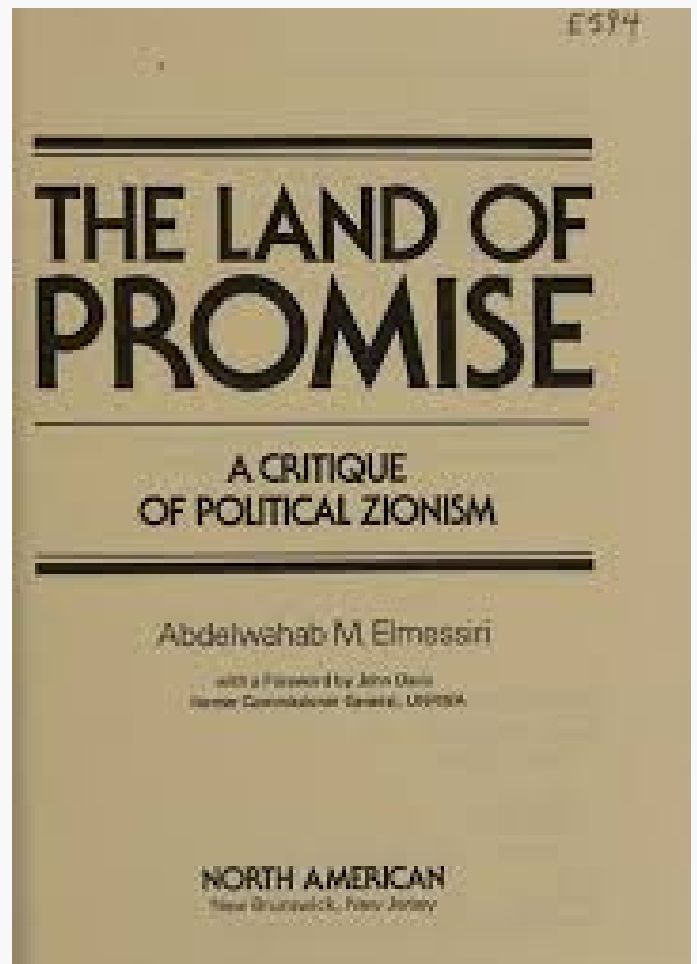
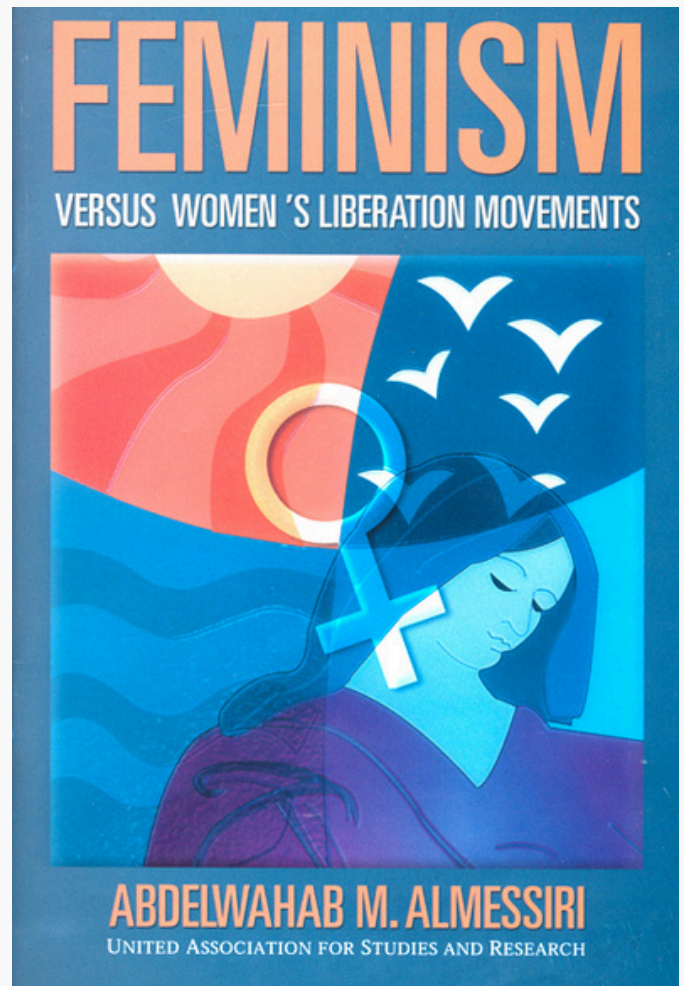
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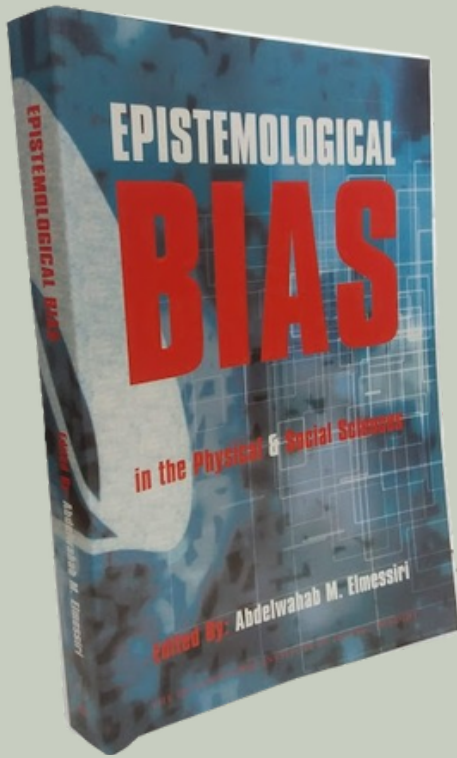
His work on Jews, Judaism, and Zionism is remarkable for its perspective. Most notably, Elmessiri examined Zionism from the standpoint of its victims, the Palestinians, rather than solely from the perspective of European colonisers. He contextualised Zionism within a broader religious and socio-historical framework, presenting it as part of the Western colonial project and positioning the settlers as outsiders rather than as natives of the land. Another significant contribution of this study is its provision of a lens through which Muslims can understand Zionism from their own perspective, rather than through Western narratives.



Elmessiri's life and literary contributions are perhaps more urgently in need of study now than at any other time. His life offers lessons and perspectives that cut through a world overshadowed by the immoral and uncivilised values of dominant Western culture, offering a voice of clarity, integrity, and intellectual courage.

There is no denying that the Muslim world, particularly the Gulf states, has in many ways become subservient to Western philosophies of life, emulating Western practices and adopting the West as a model to be followed. Nowhere in our history has such intellectual subjugation existed: the slavery of the mind, which is far more insidious than physical slavery. Elmessiri serves as an antidote to this form of mental enslavement. His work encourages Muslims to critically understand the West and recognise its flaws and equips them with the intellectual tools to articulate a worldview grounded in Islamic principles. It is for this reason that Elmessiri's writings are essential and continue to merit careful study and reflection.



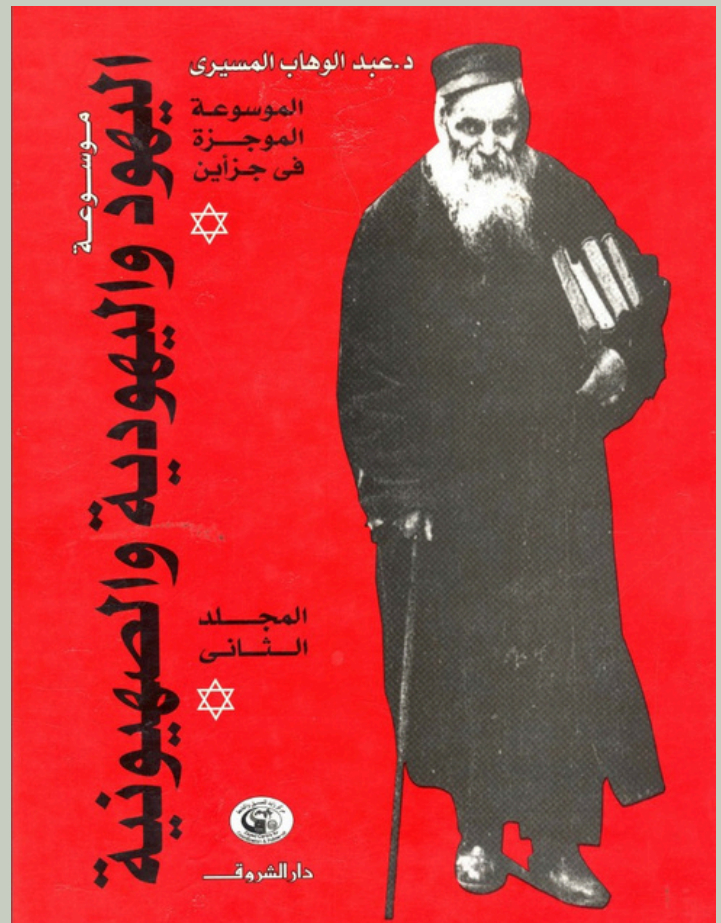


*Epistemological Bias in the Physical & Social Sciences*, edited by Abdel Wahab M. Elmessiri, is a collection of eleven scholarly articles examining how Western intellectual traditions carry inherent biases that subtly impose cultural paradigms globally. The book critiques Western methodologies in both the physical and social sciences, arguing they are neither universal nor fully applicable to Muslim societies. Contributors highlight that Western progress, while significant, arose from historical circumstances like imperialism and colonization, making it largely unrepeatable elsewhere.

The publication advocates an Arab-Muslim-centered approach to development that integrates useful aspects of Western advancement while grounding progress in Islamic ethics, the Quran, Sunnah, and historical heritage. Through literary and historical analysis, including works by Achebe and Tayeb Salih, the book demonstrates that Western epistemological bias can be challenged. Its ultimate goal is to empower Muslims to achieve intellectual and material progress on their own terms, fostering critical understanding of the global narrative.

This is a comprehensive multi-volume Arabic encyclopedia that explores the history of the Hebrews in the ancient world and the development of Jewish communities worldwide. It examines their population distribution, defining traits, social and organizational structures, and the relationships of Jewish individuals with the societies they inhabit as well as with the Zionist state. The encyclopedia also highlights notable Jewish figures, such as Maimonides, and influential non-Jewish figures connected to Jewish history, including Napoleon and Hitler.

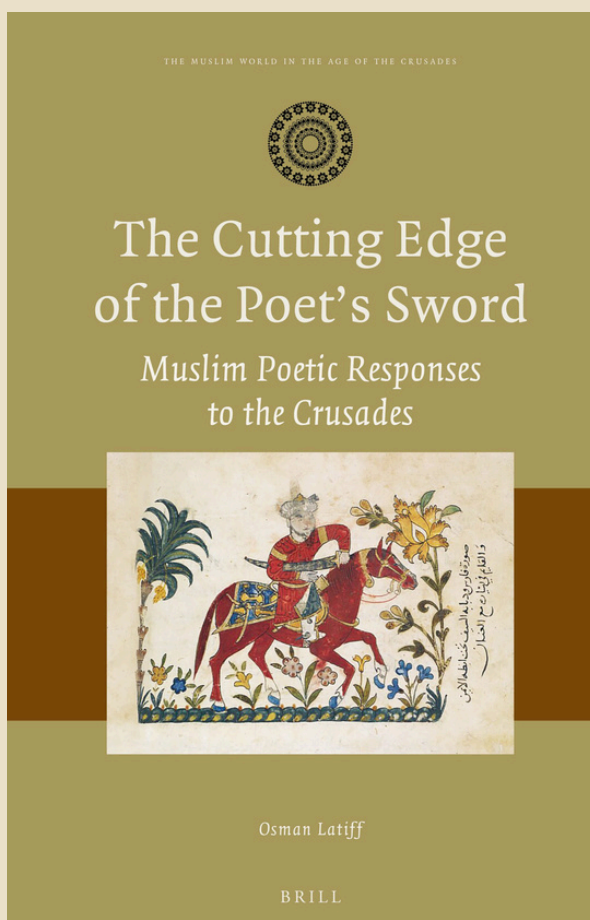
Moreover, it covers all aspects of Judaism, including its sects, religious texts, rituals, and ceremonies, while addressing its modern challenges, its connections with Zionism, and encounters with antisemitism. The work further provides an in-depth account of the Zionist movement, detailing its activities, educational institutions, leading figures, and key aspects of the Zionist state.



*“Zionist thought is thoroughly Western in its essence. The Zionist worldview is one of the many byproducts of modern Western imperialist ideology. This is clear in the ‘apologetics’ put forth by Zionists: arguments crafted to deflect blame and justify aggressive acts, wrapping them in a cloak of meaning. Though they include some Jewish elements, these apologetics are essentially Western to the core. They rely on a perception of the self (the actor) and the other (the acted upon), from which a theory of rights is derived rights for the actor, none for the other.”*

# *The Cutting Edge of the Poet's Sword: Muslim Poetic Responses to the Crusades*

## *Dr. Osman Latiff*

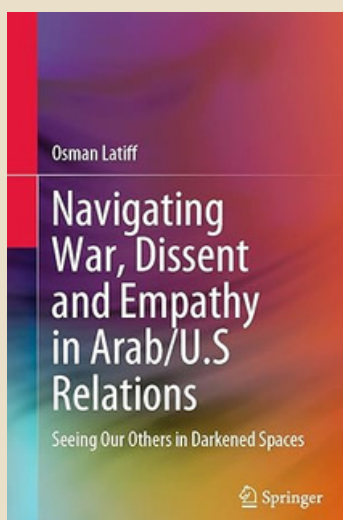


The Cutting Edge of the Poet's Sword examines how literature particularly poetry served as a powerful tool for resistance in the Muslim world, fostering both political mobilisation and collective consciousness during the ongoing Crusader campaigns, especially in Jerusalem. Dr. Osman Latiff argues that poetry was far more than a cultural pastime or entertainment; it played a sophisticated and crucial role in shaping the mindset of political elites, religious figures, and ordinary people, instilling a sense of urgency to resist the Crusaders.

The book explores a wide range of literary works and poetry in Muslim society, demonstrating how they were employed to mobilise communities in response to the Crusade. Poets shifted from expressing grief and lifting the veil of silence to actively constructing narratives of holy struggle, weaving together historical and chronological accounts. Latiff shows how poetry transformed Jerusalem in the Muslim imagination from a distant land into a sacred, non-negotiable symbol of faith, galvanising society to confront the Crusaders.

Furthermore, the work examines the psychological dimensions of the conflict, illustrating how the "poet's sword" was used to define the Crusader "Other" while simultaneously elevating leaders like Saladin to the status of divinely appointed liberators. Latiff meticulously demonstrates that the military successes of the counter-crusade were deeply rooted in this intellectual and emotional groundwork. The book serves as a vital reminder that the battle for the Levant was fought not just on the field with steel but in the hearts and minds of the people through the enduring power of the written word.

*Other titles by Dr. Osman Latiff*



*“Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.”*

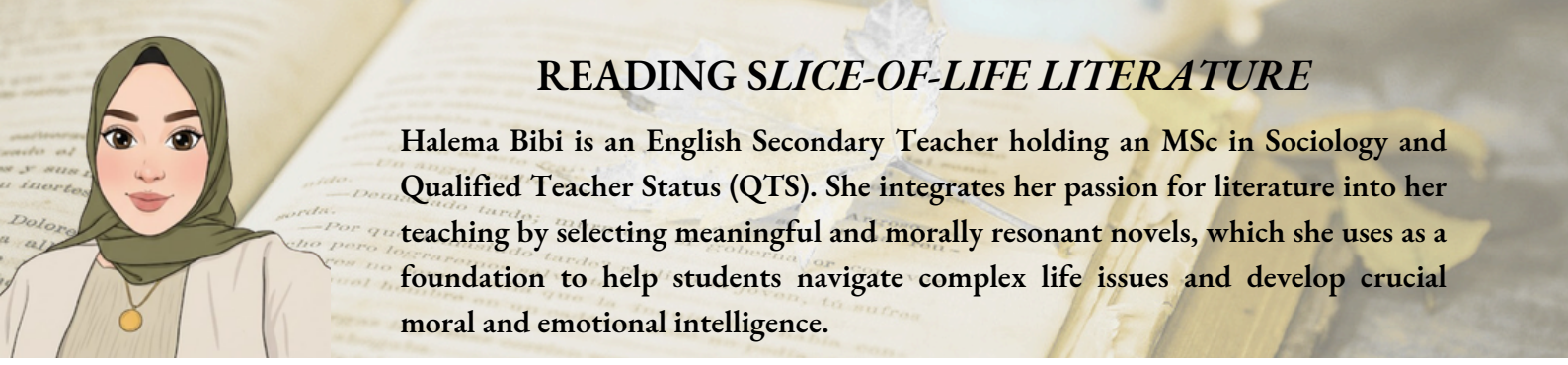
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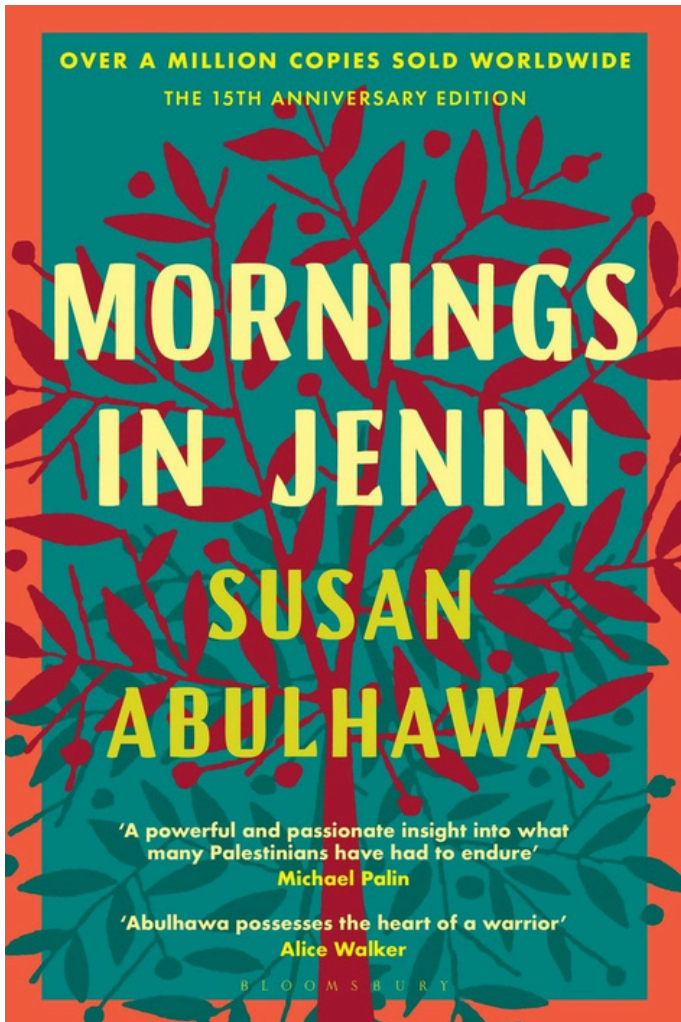
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## READING *SLICE-OF-LIFE LITERATURE*

**Halema Bibi is an English Secondary Teacher holding an MSc in Sociology and Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). She integrates her passion for literature into her teaching by selecting meaningful and morally resonant novels, which she uses as a foundation to help students navigate complex life issues and develop crucial moral and emotional intelligence.**

Reading should be more than an escape; it should be a mirror. I constantly seek books that are rich in meaning and moral insight, works that genuinely put life into perspective. This is precisely why I am so deeply drawn to slice-of-life literature. I believe we often forget that everyone has a story, and that the most profound narratives are not always found in epic fantasy or high-stakes thrillers. Slice-of-life books focus on the quiet, often overlooked beauty of the ordinary. They deliberately slow the pace and honour the small, everyday moments: a family dinner, a difficult conversation, or a moment of profound realisation over a cup of coffee. I value these books because they remind us that the most significant struggles, the deepest moral lessons, and the truest forms of character development occur in daily life. They affirm the complexity and worth of ordinary experience, demonstrating that what appears mundane is, in fact, overflowing with meaning.



This novel explores profound themes of love, loss, war, and systemic oppression through a deeply personal narrative. At its core is the harrowing story of a Palestinian mother whose child is forcibly taken from her and raised within Israeli society an act that lays bare the human cost of geopolitical conflict. The narrative confronts the brutal realities of war, illuminating the psychological and emotional toll borne by those living under occupation.

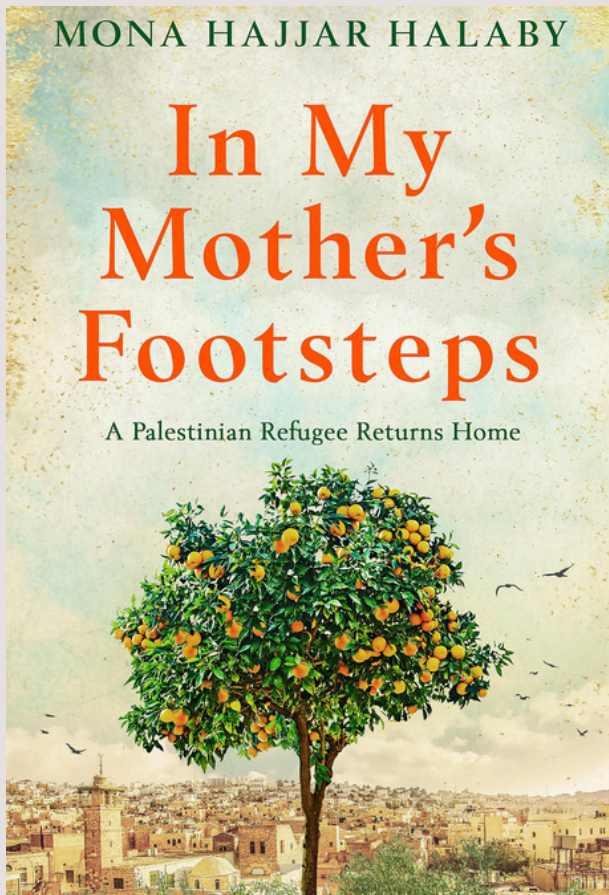
Beyond its portrayal of suffering, the novel stands as a powerful testament to the resilience and perseverance of the Palestinian people. It offers readers a poignant reminder that, despite enduring immense hardship and displacement, communities continue to preserve their identity, dignity, and faith. The story is also infused with a spiritual dimension, reflecting the belief that trials are divinely ordained for those strong enough to endure them—echoing the Islamic principle that Allah tests His most steadfast believers.





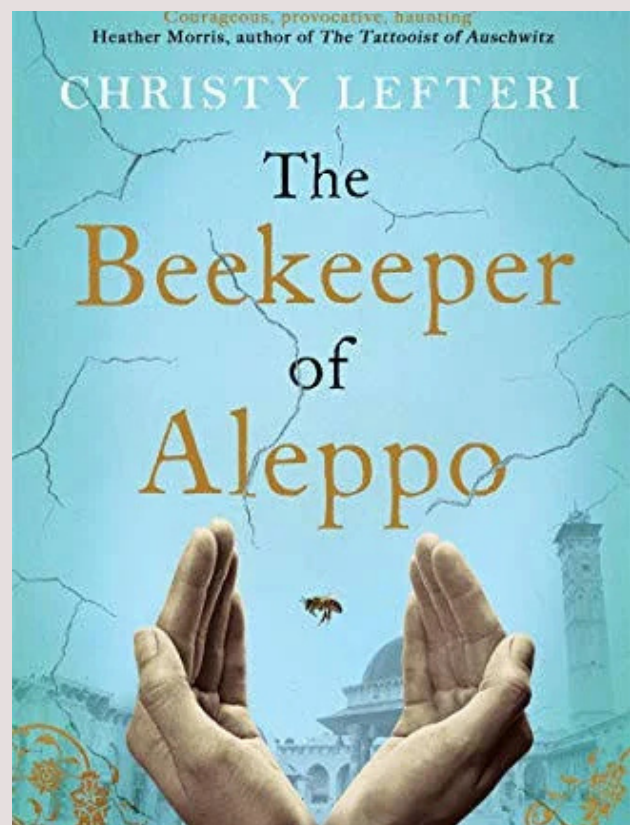
The story of Nana, an abandoned cat who finds companionship with Satoru, explores themes of loyalty, belonging, and the enduring nature of relationships. Initially isolated and without a sense of community, Nana discovers profound meaning through his bond with Satoru. When Satoru's illness makes it necessary to find Nana a new home, the cat's refusal to leave reveals the depth of his attachment and the unseen yet deeply felt power of love.

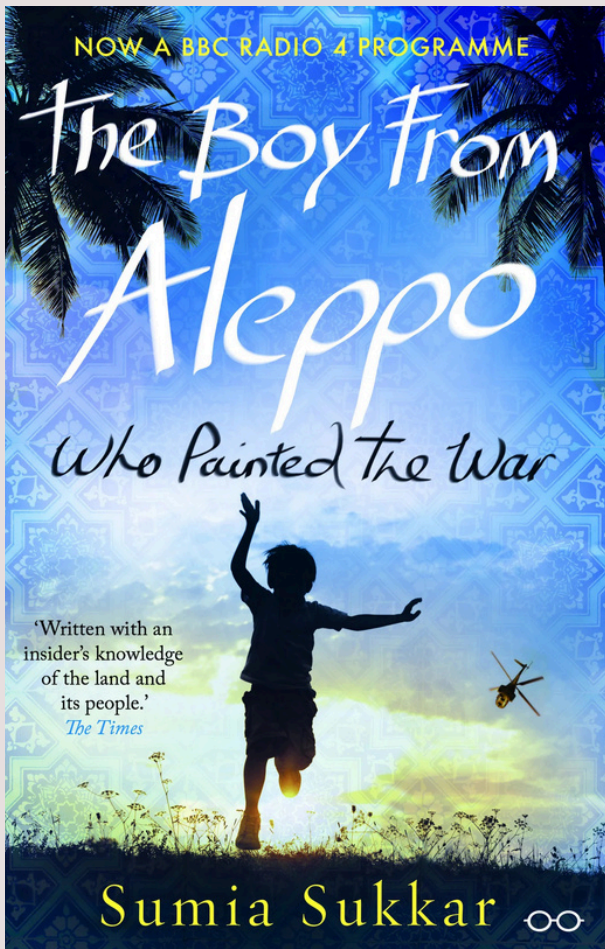
This narrative resonates with the Qur'anic emphasis on compassion (rahma) and stewardship (khilāfa). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught that mercy towards animals reflects mercy towards all creation: "Whoever is kind to the creatures of God is kind to himself" (Hadith, Bukhari). Nana's loyalty and Satoru's care embody this principle, reminding us that relationships with animals are not peripheral but integral to the ethical life of a believer.



Mona Hajar's return to Palestine, marked by her confrontation with her mother's dispossessed home now occupied by settlers, stands as a powerful symbol of grappling with inherited trauma and collective memory. Her narrative unfolds not within the framework of conventional pedagogy but amid the extraordinary circumstances of children whose formative years have been shattered by violence. These students, though chronologically eleven or twelve, display a developmental arrest rooted in the earliest traumatic experiences they endured at the age of five or six. For them, education is not merely a matter of literacy or numeracy; it is an existential struggle to continue learning and living in the relentless shadow of war.

Nuri, once a prosperous beekeeper, endures the devastating rupture of civil war, which compels him, his wife, and their son to flee their homeland. The bombing of his village leads to the tragic death of his child and the loss of his wife's sight, leaving Nuri with the profound responsibility of protecting what remains of his family. His subsequent decision to undertake migration along perilous routes highlights the existential burden of displacement and the relentless struggle for survival.

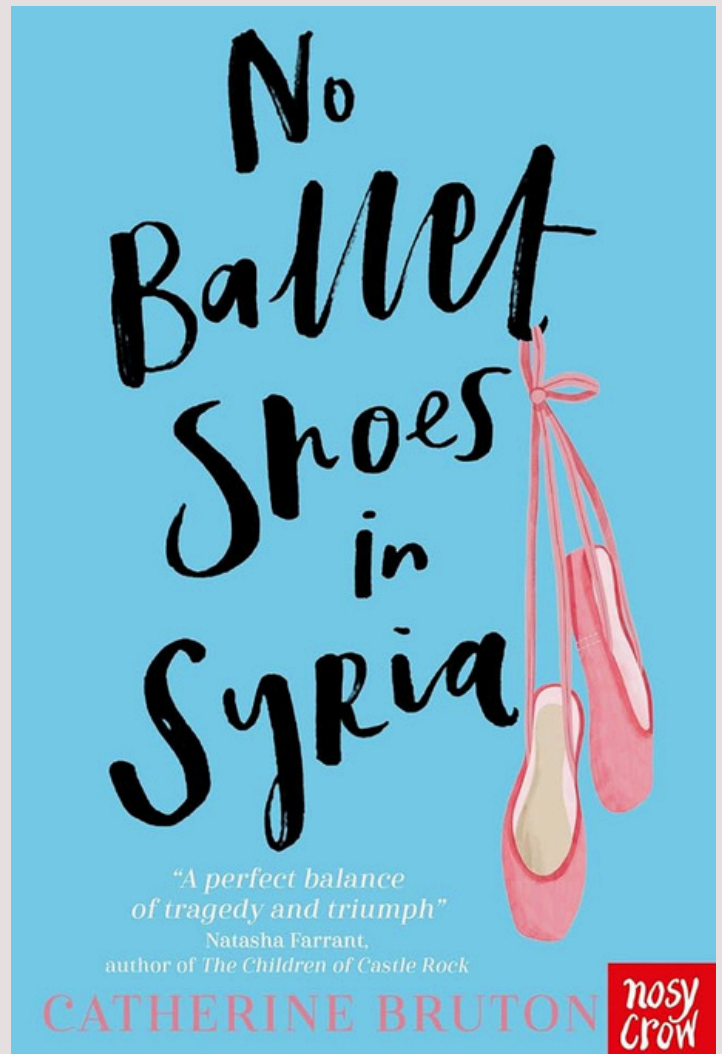


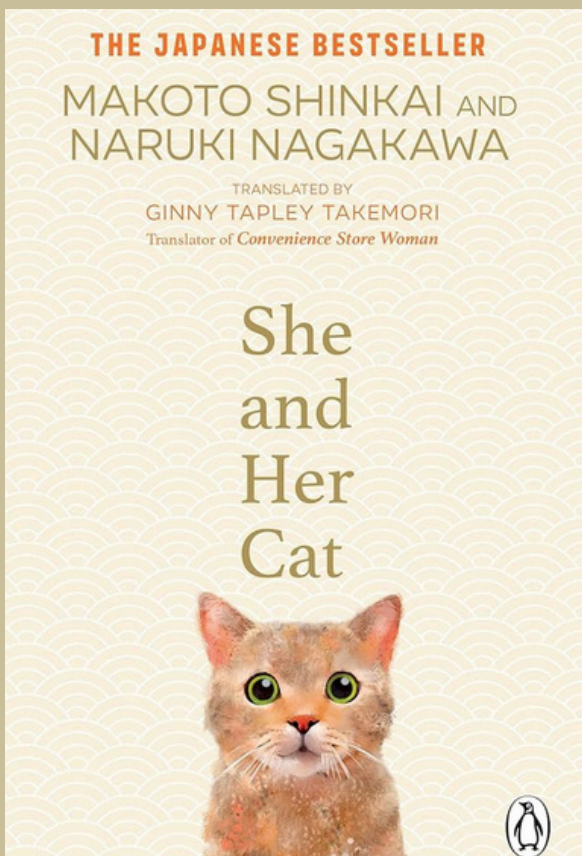


Adam, a young boy with autism, endures the profound loss of his mother and finds solace only in the compassionate presence of his elder sister, Yasmine. His understanding of the ongoing war is limited; he cannot comprehend its political or historical causes. Instead, he interprets his role through the act of painting, believing that his creative expression might help to bring an end to the violence. This narrative illuminates the intersection of trauma, disability, and resilience within the context of armed conflict, offering a poignant insight into how children strive to construct meaning in the face of incomprehensible suffering.

Aya, an eleven-year-old refugee, arrives in Britain after fleeing the devastation of war in Syria. She lives with her mother and infant brother in temporary accommodation, a situation that reflects the precarious realities faced by displaced families. Within this fragile environment, Aya discovers a local ballet class, where her natural talent is swiftly recognised by her teacher, who believes she has the potential to earn a scholarship and pursue a professional career in dance.

Yet Aya's story is shaped by the tension between aspiration and circumstance. Her dedication to ballet becomes a powerful metaphor for resilience and hope, yet it is continually tested by the harsh realities of displacement: homelessness, poverty, and the weight of familial responsibility. The contrast between her artistic dreams and the instability of her daily life highlights the broader struggles of refugee children, who must navigate the dual challenges of survival and the pursuit of self-actualisation.



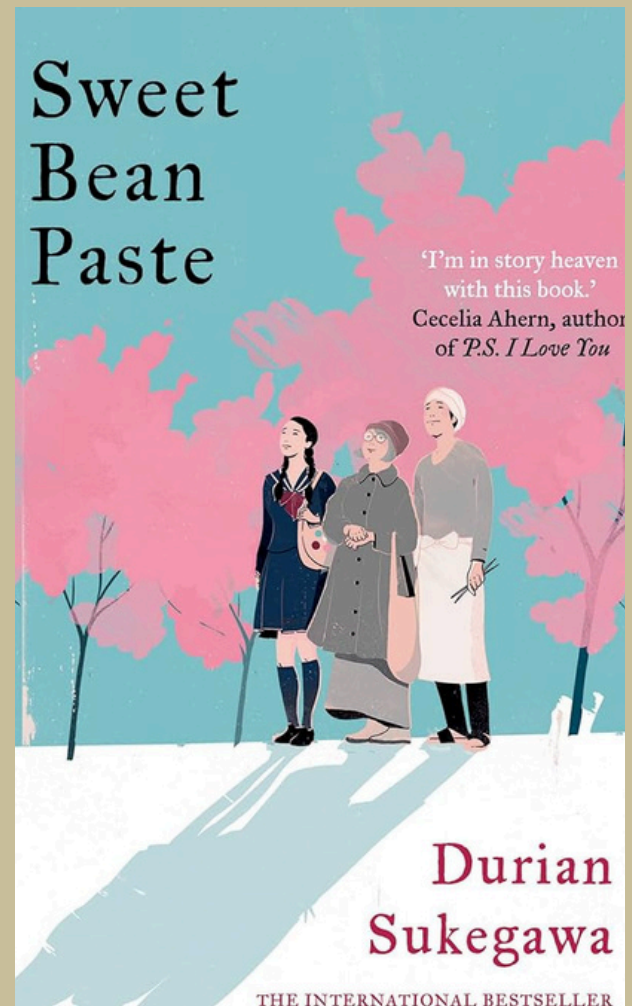


This book explores the themes of isolation and human connection, foregrounding the relationship between a cat and its owner as a vital source of comfort and emotional stability in times of loneliness. The narrative opens with the rescue of an abandoned cat by a woman already weighed down by personal hardship. Through this act of compassion, she gradually finds relief and emotional renewal, as the animal's presence restores a sense of purpose and continuity in her life.

The text illustrates how, even in moments of profound despair, human beings instinctively seek comfort and companionship, often through bonds with animals. From an Islamic perspective, the narrative extends beyond the human–animal relationship to emphasise the believer's connection with Allah through His creation. The Qur'an affirms that all living beings are signs of divine wisdom: "There is no creature on earth nor bird that flies with its wings except that they are communities like you" (Qur'an 6:38).

The narrative of Sentaro, an ex-convict trapped in a monotonous routine, explores themes of redemption, resilience, and the transformative power of human connection. Having once lied on behalf of a powerful man, Sentaro was imprisoned and, upon his release, offered work managing a small confectionery shop. His days are consumed by the repetitive task of making sweet bean paste pancakes, yet his existence remains devoid of deeper meaning or fulfilment. This changes with the arrival of Tokue, an elderly woman who asks to work at the shop. Although initially reluctant, Sentaro allows her to prepare the bean paste, and her remarkable skill not only revitalises the business but also uncovers aspects of her life that profoundly affect his own.

From an Islamic perspective, Sentaro's journey reflects the theological principles of *tawbah* (repentance) and *ṣabr* (patience). The Qur'an affirms that no individual is beyond redemption: "Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins'" (Qur'an 39:53). Sentaro's longing for a second chance embodies this divine promise, illustrating that renewal remains possible regardless of past transgressions. His stagnant life before meeting Tokue symbolises the paralysis that can arise from guilt and despair, while their unexpected friendship demonstrates how Allah often grants relief, healing, and guidance through human relationships.





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### *Interview with Tharik Hussain*

Tharik Hussain is an award-winning author and journalist specialising in global Muslim heritage and culture. He has written for newspapers such as The Times, Guardian, and Telegraph, magazines such as National Geographic Traveler, and broadcast media such as Al Jazeera and the BBC. For the latter, he produced award-winning radio program America's Mosques. Tharik has written or contributed to travel books on areas including the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Europe, and his book on Islam in the Western Balkans, *Minarets in the Mountains*, was longlisted for the Baillie Gifford Prize, shortlisted for the Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year, and won the Adele Evans Award.

*Your book covers 1,400 years of Muslim history in Europe. What is the biggest myth about Islam in Europe, and why does it persist?*

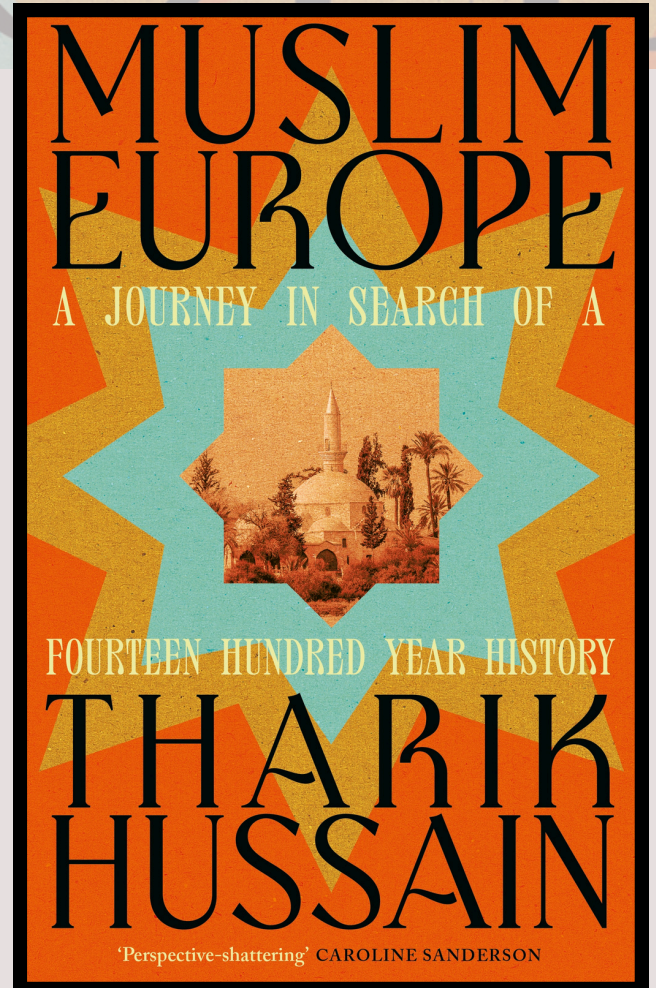
This is a huge question, as there are so many myths, but the two biggest are probably that 'Muslims are new to Europe' and that 'Europe is purely a Judaeo-Christian construct'. As my book makes clear, the very first generation of Muslims became European. This means Muslims were European quicker than Jews or Christians. The book also demonstrates that modern Europe would not exist without the enormous contributions of Muslim culture intellectually, culturally, socially, philosophically... I could go on, but I need your readers to buy the book!

*While researching, were there any places such as Cyprus or Sicily that changed the way you think about Europe's Muslim history? Could you share one story?*

Yes. I think the role of Palermo in transmitting Europe's Muslim culture to its Christian communities was something I had not fully appreciated until I began researching the book. In particular, I was struck by the impact this relationship had on England, because, of course, the Normans ruling England at the time were cousins of the 'Arab-Normans' ruling Sicily. In fact the two families were also related through marriage.

*"The book is packed with intriguing details and revealing insights"*

Shafik Meghji



*You talk about "Islamic amnesia." How does forgetting this history affect Muslims and non-Muslims today?*

The consequences of this amnesia are far-reaching for both groups. By erasing the role of Muslims in the emergence of modern Europe, Muslims are denied what is known as a 'narrative of belonging' that is, a history and heritage that legitimately allows them to feel they belong here. They are also denied recognition for the immense contributions Muslims have made over the past 1,400 years, whether in protecting Europe's Jews up until the early 20th century or in

providing the intellectual and cultural foundations that helped seed Christian Europe's much-lauded Renaissance. This amnesia also reinforces the anti-Muslim and Islamophobic rhetoric—increasingly prevalent across the continent—that suggests that Muslims cannot be European and do not belong here.

*Some early Muslim arrivals in Europe occurred much earlier than most people realise, such as in Cyprus in 647AD. Why is it important to remember these early events?*

There are several key reasons why the Cyprus expedition is so significant in the story of Muslim Europe. Firstly, Cyprus was where the very first generation of Muslims (the Sahaba) arrived and thus became 'European,' extinguishing the myth that Muslims are new to Europe. Secondly, given the reverence Muslims have for the first three generations, the fact that many of them are buried in Cyprus and other European locations, such as Sicily, renders these lands sacred and places of ziyāra (pilgrimage).

Finally and arguably most importantly, the expedition to Cyprus was only possible with the construction of the very first Muslim navy, which was a monumental achievement and pivotal moment. Without this naval capability, much of what followed in Sicily, Malta, Portugal, and Spain would not have been possible. By establishing control of what they called the Bahr ar-Rūm, or 'Sea of the Romans' (the Mediterranean), the early Muslims paved the way for subsequent expeditions and the spread of Muslim influence across Europe.

*Your research used travel, interviews, and archives. Did you face any surprises or challenges that changed your story?*

Change and challenge are a normal part of writing and researching any book, and authors like myself, where possible, try to embrace them. Nothing fundamentally altered the overarching theme or perspective of the book, but some of the discoveries along the way further enhanced and reinforced it. For example, coming across irrefutable evidence that historical European archaeologists had actively destroyed physical Muslim heritage in places like Malta and Portugal, though shocking only served to emphasise the reality that Europe's Muslim heritage was systematically erased.

Similarly, a wonderfully spontaneous moment in the Spanish village of Órgiva, where I found myself sitting with a Moroccan who had recently discovered that his ancestry traced back to the Muslim period in Seville, brought to life the fact that historic Spain had been home to indigenous Muslims who were later forcibly expelled.



*“A vital, important and sharply observant new voice . . . In an age of growing Islamophobia, when ignorant commentators constantly depict Muslims as the Other, as dangerous outsiders, Hussain reminds us of the long history and the complex, mixed syncretic culture of European Islam, and nudges us to remember the massive debt Europe still owes to the Muslim world . . . A book I’ve been longing for someone to write --”*

William Dalrymple

*Some critics argue that focusing on Muslim contributions might be excessive. How do you present this history while keeping it accurate?*

I think those critics need to consider the traditional lack of attention given to European Muslim history in popular histories and textbooks. This will help them appreciate that even what my book offers is not enough. This focus (on Muslim contributions) seeks to address a longstanding imbalance, and I would therefore argue that, in doing so, Muslim Europe makes our understanding of European history more accurate than it has ever been.

*Your book discusses Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities sharing history. What is one story that illustrates this best?*

A good example is the period of the Caliphate of Córdoba in the tenth century, when the Caliph, Abd al-Rahman III, had a Jew named Hasdai ibn Shaprut as his right-hand man, and his administration included believers of all three faiths. This was a period in which the Jews of Iberia, the Sephardim, experienced a golden age or renaissance of their own, and it occurred within Muslim Europe.

*At the East London Mosque launch, you mentioned things like the Maltese language. How do these cultural traces help people connect with Europe's Muslim past?*

The Maltese language is Europe's only Semitic language, as it is predominantly derived from an ancient European Arabic known as Siculo-Arabic, once spoken across the Emirate of Sicily. This was the historic Muslim emirate that ruled over Sicily and the Maltese archipelago. The Maltese language is therefore an intangible piece of heritage that is directly connecting us to the history of Muslim Europe.

***“Uncovers a world of which few are fully aware”***

**Colin Thubron**

*For European readers who feel this history is distant, what do you want them to take from your book?*

It may feel ‘far away’ because much of what is discussed in the book happened a long time ago, but the living legacy of that Muslim presence continues to this day in the indigenous Muslim communities of Europe in places such as (northern) Cyprus, Bosnia, Albania, and Kosovo, to name just a few. Of course, it is also woven into the culture and identities of many modern European peoples, from the Spanish to the Serbs; in fact, all of European culture has been shaped in some way by early Muslim Europe. Up until now, we simply have not been made fully aware of this, or at least not very well.

*How could the narratives in Muslim Europe change the way European history is taught in schools or understood by the public?*

The way European history is currently taught in schools is deeply problematic: it is highly selective and prescribed, and it largely omits the Muslim element when discussing the continent's past. Correcting this would require a seismic shift in the popular understanding of Europe's historical and cultural development, and such change takes time. At present, we are only beginning to disrupt what has become widely accepted, and we are, therefore, still several stages away from any attempt at correcting things.

***“A perspective-shattering work showing that, far from being fatal to Western culture, Islam has been integral to the development of Europe for more than 1,400 years . . . Muslim Europe reads as both a revisionist work of history and a voyage of discovery --”***

**Caroline Sanderson**

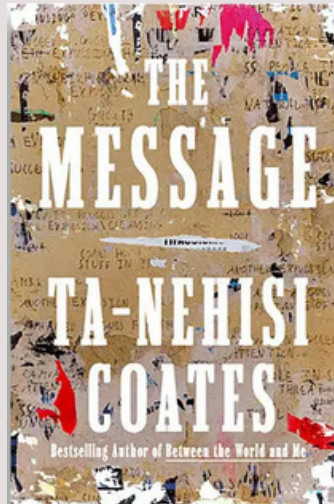


# Dr. Shamim Miah

Dr. Shamim Miah is the author of four books on Muslim communities, including *Ibn Khaldun: History, Education and Society* (2023) with a foreword by Malaysia’s Prime Minister. His earlier books cover multiculturalism, security, and Muslim schooling, with one earning a “highly commended” award. He co-edits the Muslims in Britain series (OUP), is a senior fellow at the Centre for Postnormal Policy and Futures Studies, co-edits the Postnormal Times Reader, Volume 2, and is an associate editor of Critical Muslim.

## *The Message*

Looking back on 2025, it was a particularly consequential year for bibliophiles—especially those engaged with questions of race, religion, and politics. The much-anticipated *The Message* by Ta-Nehisi Coates was published in the UK that year, igniting intense debate within the liberal establishment, particularly around his reflections on Palestine. Drawing on the Black historical experience in the United States, Coates sought to connect, navigate, and ultimately make sense of the seemingly senseless and ongoing onslaught on Gaza. In doing so, he reminded readers between the Palestinian liberation struggle and the Black political activism in the United States.

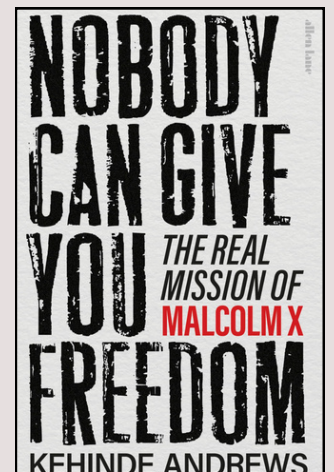
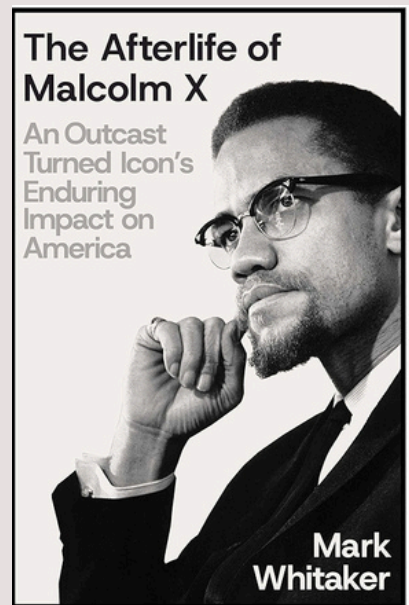
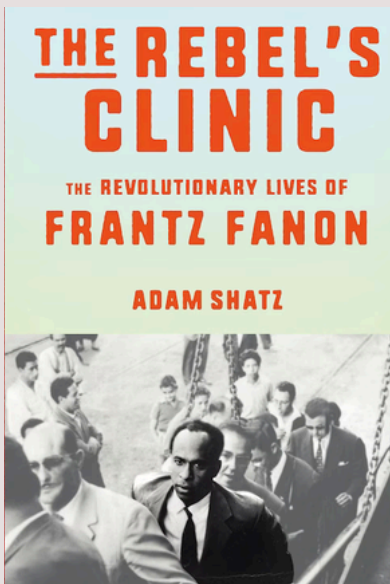


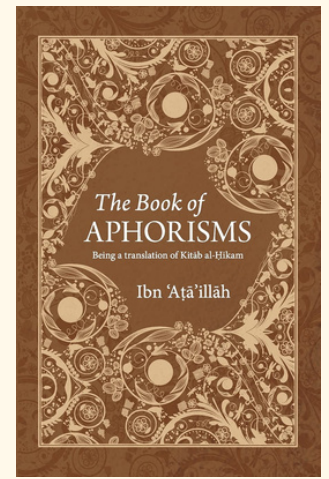
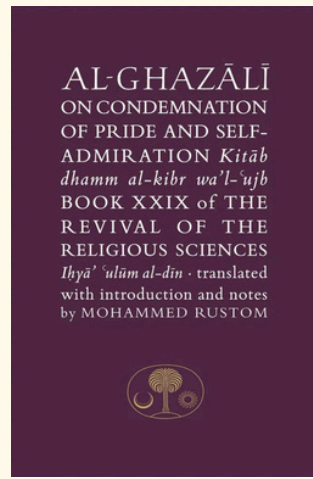
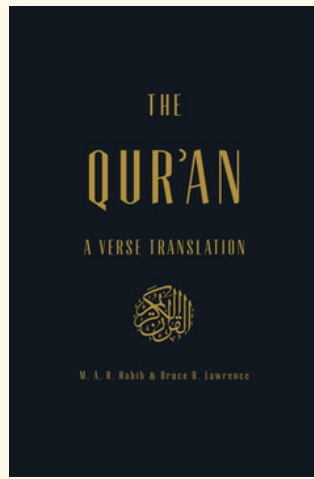
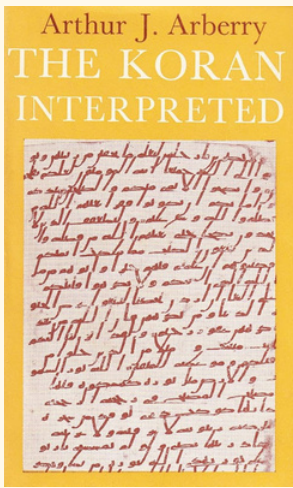
## *The Afterlife of Malcolm X & Nobody Can Give You Freedom: The Real Mission of Malcolm X*

As an avid reader and collector of books on Malcolm X, it would feel remiss not to mention those published in 2025 to mark the centenary of his birth. Mark Whitaker’s *The Afterlife of Malcolm X* explores the enduring impact of this iconic Muslim figure, while Kehinde Andrews’ *Nobody Can Give You Freedom: The Real Mission of Malcolm X* revisits Malcolm’s political project through his speeches, reminding readers of the depth and radicalism of his philosophy. Both of these books published in 2025 are essential reading for anyone interested in the works of Malik-El-Shabaz.

## *The Rebel’s Clinic: The Revolutionary Lives of Frantz Fanon*

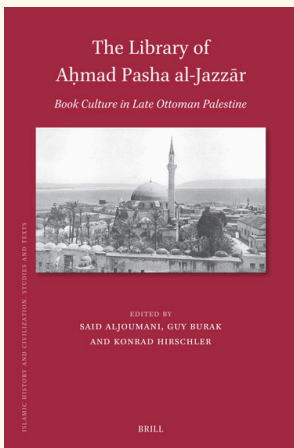
The concern with connecting political histories of race and resistance is also reflected in Adam Shatz’s *The Rebel’s Clinic: The Revolutionary Lives of Frantz Fanon* (2024), which is a valuable contribution to the growing literature in Fanon studies. The publication of a new biography of Fanon felt especially timely, given the continuing relevance of empire, settler colonialism, and necropolitics. Shatz’s recent biography on Fanon is a much-needed counterbalance to the recent hysteria around post-colonial theory. Fanon’s writing still has considerable relevance for the contemporary Muslim condition as it forces us to think about the deep-psychological impacts of racism and Islamophobia. In short, Fanon’s writings aim to ‘liberate man of colour from himself’—a project that continues to resonate in the present political climate





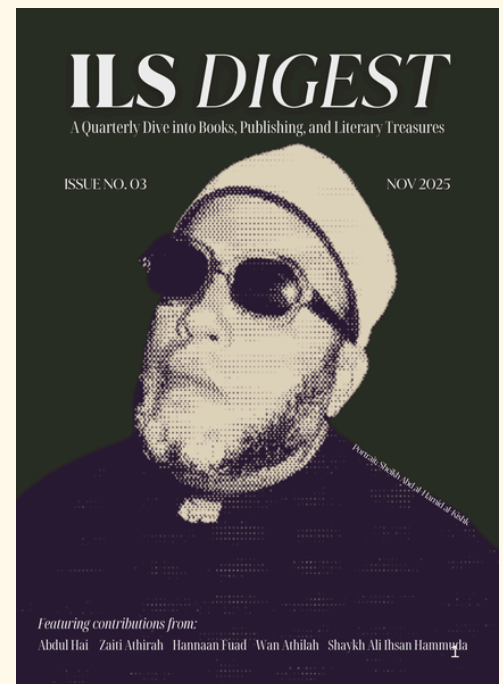
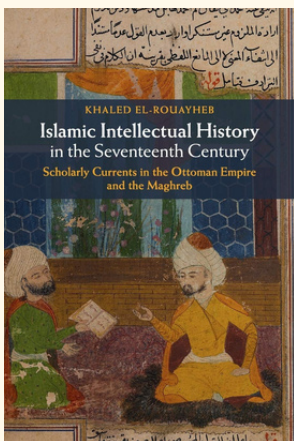
*The Qur'an: A Verse Translation, The Koran Interpreted, The Condemnation of Pride and Self-Admiration, & The Book of Aphorisms.*

Looking ahead to 2026, my immediate priority was to refocus my reading for Ramadan on the works of al-Ghazali and the study of the Quran. This year I decided to continue to read M.A.R Habib and Bruce Lawrence’s translation, *The Qur’an: A Verse Translation*—especially because it captures the linguistic beauty of the Qur’an. Whilst the Qur’an detaches itself from the works of poetry, it is clear to anyone who has recited or listened to the Qur’an in Arabic that it has a distinguishable formal beauty which reflects the highest poetic eloquence. Habib and Lawrence recognise that ‘not only is the Qur’an aesthetical and musical in nature, but its meaning is inseparable from its sound. Its sound is more poetic than prosaic, even in the later legislative Medinan suras.’ The underpinning point of translating the Qur’an through prose is based upon the recognition that the Qur’an is not a work of poetry; indeed, it is more than poetry. In order to capture the beauty of the Qur’an, the translators use the established principle of saj; whilst saj is often translated into English as ‘rhymed prose,’ it is important to state that this loose translation fails to capture the complex and sophisticated role saj plays in the Qur’an.



*The Library of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar & Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*

After Ramadan, I am eager to begin *The Library of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar: Book Culture in Late Ottoman Palestine*, edited by Said Aljooumani, Guy Burak, and Konrad Hirschler, published by Brill. I am equally looking forward to *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* by Khaled El-Rouayheb, published by Cambridge University Press.



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# Dr. William Barylo

Dr. William Barylo is a sociologist and visual artist whose work examines social justice issues through decolonial and restorative frameworks. His research focuses on grassroots initiatives in Europe and North America and their responses to social, environmental, and economic inequalities. He works collaboratively with community artists and activists, producing documentary and experimental film alongside academic research.



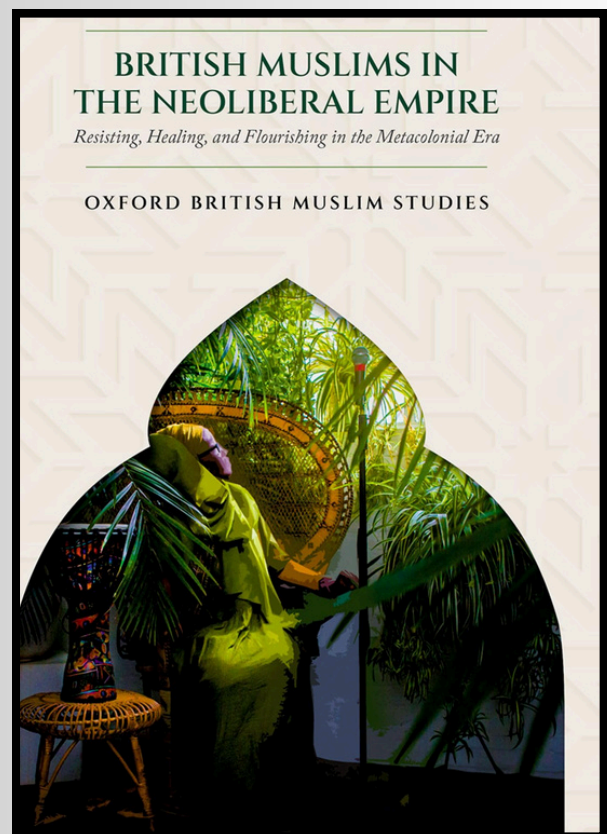
## *Twenty Years After 9/11*

More than twenty years after 9/11, what has changed for Muslims in Europe and America? State and institutional oppression appears to be at an all-time high. Religious visibility is strictly regulated, nationalist and white supremacist narratives are becoming mainstream, and protests or expressions of solidarity with the oppressed are increasingly criminalised. Now, Muslims also have to confront forms of oppression emerging from within their own communities: politicians expressing narratives against their own people; influencers promoting modest fashion products made by other Muslims in forced labour camps; multi-million-pound “humanitarian” charities behaving like nineteenth-century British colonial officers; far-right sympathisers; and even Muslim white supremacists. Although hope may seem scarce, many Muslims in Europe and North America have developed creative alternatives inspired by their faith in order to resist, heal, and flourish, even in the face of minimal resources and support

## *Empire, Rebellion, and the Diagnostic Approach*

*British Muslims in the Neoliberal Empire* (published in April 2025 by Oxford University Press) is a tale of empire and rebellion. Society colonises us, so what can we do about it? How can we decolonise ourselves and the wider society? This book is both a diagnostic and ultimately a work of solutions.

It examines how contemporary cultural, social, political, and economic forces compel people to sacrifice their ethics, identity, culture, beliefs, and more, merely to conform. From the occupation of lands, the world has entered a new era: the occupation of minds. This new form of colonialism—Metacolonialism—has effectively turned historically oppressed people into the new oppressors.



## *Grassroots Success Amidst Oppression*

In a society that marginalises and abuses Muslims, treating the ummah as two billion consumers rather than two billion believers, this book highlights grassroots success stories: initiatives reshaping public debates, individuals devising practical solutions, and small groups rethinking community organising.

These examples demonstrate that building a fair and just society is possible. Based on fifteen years of ethnographic research, participant observation, and interviews conducted during my tenure as a Research Fellow in Sociology at the University of Warwick, this book draws on my personal journey: embracing Islam in 2008 in France, relocating to the UK, and observing not only how governments and the media attack Muslims but also the paradoxes and contradictions within our own communities.

### ***The Concept of Metacolonialism***

The central concept of this book is Metacolonialism, a term coined by Hussein Bulhan (founder of the Frantz Fanon University in Hargeisa), a professor of psychology who observed how mental health institutions in Sudan inadequately served the population by importing Eurocentric models of care. If you have ever had to alter your accent to blend in, change your appearance or behaviour to seem non-threatening, or hope that people would refrain from making comments about you—or if you have been rejected from a job or relationship for not fitting certain criteria—or, worse, if you have had to compromise your ethics and morals to survive in a workplace, then you have likely experienced the effects of metacolonisation. We have reached a point where our preferences, speech, appearance, and behaviour are not entirely our own choices. Each of us is being colonised—not by law, but through standards and norms that, although not imposed, are strongly suggested by institutions, the media, education, workplaces, popular culture, and peer pressure. We sacrifice our culture and language, but also our morals, ethics, faith, and beliefs. A striking example is Palestine: it is not illegal to speak about it, yet doing so may cost you your job; the police may visit your home; in the United States, your visa may be revoked, and you could face deportation. Geographical empires may have fallen, but they have been replaced by more insidious forms of power that control people through schooling, economic systems, justice mechanisms, and more.

### ***The Transformation of the Marginalised into Oppressors***

One hallmark of metacolonialism is that historically marginalised communities can become oppressors. During the era of geographical occupation, the boundaries between coloniser and colonised were clear. Not anymore. Some Muslims have internalised Islamophobia or Zionist narratives, but the issue extends further. In a society where individuals compete for minimal representation and financial security, the prospect of becoming an ambassador for a major brand is tempting—but often requires promoting products manufactured through precarious or forced labour. Consequently, the Empire has realised its ultimate goal: the ummah is perpetuating its own oppression.

### ***Personal Reflections on Metacolonialism***

I am myself a child of metacolonialism. My parents are Polish, gave me an English name, and did not teach me Polish. They erased my Polish identity to ensure I could blend in, fearing I would be bullied at school or that our family might be deported. Yet it was in the UK that I learned to despise myself. In post-Brexit Britain, being Polish is stigmatised both by mainstream society and by segments of the Muslim community who have adopted nationalist rhetoric. My identity cost me jobs, friendships, and marriage opportunities. These rejections instilled in me the desire to abandon my ethics and misrepresent myself—to become someone else in order to be accepted within the British ummah. These dynamics explain why many people from marginalised communities are willing to sacrifice faith, culture, and morals.

Alongside these social and cultural pressures, metacolonialism carries a theology of liberation: like a religion, it promises happiness, financial stability, and representation to those who adhere to the Empire's rules. In nineteenth-century British-occupied Nigeria, the British created the "Good Muslim/Bad Muslim" divide. "Good Muslims" were those who were non-religious and

willing to collaborate with the Empire, while “Bad Muslims” were those who understood their faith as a duty to speak truth to power. This narrative resurged after 9/11 in the UK and US, where it became an official recommendation for governments to engage with Muslim “liberals,” Sufis, secular Muslims, and, more broadly, wealthy, influential, or powerful figures. Today, government-vetted and sponsored private elite Muslim clubs act as gatekeepers, producing Europe and America’s Muslim elite offering jobs in mainstream media, finance, Hollywood, and major political parties, contingent upon avoiding controversial topics such as Palestine. Governments and think tanks now create fake Muslim charities, fake Muslim media outlets, and pay Muslim influencers to dictate how other Muslims should speak, look, and behave. The epitome of this phenomenon is the rise of Muslim “Redpill” influencers (also called the Muslim manosphere): internet preachers with no religious qualifications attacking fellow Muslims, particularly women, poor, and Black Muslims, under the pretext of preventing “fitna” (division).

### *Victims of the Modern Empire*

However, after interviewing dozens of these individuals, I argue that many are in fact wounded victims of modern colonial hegemonies. Though they have become agents of colonial influence, their experiences reveal how the Empire has atomised communities and families, imprisoned already-deprived people in survival mode, deprived young Muslims of intellectual tools, religious knowledge, time for reflection, support networks, and role models—leaving them to follow the examples presented by social media and dominant political narratives.

### *Grassroots Initiatives and Stewardship*

I also wish to highlight the remarkable grassroots initiatives I encountered on this journey, which work tirelessly to improve society against all odds. Informal and independent of institutions, these initiatives have pioneered alternatives in mental health, community organising, environmental protection, heritage, the arts, and more.

Through stories of Muslim grassroots initiatives (such as Rumi’s Cave, the Green Deen Tribe, Muslim History Tours), this book demonstrates how individuals can resist, heal, and flourish even with limited resources. Rejecting the modern Eurocentric obsession with hierarchical “leadership,” these initiatives embrace a duty of stewardship: viewing the world and humanity as a single ecosystem to care for future generations. While the Empire encourages domination and control, these initiatives follow the prophetic example: building, supporting, listening, guiding, befriending, and demonstrating mercy—not only to Muslims but to the entire world.

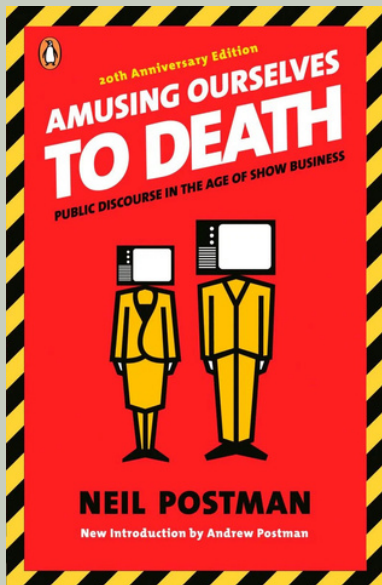


### *Knowledge as Zakat*

This duty of stewardship also motivated me to write this book. Just as zakat obliges us to give from our finances, this work represents my zakat of knowledge: I do not consider my knowledge valid unless it is shared and useful. Many findings from this research are available in shorter, visual forms on my YouTube channel. Through these stories, I aim to show that one does not need to submit to the Empire, participate in its games, possess wealth or fame, or know influential individuals to make a societal impact. Any one of us can plant the seeds of change.

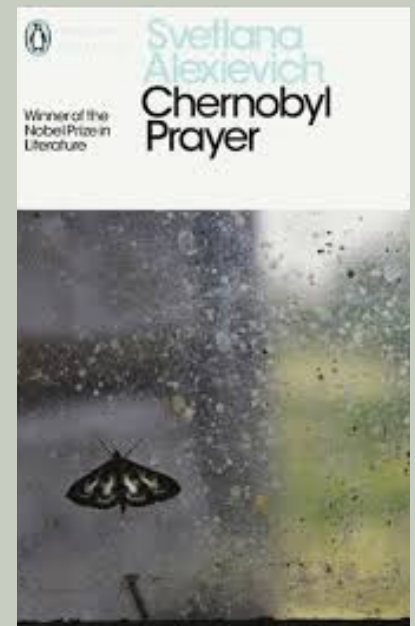
# Mufti Khalidul Haq

Mufti Khalidul Haq began memorising the Qur'an in Jami'a Islamiyya (Tunbridge Wells, Kent) and completed it in Darul Uloom London (Chislehurst, Kent). Thereafter, he began the Alimiyya programme and completed it in Madrasa Arabia Islamiyya (Johannesburg), where he also pursued a specialisation in Fiqh under Mufti Muhammad Sa'id Mutara and Hadith under Shaykh Fadlur-Rahman al-A'zami. After graduating, he served as an Imam in Shah Jalal Mosque (Manor Park) and Poplar Mosque & Cultural Centre (Poplar). Currently, he teaches Tafsir, Hadith, and Fiqh at the college.



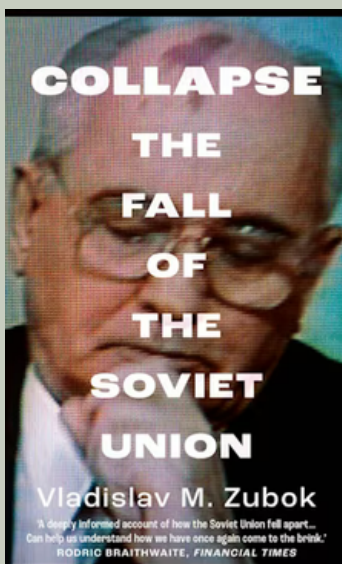
## *Amusing Ourselves to Death.*

Media has become ubiquitous over time. It has changed in form and content. What has it done to the human landscape? I was enthralled by this author as I read this book in its entirety. Though the book is slightly old and his references are mostly the television as the example of media, one only needs to look at current media to realise that Postman's findings are not only accurate, but the problem has metastasized considerably. This is especially concerning, given that anti-Muslim bias and other such hatred has reached epic proportions. This is ideal reading for anyone wanting to understand the dynamics of media in the realm of human experience.



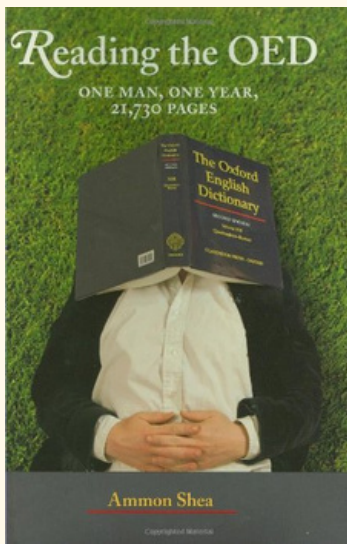
## *Prayers for Chernobyl*

To the world, Chernobyl represents a government out of control, deceit for the purpose of maintaining hegemony, and an environmental catastrophe. However, one seldom considers the experience and memories of the people actually involved in this event. This author painstakingly interviewed dozens of people, from professionals to simple common folk, about their experiences, feelings, and thoughts. The result is heart-breaking and soul-deadening. The author does not comment at all except by way of titles. One cannot read this except by coming away sad, on the one hand, at the tyranny meted out upon these innocent souls but, on the other hand, inspired by the optimism and thirst for life.



## *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union*

Russian history since its first revolution is the very epitome of the phrase 'stranger than fiction.' At first, I thought Chernobyl would be the only thing that would arouse my curiosity. However, when I began looking into the power structure of the USSR and its history, I was stunned. Documentaries, I realised, only scratched the surface when I found this incredible book in the library. Not only is the author meticulously accurate and exhaustive in his retelling, his prose is quite entertaining. At a particular point, I even began reading the book out aloud to myself. Ideal for students of history, especially for those who are interested in the recent history of Russia.

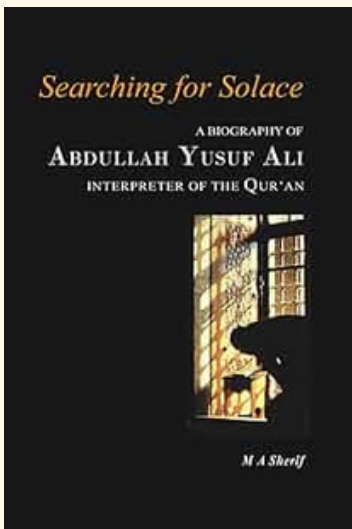
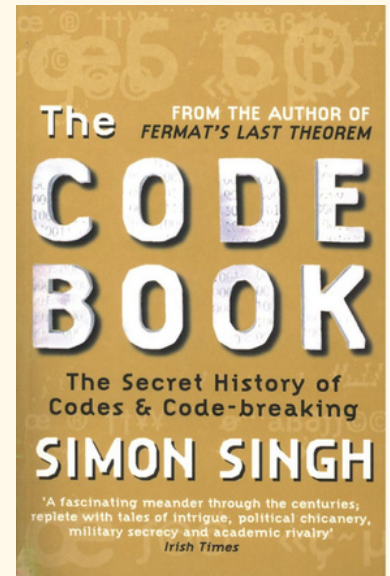


### *Reading the OED*

The tradition of reading voluminous books from cover to cover is a quite frequent phenomenon in the annals of Muslim scholarly history. So, it was a pleasant surprise to read about this author in an article of the Guardian newspaper. I found his story to be entertaining enough to eventually purchase his book. The author had a strange penchant for dictionaries: his home was littered with them. However, they were mostly single-volume. One day, he decided to give himself a year to read the entire *Oxford English Dictionary*, all twenty volumes of it. This is an entertaining read, ideal for people who love language and reading.

### *The Code Book*

Did you know that Muslims were the first code-breakers in history? I did not know this until I read this book. The author recounts the amazing history of code-making and code-breaking. Due to the nature of the subject, some of his material was just declassified when he wrote the book. The author displays his passion for the subject, especially his love for maths. My favourite part of the book was the discussion about the Enigma machine and Bletchley Park's effort to decipher the Nazi's communication in order to thwart them in battle. This author also sheds light on modern methods of code-making.

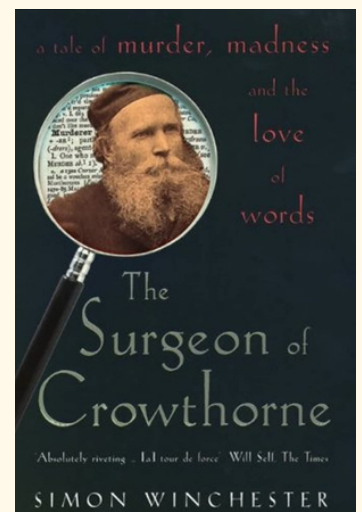


### *Searching for Solace*

A teacher once told us: losers complain about things they don't have; winners make the best of what little they do have. This applies to the subject of this biography: Abdullah Yusuf Ali. This book charts his early academic life, his life in England, and his works and thought. It provides a necessary context to understanding him as a person and his eventual famous work, the translation of the Holy Qur'an. Readers familiar with his academic output maybe taken aback when they read of his tumultuous personal life and the devastating effect it would have upon him. This is definitely a book students of Qur'anic studies and history should read.

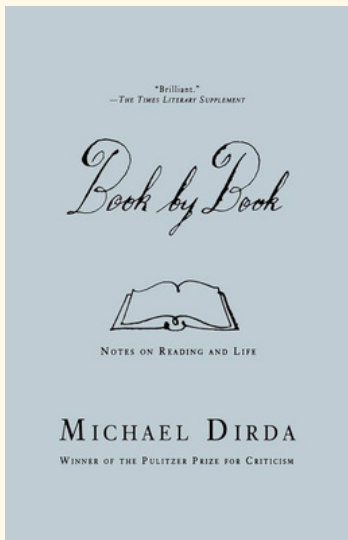
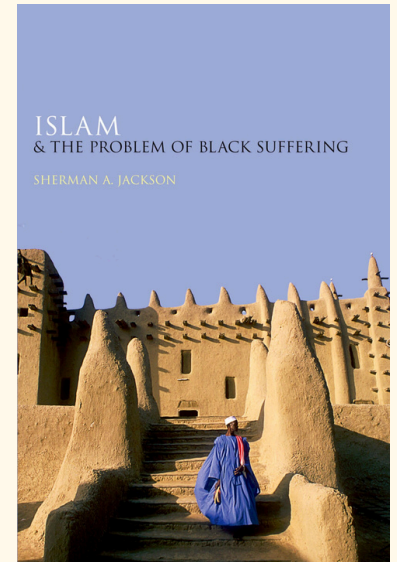
### *Surgeon of Crowthorne*

This is one of the wildest stories you will ever come across. Can you imagine a psychologically-deranged person, locked away in a psychiatric hospital, for a murder he committed, contributing a great deal to the legendary Oxford English Dictionary? This book briefly charts the history behind the making of this amazing multi-volume tome. It explains the painstaking, meticulous way in which the scholars collated and sorted through piles of literary references in order to establish a chronology of the meanings of words. To think that a murderer sitting in a psychiatric hospital continued to supply the editorial team with quality submissions is astounding.



### *Islam & the Problems of Black Suffering*

Every community has its own issues with religion. As the author states, the issue for African-Americans is ‘Why did God allow horrific torture and slavery upon the African people?’ Of course, this issue relates to the infamous thorny issue of theodicy. Christian theologians wrestled with this question, culminating with a particular theologian stating that religion has no answer for this problem. The author wishes to resoundingly refute this notion. He draws from Athari, Maturidi, Ash’ari and even Mu’tazili theology to produce responses to this theological problem. This book is a commendable attempt to illustrate the complexity of traditional scholarship and to prove that it still deserves our scrutiny.



### *Book by Book*

The author is a veteran book reviewer. His appreciation of books of a myriad of genres is impressive. Reading this book felt like following the author around his house: he was comfortable slipping in and out of rooms, extolling the virtues and nuances of each and every object. He divides his book into various subjects, threading quotes and names of books in between his prose like an expert tailor. It is highly motivating and refreshing seeing this level of passion for reading and books. It would be extremely hard for a seasoned reader—or, dare I say, a novice even—to read this book and not find the passion infectious.

*"Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers."*

*Charles W. Eliot.*



"وَكَيْفَ تَنَامُ الْعَيْنُ مَلءَ جُفُونِهَا  
عَلَى هَفَوَاتٍ أَيْقَظَتْ كُلَّ نَائِمٍ

وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ بِالشَّامِ يُضْحِي مَقِيلُهُمْ  
ظُهُورَ الْمَذَاكِي أَوْ بُطُونَ الْقَشَاعِمِ

يَكَادُ لَهُنَّ الْمُسْتَجِنُّ بِطَيْبَةِ  
يُنَادِي بِأَعْلَى الصَّوْتِ يَا آلَ هَاشِمٍ"

*"And how can the eye sleep soundly  
Upon transgressions that have awakened every sleeper  
While your brothers in Syria find their resting place  
On the backs of the camels or the bellies of the hyenas  
Even the one who seeks refuge in Taybah almost cries out with a loud voice,  
'O family of Hashim!..'"*

*Abu al-Muzaffar al-Abiwardi*

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