

Abdur Raheem Kidwai, *Orientalism in English Literature: Perception of Islam and Muslims*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2016. xi-xv, 282 pp. ISBN 978-81-309-2692-6.

The author, Professor of English at Aligarh Muslim University, is a specialist in literary Orientalism, as is clear from the opening survey chapter “Perceptions of Muslims and Islam in English Literature,” and has a particular interest in Orientalism and the British Romantics which features in chapters 2-5 and 12-19 of Section One, and passim. Section Two is a collection of twenty-five book reviews on topics ranging through the *Turkish Embassy Letters* of Lady Wortley Montagu, the *Arabian Nights*, the academic Orientalism of Edward Lane, European Travel Writing on the East, anti-Islamic polemic, and Postcolonialism and Islam. In addition, the volume pinpoints classic historical surveys such as Martha Pike Conant’s *The Oriental Tale in the Eighteenth Century* (chapter 5), Samuel Chew’s *The Crescent and the Cross: Islam and England during the Renaissance* (chapter 39), Dorothy Metlitzki’s *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (chapter 1), Byron Porter Smith’s *Islam in English Literature* (chapter 21), and more recent ones such as Claire Chamber’s *Britain Through Muslim Eyes* (chapter 7). To influential critical texts like Norman Daniel’s *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (chapter 37), Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (chapter 27), and Nigel Leask’s *British Romantic Writers and the Legacy of the East* (chapter 22), is added reviews of more recent criticism such as Andrew C. Long’s *Reading Arabia* (chapter 7). Volumes by well-known academics such as Oxford University expert on the Oriental Tale Ross Ballaster (chapter 35), and University of Toronto Medieval Orientalism specialist Suzanne Conlan Akbari, as well as critiques from a Muslim perspective such as Ahmad Gunny’s *Perceptions of Islam in European Writing* (chapter 33) are also showcased.

Overall, most of the areas touched on by Professor Kidwai are standard ones found across the broad domain of British, European and to a lesser extent American writing on the East, and the approach is largely descriptive. However, a running theme (pointed out in many of the chapters) is cultural misrepresentation, from the type of Orientalism exposed by Edward Said, especially manifest in European writers’ denigration of the Prophet Muhammad, to the almost contemporary “pulp fiction or hate writing” of a figure like Jean Sasson (chapter 6). On occasion a distinctive sub-continental flavour emerges, particularly in the discussion of the work of postcolonial Asian writer Qaisra Shahraz. Exposition of the themes of her novel *Holy Woman* (chapter 8) forms the strongest chapter in this book. A close runner (chapter 10) is a discussion of Punjabi writer Balwant Gargi’s *Purple Moonlight* in which the author points to his ambivalent stoking of Hindu fears of a “Muslim menace,” at the same time as acknowledging marginalisation of Muslims in public life and expressing admiration for Muhammad Iqbal. A similar theme emerges (chapter 28) from a

review of a volume of Indian short stories, *Image and Representation: Stories of Muslim Lives in India* edited by Mushirul Hasan and M. Asaduddin, consisting of translations from ten subcontinent languages. Laudable at a time when the *bhasha* are mainly relegated to the shadows by English, the stories still draw from the author recognition of the (perhaps unsurprising) “anxieties, marginalization and plight of the Muslim minority” in India (230).

Overall, there is much to engage a reader in the range of subjects discussed, but it must also be added that this work also has significant value as a bibliographical study.

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