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## Najib al-Kilani as an Islamic Theorist and Writer

Abdul Muiz Munawar<sup>1</sup> & Zulkarnain Mohamed<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This study examines the position of Najib Abd al-Latif Ibrahim al-Kilani (1931–1995) as both a theorist and practitioner of Islamic literature, departing from his introduction of the concept of Islamic literature through his theoretical and creative works that are deeply grounded in the knowledge, virtues, and ethical guidance of the Qur'an and Hadith. The study further explores the scope and structure of his literary thought and how his writings integrate Islamic values into artistic expression. In addition, this study addresses the relevance and vitality of his ideas within the broader context of modern literary discourse, particularly since his novels consistently adopt global Muslim issues and moral concerns based on themes derived from his Islamic literary theory and worldview. His vast intellectual and creative contributions are also crucial in understanding contemporary literary challenges facing Muslim writers who seek an authentic and comprehensive Islamic theoretical framework. To this end, the study draws upon arguments from the principal Islamic sources and the inclusive worldview of authoritative Muslim scholars such as Abdul al-Raziq (2002) to highlight the significance, continuity, and contemporary relevance of al-Kilani's Islamic literary theory and practice. In conclusion, al-Kilani's literary vision continues to inspire the development of an enduring Islamic aesthetic perspective.

**Keywords:** Islamic literature, Najib al-Kilani, literary theory, contemporary Muslim writers, Islamic worldview

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<sup>1</sup> Postgraduate Student, Program of Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

<sup>2</sup> Senior Lecturer, Research Centre for Arabic Language and Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. E-Mail: [nain@ukm.edu.my](mailto:nain@ukm.edu.my)

## Introduction

This article addresses Najib al-Kilani (1931–1995) and his contribution to the modern and contemporary Islamic literature, by focusing on his position as significant Islamic theorist and writer. Al-Kilani passed away on March 7, 1995, at the age of 63, leaving behind a substantial intellectual legacy that represents a pivotal moment in the development of Islamic literary discourse. His systematic approach to establishing theoretical foundations bridges classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary literary expression, making him one of the most influential figures in modern Islamic literature.

The significance of this study is to review and highlight the development of modern and present Islamic literature through the lens of al-Kilani's theoretical and creative contributions, particularly examining how his work addresses the critical gap between traditional Islamic scholarship and contemporary literary expression. The emergence of Islamic literature as a distinct literary movement in the mid-20th century coincided with broader debates about cultural authenticity, intellectual decolonization, and the role of religion in modern artistic expression.

Therefore, the following discussion focuses on reviews of recent studies on the writer, the main works of al-Kilani to be further explored, and finally detailed exploration of his namely al-Kilani's definition of Islamic literature; his awareness of Islamic history and Muslim integrity; and his influence on other fellow Muslim scholars and writers.

## Literature Review

Contemporary scholarship recognizes al-Kilani as a prolific writer spanning theoretical aspects of Islamic literature, as evidenced in foundational works such as *Madkhal ila al-Adab al-Islami* (Introduction to Islamic Literature) (1986), *Al-Islamiyah wa-al-Mazahib al-Adabiyah* (Islamic Character and Literary Doctrines) (1985), and *Afaq al-Adab al-Islamiyy* (Horizons of Islamic Literature) (1985). Barighish (1994) identifies al-Kilani as a pioneer of Islamic literature, while Kubarek (2016) credits him with introducing the concept of *shakhsiyyat Islamiyyah* (Islamic characters) to literary theory. This recognition has inspired subsequent Muslim theorists to expand upon al-Kilani's conception. Khaleel (2007) explores beautiful expressions in Islamic works through word selection based on Islamic portrayals of nature, while Qassab (2008) examines purposeful expressions related to poetic experience derived from Islamic conceptions of nature, humanity, and life.

Recent studies have also examined al-Kilani's creative works. Haji Maming & Mustapha (2019) analyze the role of protagonists in his novels at local and global levels, focusing on liberation from colonialism and social corruption. Najat et al. (2021) position al-Kilani among excellent Muslim writers who convincingly propose Islamic values as prerequisites for authentic Islamic literature. Andika et al. (2023) demonstrate al-Kilani's sophisticated approach to sensitive social issues through analysis of his treatment of female characters in stories like "Al-Jawwu Barid" showing how he employs cross-cultural perspectives to examine conflicts between social practices and Islamic teachings.

While existing scholarship acknowledges al-Kilani's historical significance, there remains insufficient examination of how his theoretical framework addresses contemporary challenges facing Muslim writers. Most studies focus on historical or thematic aspects rather than analyzing the practical applicability of his literary theory in current contexts.

## Methodology

This study employs qualitative textual analysis, examining al-Kilani's primary theoretical works alongside his creative literature. The research utilizes comparative analysis to contextualize al-Kilani's contributions within broader Islamic literary theory, drawing particularly on the comprehensive Islamic worldview framework established by contemporary scholars such as 'Abd al-Raziq (2002).

The analysis focuses on three key areas: (1) al-Kilani's definition and theoretical framework for Islamic literature; (2) his integration of historical consciousness with contemporary awareness; and (3) his influence on subsequent Muslim scholars and writers. Primary sources include al-Kilani's theoretical works and selected novels, while secondary sources encompass scholarly analyses and comparative studies.

## Discussion

The following discussions cover three aspects, namely al-Kilani's definition of Islamic literature; his awareness of Islamic history and Muslim integrity; and his influence on other fellow Muslim scholars and writers.

### Al-Kilani's Definition of Islamic Literature

Retrospectively, Islamic literature is deeply rooted in the prophetic era of Muhammad and the concept only began to gain broader recognition and acceptance in the 1950s when the confrontation between Western modernism and local Islamic conservatism happened.

In those years, al-Kilani was mostly regarded a theorist of Islamic literature as he convincingly disseminated his concept with its connection to the Qur'an and Hadith, offering a comprehensive and meticulous perspective. His relentless efforts paved the way for later Muslim writers to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic literature through his works supported with Qur'anic and Hadith evidences as can be found in his work *Madkhal ila al-Adab al-Islami*.

Briefly speaking, the work consists of several chapters beginning with an introduction to the concept of Islamic literature and its historical development. The discussion then proceeds with an analysis of the definition and concepts of Islamic literature, its historical evolution, genre analysis, and examples of key works and authors. Moreover, the author employs a historical approach to illustrate the development of Islamic literature from the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW to the modern era, apart from how Islamic literature is connected to the resilience and advancement of Islamic civilization.

Through the work mentioned above, obviously al-Kilani employs the traditional approach of excessively utilizing Qur'anic and Hadith evidences resulting in his

argument being minimised, leading some readers to concluding that his thought is be traditional or outdated. However, his approach is based on consciousness and purpose as he intends to show the strength of the documented Islamic evidences that are reliable and relevant in a comprehensive and systematic discussion of the characteristics of Islamic literature, besides effectively harmonising practical creative works with the Islamic literary theory. Despite the work densely being packed with Qur'anic and Hadith references, the approach of al-Kilani obviates the vagueness in understanding the relationship of the fundamental Islamic sources to his concept of Islamic literature. Also, the vagueness is alleviated through his argument that is supported with historical analysis.

Thus, al-Kilani's discussion of the definition and characteristics of Islamic literature that are corroborated with Qur'anic and Hadith evidence remains relevant to contemporary discourse. Specifically, al-Kilani addresses the principles and features of Islamic literature, religious themes, universal values rooted in Islamic teachings, and the shaping of morality and societal values. In this light, al-Kilani emphasizes the authority of the Qur'an and Hadith as key references in discussing the definition and characteristics of Islamic literature. Basically through *Madkhal ila al-Adab al-Islami*, al-Kilani uses the methodology of *traditional Islamic explanation* in defining and describing the features of Islamic literature, drawing this article to exploring the relationship between the Islamic teachings and values on one hand, and Islamic literary creativity and the characteristics on the other.

Broadly speaking, in the eye of intense contemporary Muslim critic such as 'Abd al-Raziq (2002), al-Kilani's viewpoint is viewed as relevant because like al-Kilani, the former draws our attention to harmonious relationship between Islamic foundation (al-Qur'an and Hadith) and literary heritage on one hand, and the meeting point between modern literary exploration and the traditional Islamic discussion on the other. This is evident in 'Abd al-Raziq's discourse on *at-Turath al-Islami* (Islamic heritage), emphasizing that his approach of *traditional Islamic explanation* is a continuance to the approach of Qur'anic exegetes, Hadith commentators and previous Muslim scholars.

In this light, he emphasizes three aspects of the exploration of Islamic sources and literary relationship: first, the interaction between early Islamic sources and traditional scholars in the realm of Islamic discussion; second, the deduction of the realm of Islamic discussion from the main Islamic sources (the Qur'an and Hadith) in order to gain a concise literary philosophy and theory; and third, the application of the literary philosophy and theory on modern literary discussion. Likewise, al-Kilani uses the same methodology to justify that his exploration of Islamic literature is on the Islamic premise. Therefore, his discussion of modern Islamic literature does not undermine the early Islamic sources, history and heritage being revered among the Muslims.

### Islamic Historical and Integrity Awareness

Al-Kilani's works demonstrate a profound engagement with both historical reflection and contemporary issues affecting Muslim communities worldwide. His novel *'Umar Yazhar fi al-Quds* (2012) exemplifies his approach to historical reflection through its

thoughtful exploration of Jerusalem's religious and political significance in Islamic history. This work doesn't merely recount historical events but weaves them into a narrative that connects past struggles with present-day challenges facing Muslims in Palestine and beyond. Al-Kilani employs a comprehensive historical approach that contextualizes Jerusalem's importance within Islamic tradition while addressing the contemporary political complexities surrounding the holy city. The historical reflection in al-Kilani's works transcends mere documentation of past events, functioning instead as a vehicle for deeper contemplation of Islamic identity and continuity. His narratives deliberately bridge temporal gaps between historical Islamic civilizations and contemporary Muslim societies, creating a sense of historical connectivity that reinforces Islamic cultural resilience. This technique is particularly evident in works like *Layali Turkistan* (2013), where he excavates the relatively overlooked history of Central Asian Muslims under oppressive regimes. By resurrecting these historical narratives, al-Kilani creates what could be termed a "literary archaeology" that recovers and preserves Islamic historical consciousness in regions where such awareness has been systematically suppressed.

Al-Kilani's approach to history operates simultaneously on two interconnected levels. First, he presents historical events as valuable in themselves, worthy of preservation and remembrance within the Islamic literary tradition. Second, he employs historical settings as allegories for contemporary Muslim experiences, allowing readers to draw parallels between past and present struggles. This dual function is particularly evident in *ʿAmāliqatu al-Shimāl* (2013), where historical narratives of resistance become metaphors for contemporary conflicts between traditional Islamic values and encroaching ideologies. Through this allegorical approach, al-Kilani transcends the limitations of direct political commentary, creating works that remain relevant beyond their immediate historical context. Regarding contemporary awareness, al-Kilani demonstrates exceptional insight into pressing issues facing Muslim communities globally. Throughout his career, al-Kilani produced numerous works addressing international Islamic issues, such as *Layali Turkistan* (2013), *ʿAzra* Jakarta (2013), and *ʿUmar Yazhar fi al-Quds* (2012). These works reflect his deep internalization of Islamic knowledge and values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, while showcasing al-Kilani's sharp awareness of Muslim political struggles on a global scale.

His contemporary awareness is particularly evident in his treatment of political extremism and ideological conflicts within Muslim societies. Al-Kilani recognized early the dangers posed by extremist interpretations of Islam and the threat of radical secularism alike. In works like *Allazīna Yahtariqūn* (Those Burning) (2015), he explores the psychological and social dimensions of extremism without resorting to simplistic moral judgments, demonstrating his nuanced understanding of complex motivations behind contemporary social movements in Muslim societies. Al-Kilani's engagement with contemporary social issues extends beyond politics to encompass cultural challenges facing Muslim communities. His treatment of issues like family disintegration, identity crisis among Muslim youth, and the tensions between tradition and modernity reflects a keen awareness of the everyday struggles confronting ordinary Muslims. Importantly, al-Kilani addresses these issues not as abstract

theoretical concerns but through compelling narratives that humanize these challenges, making them accessible to readers across different contexts.

In *'Azra' Jakarta*, al-Kilani demonstrates this contemporary awareness through his portrayal of the political turmoil in Indonesia during the clash between newly-emerging communism and established Islamic traditions. The novel reveals al-Kilani's consciousness of global Muslim plights and struggles, specifically addressing political clashes and social upheavals in Indonesia during the 1965 rise of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Set against the historical background of Sukarno's presidency (1945-1967), the novel explores political and social tensions under his *Nasakom* ideology that aimed to blend nationalism, religion, and communism under one entity. This ideological experiment became controversial as the Muslim religious community grew increasingly uncomfortable, leading to conflict between communism and Islam that culminated in the bloody G30S-PKI clashes of 1965 and the persecution of Muslim Indonesian community leaders.

According to scholars Sholih (2022) and Dardiri (2008), al-Kilani's treatment of these Muslim social conflicts aligns with the worldview of religious scholars (ulama) who regard Islam as a unifying force for Muslims globally, transcending national boundaries. This perspective demonstrates al-Kilani's commitment to addressing contemporary issues within a framework that emphasizes Islamic solidarity while acknowledging the diversity of Muslim experiences across different geographical and cultural contexts. Al-Kilani's ability to weave together historical awareness and contemporary relevance establishes him as a writer whose work transcends temporal limitations. His narratives function as bridges between past and present, tradition and modernity, offering readers both historical grounding and contemporary guidance. This distinctive approach to Islamic literature contributes significantly to his enduring influence, as his works continue to speak to new generations of readers facing evolving challenges within Muslim societies while remaining rooted in the timeless principles derived from Islamic tradition. The following discussion revolves around al-Kilani as an Islamic writer who successfully translates his Islamic philosophy and theory into his novels and short stories. Throughout his career, al-Kilani has produced numerous works addressing international Islamic issues, such as *Layali Turkistan* (۲۰۱۳), *'Azra' Jakarta* (۲۰۱۳), and *These*. These works reflect his deep internalization of Islamic knowledge and values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, and also the works showcase al-Kilani's sharp awareness of Muslim politics on a global scale.

As an important study case here, *'Azra' Jakarta* is a historical novel infused with al-Kilani's imaginative touch, portraying the political turmoil in Jakarta, Indonesia, during the clash between newly-coming communism and long-established Islam. The novel shows al-Kilani's consciousness of global Muslim plights and struggles, exactly addressing political clashes and social upheavals in Indonesia during the 1965 rise of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Being set to the historical background of Sukarno first President of the Republic of Indonesia (1945 to 1967), the novel explores political and social tensions (Satriono Priyo Utomo, 2017) under his *Nasakom* ideology that is aimed at blending nationalism, religion, and communism under one entity. The blending became controversial as Muslim religious community felt discomforted, leading to the conflict between communism and Islam, culminated

in the G30S-KPI bloody clashes in 1965, ending with the persecution of some Muslim Indonesian community leaders. In this light, according to Sholih (2022) and Dardiri (2008), al-Kilani's consideration of the Muslim social conflicts aligns with the worldview of the religious scholars (ulama) regarding Islam as the unifying force for the Muslims globally, irrespective of different nationalities.

The novel highlighted above also draws on real historical events intricately being interweaved between factual and fictional elements concerning Indonesian political turmoil then. Al-Kilani laid out the historical events with the allusion of strong criticism of the political establishment under the leadership of Sukarno staunch supporter of the PKI. Focusing on the social, political, cultural, and psychological impacts, the novel explores the resilience and rebellion of the Islamic community against the suppressing communist party in Indonesia, emphasizing the contradiction between Islamic morality and religiosity, and communist barbarism. In this regard, al-Kilani employs strong and contrasting characters to depict real historical events, illustrating the conflict between the genuine struggle of those fighting for truth and justice on one hand, and the personal interest-infested politicians who deceived the public through oppression on the other. Central to the novel is the religious fight presented in the characters Fatimah, her fiancé Abu al-Hasan, and her father, Haji Muhammad Idris leader of the anti-communist Majelis Syura Muslimin council (Masyumi) in Indonesia. Meantime, the spread of communist ideology is marked with social oppression by the cunning antagonist Za'im influential leader of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The confrontation is described to have started between Fatimah and Za'im on the university campus life, and the confrontation is escalated as Za'im resorts to the deception and kidnapping of Haji Muhammad Idris, and the detaining of Abu al-Hasan, in an attempt to suffocate their cause. The climax of the conflict occurs when the PKI launches a large-scale opponent politician cleansing attempt but the attempt is thwarted by the military ending with Fatimah's tragic martyrdom. The novel is concluded with the defeat of the PKI, Za'im's arrest, and the release of Haji Muhammad Idris and Abu al-Hasan. Thus, *'Azra' Jakarta* is seen not merely as a historical narrative but a reflection of the moral and religious resilience of Muslims in their resistance against communist influence in Indonesia. Broadly speaking, the work parallels the moral and religious grounds that are identified with the Muslim religious sentiment of the conflict between the oppressed Islamic East and the occupying West then.

The discussion above of *'Azra' Jakarta* is in line with the literary theoretical framework al-Kilani's lays out, that is fundamentally built on Islamic themes and narratives. Through the framework, al-Kilani has proven that Islamic theme and narrative are a suitable means of literary expression that is capable of conveying Islamic messages and dealing with the challenges and plights undermining the Muslim religious and cultural values. Simultaneously, the root of the Islamic theme and narrative can be traced back to the traditional understanding of Islamic literature as can be related to the early period of Islamic literature, i.e. when the first batch of Islamic poets was born in the era of the Prophet SAW. In modern time as can be related to the view of al-Kilani, the Islamic theme and narrative are capable of realizing the need of preserving the Islamic essence (identity) and the need of dealing

Muslim contemporary issues. Importantly, in the context of this article, the integration of Islamic theme and narrative still fulfils the main characteristics of modern genre of novel and short stories built on imaginative theme and narrative.

Besides imaginative theme and narrative, al-Kilani has shown that description and decency can complement each other in delivering messages on characters and their representation in more comprehensive way rather being focused solely on the excessive physical description. In this regard, the main character Fatimah protagonist of *'Azra' Jakarta* is not only a devout Muslim but also an active participant in the ideological and political struggle against communism. The decent description of Fatimah upholds Islamic values such as faith, resilience and moral that al-Kilani advocates for in his theoretical writings. At the same time, the description of the main character as the protagonist is fulfilled because Fatimah is presented as a complete and sensible human with emotion, feeling and so on, not as a stagnant character.

### Influences of al-Kilani on Other Fellow Muslim Scholars and writers

Previous discussions of al-Kilani as the Islamic literary theorist and practiser draw our attention to the whole picture of his critical thinking grounded in the early Islamic history and the main Islamic sources, the Qur'an and Hadith. The discussions illuminate the point of view to be raised here is related to the idea of Islamic literary writing model based the strong foundation is rooted in the spirit of Islamic message and rules. Admittedly, al-Kilani's contribution is significant as it demonstrates the dynamic adaptability of Islamic literary principles across different cultural contexts while maintaining adherence to core Islamic values. Simultaneously, the idea of Islamic literary writing model is achievable as the literary writing can be aligned with the Islamic theological point of view (tawhid) as was shown by al-Kilani who successfully translate his Islamic theological point of view into his novels or short stories by framing the story background and characters descriptions according to the juristic implication (fiqh) from the Islamic theological command.

In relation to the model, there are two important elements; firstly, the basis of the model that is founded on another two intricate elements of the Islamic message and the Islamic rules of writing; and secondly, the expandable narrative part of the literary writing, i.e. necessary contemporary themes. This dual framework establishes a balance between timeless Islamic principles and contextual relevance, allowing Muslim writers to address modern issues through an authentic Islamic lens. Basically, the idea of the model can be attributed to the success of al-Kilani himself in harmonising his literary writings with original messages and rules of the main Islamic sources. al-Kilani's success proves that the model of Islamic literary writing he had introduced in the nineties has its rigid and flexible parts, and both parts are intended to be elaborated below.

The discussion of the views of al-Kilani above can be surmised that the Muslim theorist-cum-writer has laid down a strong foundation on further exploration of the same Islamic theory and literary writing approach. In terms of the Islamic theory perspective, al-Kilani comes up with two important dimensions, namely sociology and historiography, this taking into account his simultaneous concern for the plight of contemporary Muslim globally and his interest in the Islamic history. These



dimensions exemplify al-Kilani's holistic approach to literature, where both contemporary social realities and historical Islamic narratives serve as complementary sources for authentic Islamic literary expression. What is meant by historiography here is al-Kilani's concern with the study of messages underlying the Islamic history, focusing the rewriting the history in the literary or creative style of writing, and having said that, he is not a historian deeply concerned with every detail of the historical events. Next, what is meant by sociology here is the sociological aspect of literature, and this can be related to al-Kilani's concern with social criticism.

Apart from that, al-Kilani has shown that modern literature of various genre alien to the traditional Islamic poetry and simple story genres can be with harmonised with the original Islamic message on one hand, and can be considered the adaptation to available similar genre of story or short story. His innovative approach demonstrates that Islamic literature can embrace contemporary literary forms without compromising its spiritual essence, thus creating a bridge between tradition and modernity that remains authentically Islamic. The scholar-cum-writer has proven that the strong foundations of the Islamic message and the Islamic literary tradition can carry the weight of modern genre because the foundations are built on unbiased Islamic values that stands across the course of various historical period from the beginning of Islam to the modern time. The unbiased Islamic values are put in various situations of the Muslim and non-Muslim politically and socially dominance, and yet the values remain the same. This is because the values are contextually relatable and at the same rooted in the Islamic teachings contained in the main Islamic sources of the Quran and Hadith.

The profound theoretical framework established by al-Kilani draws our attention the relevancy of the views in the context of contemporary Muslim theorist and writers especially those from the Malay World as it is noted throughout the history of Malay-Arab religious and intellectual relationship that Muslim Arab scholars and writers have influenced Malay Muslims scholars and writers. This literary connection, established since the early spread of Islam throughout the Malay Archipelago, has cultivated a distinctive creative writing landscape where Arabic literary thoughts and works find fertile ground for interpretation and reimagination within the Malay cultural framework. The presence of al-Kilani's literary thought in the Malay writing sphere represents a continuation of this tradition of knowledge exchange, whereby Islamic literary principles are not merely transferred but thoughtfully reinterpreted through expressions sensitive to local cultural nuances, linguistic aesthetics, and the literary heritage of the Nusantara region. The inclination of Malay literary scholars to embrace and develop al-Kilani's theories demonstrates the strength of his Islamic literary conception that transcends geographical boundaries while remaining anchored to the foundational sources in Islamic writing tradition. This historical intellectual exchange between Arab and Malay Muslim scholars creates a natural pathway for al-Kilani's theories to find resonance within the Malay literary tradition, enriching both traditions through cross-cultural fertilization. Briefly speaking, as was mentioned early al-Kilani is seen by Muslim Malay researchers as the Islamist theorist and writer, therefore the discussion of the relevancy of al-Kilani's views in the Malay literature context is acceptable. The relevancy of al-Kilani's views is

obvious when some distinguished works of Hassan such *Pendidikan Estetika daripada Pendekatan Tauhid* (2005) and *Pujangga Melayu* (2017) are reviewed here. Basically, the works reflect the same key elements that can be traced back to al-Kilani's approach to Islamic literature. The works serve as a testament to the enduring relevance of al-Kilani's literary theories, emphasizing the integration of Islamic principles with literary creativity.

As for *Pendidikan Estetika daripada Pendekatan Tauhid* (2005), it explores aesthetic education from the perspective of *tauhid* (Islamic monotheism), focusing on how tauhid values can be integrated into the study of art and aesthetics. This integration represents a profound contribution to Islamic literary theory by establishing tauhid not merely as a theological concept but as the foundational aesthetic principle that shapes artistic creation and reception within an Islamic framework. The author investigates how principles of tauhid—faith in the oneness of God in Islam—shape understanding and teaching within aesthetics. The work presents a framework for incorporating tauhid into art education, illustrating how these values enrich and influence the appreciation and evaluation of art. This approach underscores the role of religious principles in forming aesthetic thought and provides guidance for educators and students on applying tauhid values in the field of art. Besides, the author emphasizes that Islamic literature should function as a medium for tarbiyah (education) and tazkiyah (soul purification), echoing al-Kilani's idea that Islamic literature must be grounded in the core values of the religion, using aesthetics as a means of conveying the truth of Islamic thought. This dual function of literature as both educational and spiritual transformation aligns with the Islamic concept of '*adab*' where literary expression serves as a vehicle for moral development and spiritual enlightenment. Likewise, the exploration of tauhid and aesthetic relationship in *Pendekatan Tauhid* (2005) aligned with al-Kilani's belief that literature should serve both spiritual and moral purposes. Therefore, the concept of Espen abridged from *esei* (essay) and *penceritaan* (narrative) mirrors al-Kilani's insistence that Islamic literature should go beyond entertainment, offering guidance to the reader on how to live according to Islamic principles.

Meantime, *Pujangga Melayu* (2017), the word *pujangga* (poet or literator) is emphasised signifying the role and responsibility of the writer especially in the contemporary Malay context preserving the heritage of Malay Islamic literature and shaping the Malay worldview of religion and life. This elevation of the writer to the status of *pujangga* reflects al-Kilani's conception of the Muslim writer as both artist and moral guide, bearing responsibility not only for aesthetic excellence but also for spiritual guidance of the community through literary expression. It is clear that the author discusses significant works in Malay literature and the contributions of *pujangga* in maintaining and advancing the literary tradition. This work provides a profound analysis of how Malay literature plays a crucial role in society and culture, offering insights into the evolution of the literary tradition and the pivotal role of *pujangga* in its preservation and advancement within a contemporary context. Generally, the author employs the concept of *Persuratan Baru* (New Literary Tradition) to criticise conventional Malay literature, and he advocates the swing to Islamic values, arguing that Malay literature should be shaped by the moral and

ethical teachings of Islam. *Persuratan Baru* emerges as a distinctly Malay manifestation of al-Kilani's theoretical framework, demonstrating how his principles can be effectively localized within specific cultural contexts while maintaining their Islamic essence. Almost like al-Kilani's theory, *Persurat Baru* emphasizes the responsibility of the writer as a moral guide to engage with societal issues through an Islamic lens, reflecting *tauhid* and moral justice.

In short, both *Pendidikan Estetika daripada Pendekatan Tauhid* (2005) serve as contemporary interpretation of al-Kilani's Islamic literary theory, emphasizing the integration of Islamic values into literary aesthetics. These interpretations demonstrate the versatility and adaptability of al-Kilani's theoretical framework, proving its applicability across different cultural contexts while maintaining its essential Islamic character. Hassan's works exemplify how al-Kilani's theoretical concepts continue to influence contemporary Islamic literature. By grounding their thematic focus on tauhid and moral responsibility, these works reinforce al-Kilani's belief that Islamic literature must engage with real-world issues, promote spiritual growth, and reflect the ethical framework provided by the Qur'an and Hadith. Meantime, *Pujangga Melayu* (2017) highlights the role of the writer in guiding the community towards Islamic values, which mirrors al-Kilani's view that literature must serve a higher moral and spiritual purpose. This continuing intellectual lineage from al-Kilani to contemporary Malay literary theorists exemplifies the timeless relevance of Islamic literary principles when thoughtfully adapted to specific cultural and historical contexts.

The narrative component of Islamic literary writing must emerge organically from its foundational principles, creating a seamless integration of form and content where aesthetic expression serves the higher purpose of conveying Islamic values. This integration allows for creative exploration of contemporary themes while ensuring adherence to Islamic ethical and spiritual frameworks. Contemporary Muslim writers can expand the narrative dimensions by addressing modern challenges such as globalization, technological advancement, environmental concerns, and social justice issues through an Islamic perspective, thus demonstrating the continued relevance and applicability of Islamic values in addressing emerging societal needs. Furthermore, the narrative aspects should reflect the universal nature of Islamic values by exploring common human experiences across cultural boundaries, creating works that can resonate with both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences while maintaining their authentic Islamic character.

### Implications for Contemporary Islamic Literature

Al-Kilani's framework offers several implications for contemporary Muslim writers and scholars. First, it demonstrates that authentic Islamic literature need not be confined to traditional forms but can embrace modern literary genres while maintaining spiritual essence. Second, it provides a methodology for addressing contemporary social and political issues through authentic Islamic perspectives.

Third, the framework establishes balance between universal Islamic principles and contextual relevance, allowing writers to address modern challenges through authentic Islamic lens. This approach enables literature to serve as both artistic

expression and vehicle for social reform, spiritual development, and cultural preservation. The continuing relevance of al-Kilani's approach is evident in its adoption across different cultural contexts, from Arab literary tradition to Malay literary discourse, demonstrating the universal applicability of his theoretical framework when thoughtfully adapted to specific cultural and historical circumstances.

## Conclusion

This study confirms Najib al-Kilani's pivotal position as both theorist and practitioner of Islamic literature. His systematic approach to establishing theoretical foundations grounded in Qur'anic and Hadith sources provides a sustainable framework for contemporary Muslim writers addressing modern challenges while maintaining authentic Islamic foundations. Al-Kilani's dual contribution as theorist and creative writer demonstrates the practical applicability of Islamic literary theory in addressing contemporary global issues. Through works like *'Azra' Jakarta*, he shows how Islamic themes and narratives can effectively convey universal messages while dealing with specific cultural and political challenges.

His influence extends beyond individual works to establish a comprehensive model for Islamic literary expression that balances rigid foundational principles with flexible narrative applications. This model continues to influence contemporary scholars across different cultural contexts, as evidenced in Malay literary discourse through works of scholars like Hassan. The enduring relevance of al-Kilani's contributions lies not merely in their historical significance but in their continued capacity to guide contemporary Muslim writers in creating authentic Islamic literature that addresses modern realities while remaining grounded in timeless Islamic principles. His legacy represents a living discourse that continues to shape Islamic literary thought, offering both theoretical framework and practical guidance for future generations of Muslim writers and scholars.

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