ISLAMIC LITERATURE DISCOURSE IN THE POSTCOLONIAL ERA: THE TRANSCENDENTAL LITERATURE OF INDONESIA AND GENUINE LITERATURE OF MALAYSIA

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Abstract

This article discusses the idea of Prophetic Literature or Sufi Literature that developed along the same lines as Transcendental Literature, founded by Kuntowijoyo. The core philosophies behind Transcendental Literature are the teachings of Sufism and mysticism. With *Islam Kejawen* (Javanese Sufism) as a background, Transcendental Literature emphasizes the spiritual experience and effort by humans to seek the love of Allah. It also emphasizes on traditional elements such as the "return to the roots of local culture", including *Kejawen* (Javanese Sufism) as a source to respond to the post-colonial literary discourse. In comparison, in Malaysia, Genuine Literature, pioneered by Mohd. Affandi Hassan, attempts to differentiate between the term and concept of *kesusasteraan* (literature), which is linked to Western fiction, and *persuratan* (writing), Mohd. Affandi Hassan's ambitious venture was to liberate Muslim authors from Western colonization. Genuine (Islamic) Literature focuses on 'ilm or knowledge, hence excluding aspects of superstition and imagination in literary

works. Also, in Genuine Literature, the real beauty in literary works lies in the "combination of aesthetics and intellect". Genuine Literature also rejects absolute freedom for authors, with creativity no longer taken to be a measure of creativity. As an early discussion, this paper will highlight aspects of the Transcendental Literature of Indonesia and Genuine Literature of Malaysia and how they were presented as a response to the Western discourse. Both clearly try to provide "Islamic Literature" with distinctive features to create a more meaningful post-colonial discourse.

INTRODUCTION

After its rapid development in the United States, the study of Comparative Literature declined, especially in the 1970s. According to Md. Salleh Yaapar (1994:3-8), there were three major factors that challenged the existing discipline and made it "appear disorganised". Firstly came the rise of what was called "emergent literatures"–literature that had previously been marginalized. This then led scholars of Comparative Literature studies to refrain from using solely Western standards. Wlad Godzich (1995:35), a professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Montreal, proposed that the discipline of Comparative Literature view emergent literature with the aim of "refreshing the discipline of Comparative Literature". Godzich continued to explain that emergent literatures are "those literatures that cannot be readily comprehended within the hegemonic view of literature that has been dominant within our discipline". Therefore, emergent literature–which includes literature written by the African-American minority, women writers, the gay and lesbian communities, as well as those written by writers from non-Western areas such as Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean–received greater attention. Godzich's views are as follows:

> Emergent literatures are not to be understood then as literatures that are in a state of development that is somehow inferior to that of fully developed, or emerged literatures–our own disciplinary version of underdevelopment or developing literatures, if you wish, with attendant Third Worldist ideologies–but rather those literatures that cannot be readily comprehended within the hegemonic view of literature that has

been dominant in our discipline. In this view, emergent literatures will include writings by racial and ethnic minorities in countries such as the United States; literature by women in, let us say, Italy, France or Australia, as well as much of the new writing from Africa, Asia and Latin America, including the Caribbean. Emergent literatures represent a different conception of field and of object than that represented by the often-used expression "emerging literatures".

Secondly, Comparative Literature began to be well-received among Asian scholars. Md. Salleh Yaapar explains that scholars from China began to challenge Comparative Literature for using in its evaluation "a Western scheme". Thirdly, Md. Salleh also pointed out that the decline of Comparative Literature in America occurred due to a Western obsession with theory. He meant by this that there was a greater inclination towards Western literary, linguistics, historical, philosophical, psychological, sociological, and religious theories, considered *les sciences humaines* by the French. For example, the discourse on deconstruction pioneered by Jacques Derrida received greater attention than Comparative Literature. This new field required comparative scholars to master theories apart from possessing a mastery of a foreign language. Indirectly, this caused scholars of Comparative Literature to spend a lot of time comprehending all kinds of theories instead of focusing on the actual comparative work.

Simultaneously, the rise of postcolonial literary studies in the East (much of which had once been colonized by the West), resulted in Comparative Literature being adopted as a tool to reevaluate the position of National Literature. Western standards were no longer used in Comparative Literature. In fact, for a certain time, Comparative Literature became an "interpreter" for National Literature, for example in India. This situation was acknowledged by Ganesh Devy in his essay *"Comparative Literature: Indian Dimensions"* (Susan Bassnett, 1994:8).

These three major challenges to Western Comparative Literature, when linked to the emergence of Islamic Literature in the region, are not insignificant. This is because Islamic Literature can be regarded as a manifestation of emergent literature or a rising National Literature that has a greater local character. Even then, it has to be stressed here that placing Islamic Literature in the sphere of emergent literatures is not entirely correct as this genre has existed for a long time, emerging together with the arrival of Islam. However, the discipline was neglected after the Western colonization

of many countries including Muslim nations. Islamic Literature has in fact returned to become a phenomenon in the Muslim *ummah*, where it is seen as a tool that could be used to counter-respond to Western ideologies. In countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, it has reappeared as an alternative to Western literary movements. As an initial response, two different trends will be compared i.e. the Transcendental Literature (*Sastra Transendental*) of Indonesia and the Genuine Literature (*Persuratan Baru*) of Malaysia[1]. Being an early discussion, this article will only touch on several aspects of the two movements that are responses to Western discourse. It will then show that the intention of writers and scholars from Malaysia and Indonesia is to make Islamic Literature a meaningful addition to post-colonial discourse.

TRANSCENDENTAL LITERATURE IN INDONESIA

Transcendental Literature can be seen as an effort after Indonesia's independence to fill in the young nation's literary discourse with Islamic literary works. First introduced by Kuntowijoyo in a local literary convention held from the 6th to the 8th of December 1982, Transcendental Literature received an enthusiastic response from many important Indonesian writers. One of the writers and scholars who embraced it was the poet Abdul Hadi W.M., whom Kuntowijoyo frequently cites as an example of a poet writing Transcendental Literature. Despite being a writer who is more often than not related to "Prophetic Literature" (*Sastra Profetik*) and "Sufi Literature" (*Sastra Tasawuf*), Abdul Hadi W.M. has used the term "transcendental" himself. Since he seems to have no objections to the term, we can consider him as a writer of Transcendental Literature. This can also be used as evidence for the argument that Prophetic Literature, which is synonymous with Abdul Hadi's works, is essentially the same as Transcendental Literature.[2]

Being the founder of the Transcendental Literature movement, Kuntowijoyo suggests a "spiritual" solution to liberate modern humanity from various problems and moral issues, meaning that he suggests that spiritual experience should be an "escape route" from "the claws of a world that idolizes materialism and technology". According to Abdul Hadi W.M. (1992:13), Kuntowijoyo's view is in line with that of Syed Hossein Nasr, whose well-known article entitled "What does Islam Have to Offer to the Modern World" suggests that *tasawuf* (Islamic mysticism) is an alternative to free those who have lost their sight of the Divine and who are experiencing a spiritual void (1972:164-70). This view, which became the starting point

for Transcendental Literature and Prophetic Literature, is clearly shared by both Kuntowijoyo and Abdul Hadi W.M.

Thus, Transcendental Literature suggests that *tasawuf* is a solution to moral issues and problems faced by the people in the modern world. In the context of Indonesia, specifically Java, *tasawuf* is closely connected to *Kejawen* or Javanese Sufism.[3] To fully understand what is meant by *Kejawen,* it must be explained that Islam was spread around the world after the passing of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. in two approaches, that is, the strict, non-compromising approach and a more tolerant approach. Most regions of the Middle East experienced the former, where Islamic *da'wah* or the propagation of Islam was done with clear and strict guidelines to differentiate the elements of *jahiliyah* (pre-Islamic practices) from Islam. This means that there was no compromise in the spread of the faith where ancient beliefs, particularly those that contravened the Islamic *aqidah* (character), were concerned. Ancient pre-Islamic customs that went against the Islamic creed were cast aside and eliminated. Terms such as *iman* (faith), *musyrik* (one who associates partners with God) and *kufur* (one who disbelieves in God) were employed to assist in the process of propagating Islam. However, in spreading Islam to places like Africa, Central Asia and the Malay Archipelago, the second, more tolerant approach was used. Here, the teachings of Islam were often "assimilated" to or "combined" with local teachings or cultural traditions–some of which could even be considered to be unIslamic–in order to facilitate the conversion of the local people. There were even instances where pre-Islamic practices continued to exist alongside Islamic ones. This compromising approach to the religion resulted in a form of Islam that was "syncretic in nature" (Ridwan Lubis, 1999:182-83).[4]

This compromise between Islam and local traditions in Indonesia was generally accepted as a healthy practice until the emergence of the "revivalist movements of the Wahabis, Salafis and the modernist Islamic movements influenced by Egypt and Pakistan" that rigidly rejected any practices considered to be unIslamic (Simuh, 1995:21). The Indonesian scholar Jalaluddin Rakhmat (1992:118-25) argues that the arrival and spread of Islam in the Malay Archipelago is an example of a harmonious integration. According to him, Islam experienced a process of "acculturation" where "Islamic elements were integrated into the local culture". He is also of the opinion that Islam strengthened its foothold in Indonesia partly because of mysticism, in which spiritual Islam played a criticial role to facilitate the people's acceptance of the religion. The same spiritual Islam left its mark on Islamic Literature in

Indonesia in that it has greatly influenced both Kuntowijoyo's Transcendental Literature and Abdul Hadi W.M.'s Prophetic Literature, as well as having influenced the form of literary works.

According to Simuh, a scholar who has extensively studied the issue of Javanese mysticism, the *tasawuf* or mystical approach employed in the spread of Islam throughout the Malay Archipelago gave rise to "a unique mixture of Islamic teachings". He adds that the "Sufi Islam" that spread in this part of the world is "a product of the conciliation between Islam and mysticism", where Islam existed with a willingness to "compromise with the local socio-cultural traditions"[5] (Simuh, 1995:6-16).

After the independence of Indonesia, the *tarekat* (mystical groups) in Java realized that the Western culture that had come with the Dutch colonizers had destroyed spiritual values. The followers and supporters of *Kejawen* (Javanese mysticism) also believed that these spiritual aspects of Javanese culture should be revived in order to reject the negative elements of the West that are rooted in materialism and secularism. Javanese spiritual practises were regarded not only as spiritual teachings but as a guide or "a form of therapy" in one's worldly life (Simuh, 1995:64).

By the 1970s, *Kejawen* practises were actively and widely adopted as "therapy", and were often related to the "70s Poets" movement or the Transcendental Movement. This group of writers can be easily identified. Firstly, their inclination to use symbolism in their works was not seen as anachronistic; instead it was seen as an effort to "return to the roots of tradition". (Abdul Hadi W.M., 2000:83). One poet from this movement, Sutardji Calzoum Bachri, states that the group's effort to "return to the roots of tradition" clearly separates them from any of the movements before it (Abdul Hadi W.M., 1999:4). He defines this "return" or "borrowing of tradition" as a situation where traditions become not only a source of inspiration but also the starting point of one's creative writing.

There are three methods a writer can use to "return to the roots of tradition". The first is by using cultural tradition for experimenting in one's writing. One can also opt for a second method, that of prioritising ethnic and local literature (examples include Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese and Sasak literature), where their distinctive ethnic and local features are then assimilated into the mainstream Indonesian literature. A third method is by infusing the spiritual traditions from major religions like Islam into one's work. These three methods sometimes overlap in the works of writers. For

example, the works of Kuntowijoyo and Danarto were written using both the second and third methods simultaneously, where Javanese cultural traditions are combined with the teachings of spiritual Islam. In fact, *Kejawen* was also a source for the creation of their works[6] (Abdul Hadi W.M., 1999:5-19).

To recap, the second characteristic of the Transcendental Movement is found in their inclination towards Sufi teachings, where its spiritual values can be easily traced in their works. Using this characteristic as a guide, Abdul Hadi W.M. included the works of Danarto, Kuntowijoyo and Sutardji Calzoum Bachari in the "70s Poets" group. This movement, which was described as "religious", "Sufistic" and "spiritual" was then followed by writers of the early 1980s including Afrizal Malna, Hamid Jabbar, Kriapur, D. Zawawi Imron, Emha Ainun Nadjib, Linus Suryadi AG and Heru Emka (Abdul Hadi W.M., 2000:804-05).

It is clear that the main objective behind the establishment of the Transcendental Literature movement lies the need to fill in a void in the discourse of postcolonial literature. A similar situation can be observed in Malaysia, where Islamic Literature was presented as an alternative to Western thought concerning literature.

GENUINE LITERATURE

In post-colonial Malaysia, *tasawuf* and Sufism were also seen as alternatives and thus Sufi works from the Malay world were reviewed with renewed interest. According to Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas (1984), the emergence of classical Sufi literature in the Malay world brought about an astounding intellectual revolution. This view is essential to Mohd. Affandi Hassan's "Genuine Literature" (*Persuratan Baru*). Genuine Literature was an idea suggested by Affandi inspired by the concept of Islamic Literature after Shahnon Ahmad (1977:426-27) wrote a short article entitled "Islamic Literature", which soon became a catalyst to open and varied discussion about Islamic Literature. The article had a great impact and was widely discussed; as a result, Islamic Literature found a place in Malay literature:

> This article unleashed a flood of writings which developed into a sustained debate unprecedented in the history of modern Malay literature.

> (Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, 1989:232-33).

Shahnon Ahmad's views concerning Islamic Literature had a great impact. As an example, the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, as the official organizer of the Islamic Literature Prize since 1987, adopted Shahnon Ahmad's concept of Islamic fiction as a guideline for Islamic Literature.[7] This same concept was also used by the Islamic Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department in competitions organized by them.[8]

Affandi's Genuine Literature aimed at challenging the concept of Shahnon Ahmad's Islamic Literature. According to Affandi, the term *persuratan* (writing) in Genuine Literature (*Persuratan Baru*) is used in opposition to the term *kesusasteraan* (literature) as used in a Western framework. (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1994a:xiii). Furthermore, he added that Western literature is based on an imagined world. According to him, the term *persuratan* (writing) and the concept behind it are more suitable to be applied to Islamic Literature, in which the concept of *tauhid* (belief in the Oneness of God) is paramount. Despite frequently using the term "Islamic Literature" in his writings, Affandi uses it to refer to his own proposed concept of Genuine Literature instead of the one used by Shahnon Ahmad. Affandi is also of the opinion that the concepts of "literature" and "author" as used in a Western framework are no longer relevant once viewed using the approach of *tauhid*. He argued that in Genuine Literature, "creative works will no longer be lost in imaginary language that is full of pretension" but that is replaced by a "literary language that is much more energetic in terms of intellectual and analytical aspects". Affandi used his own works as examples of this type of literature.

Three factors that led to the idea of Genuine Literature were the awareness of the role of Islam in the tradition of Malay literature, the intention to stimulate discussion on Islamic Literature, and Affandi's rejection of various Western literary theories. Firstly, this awareness of the role of Islam was put in practice through "transitioning the orientation of literature to a knowledge-based one". This means that Genuine Literature emerged with the intention of returning an Islamic function to literature by infusing it with knowledge. Secondly, Genuine Literature was introduced due to the various understandings of the idea of Islamic Literature. Since Shahnon Ahmad introduced his concept of Islamic Literature, various ideas about Islamic Literature, as opposed to Western literature, came into being and were debated by local scholars. This was exemplified by the emergence of the concept of Genuine Literature itself, acknowledged by Mohd. Affandi himself when he admitted that the main objective of Genuine Literature is to provide an alternative platform to

the various discussions, concepts and ideas about Islamic Literature (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1999:11-19). Therefore, Genuine Literature was promoted as differing from Shahnon Ahmad's Islamic Literature. Thirdly, Genuine Literature emerged to undo the colonial influences that continued to form a "dependence on the West". This colonial influence can be seen in literary works where various literary theories and ideas about literature, including Islamic Literature, were viewed and presented from Western perspectives. (Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, 2010:160-287).[9]

The bulk of Mohd. Affandi's views can be read in his works such as *Pendidikan Estetika daripada Pendekatan Tauhid* (Aesthetic Education Using a Tauhidic Appraoch) (1992) and *Medan-medan dalam Sistem Persuratan Melayu* (Fields in the System of Malay Writing) (1994a)[10] which were criticisms of a lecture given by Muhammad Haji Salleh.[11] It is to be mentioned that book *Pendidikan Estetika daripada Pendekatan Tauhid* was accepted by the Aga Khan University Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations as part of The Annotated Bibliography Project that is a collection of academic Islamic writings from all over the world. This international recognition proves that Affandi's idea was not only positively accepted in the academic world but also enabled further development in the discipline of aesthetics and literary criticism (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 2006:31).

In placing Genuine Literature within the postcolonial literary discourse, Affandi stresses on human nature, the nature of knowledge, and the practices that he believes are related to the role of literature. He argued that any misunderstanding of the term "knowledge" would lead to a false idea about knowledge. Affandi claimed that he had put forth the idea of Genuine Literature as an alternative to the existing Islamic Literature. He considered that the existing concept of Islamic Literature had failed to explain this key concept of knowledge.

The understanding of human nature and the nature of knowledge led to understanding of use of a concept he refers to as *kalam.* The concept of *kalam* proposed by Affandi is closely related to the concept of delivering knowledge. Here, a work of literature must deliver knowledge. Affandi's view is quoted as below:

> *Penggunaan kalam dalam Islam dihubungkan dengan ilmu, dan ini dalam operasinya selalu ditunjukkan dalam tujuan ilmu itu, iaitu untuk membawa manusia pandai membaca ayat-ayat Allah dan dengan itu dapat meletakkan dirinya dalam perspektif yang betul. Inilah maksud keadilan dalam Islam.*

(The use of *kalam* in Islam is linked to knowledge. This, in its operation, is always shown to be the aim of this knowledge, that is, to make human beings able to read the word of Allah, and, with that, to put themselves in the correct perspective. This is what is meant by "equality" in Islam.)

(Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1992:23)

Despite not referring to any specific Qur'anic verses, his argument regarding the relationship between "kalam" and knowledge are in line with the message in Surah al 'Alaq (verse 1-5) and Surah al-Qalam. Literature, as one of the products of *kalam* (*kalam* here includes writing tools, and words or language) by itself mirrors the Truth, that is, the true nature of knowledge.

Affandi also points out that this concept of *kalam* sharply contradicts Western literary traditions. This is because the concept of creativity accepted by the West is a concept that is too loosely defined. Creativity that has no limits will ultimately bring about the creation of works of literature that will lead readers to *fasad* or wrongdoings. It also subjects readers to the whims and fancies of writers, which could confuse readers and lead them astray (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1992:23-24).

The Western concept of creativity is open to subjective and personal opinions. The nature of Western literature can be seen from its view of fiction, where fiction is limited to the "characteristics of fantasy, imagination, design and creativity" of its writer. This means that the quality of one's writing is measured using a subjective and baseless scale. In the West, this concept is known as "fictionality" (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1992:24).

Considering that fictionality is opposed to the concept of *kalam* found in Genuine Literature, the aesthetics of Islam naturally are also different. According to Affandi, the concept of beauty in Islamic Literature (or Genuine Literature) is the combination of "aesthetic and intellectual function". Therefore, beauty must not only be measured in terms of the language or writing technique but also through the knowledge content that should be able to stimulate the author's as well as the readers' intellect. For Affandi, a beautiful literary work "means that it is written based on a specific method and technique, which uses all aspects of language suitable with the chosen genre". On the other hand, the term "meaningful" is understood as "giving a truthful and deep meaning of humanity and human nature, as well as being compatible with the *tauhidic* worldview". To him, "beauty" is an aesthetic function while being "meaningful" is an intellectual function found in literary works (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1992:25). Thus, Affandi seems to stress on

intellectualism (which he views as the emphasis on knowledge) in a literary work as compared to the overall effect or aspects of fiction. Genuine Literature is described as different from the previous concept of Islamic Literature as it no longer includes the Western framework of fictionality.

Four features of Genuine Literature that differentiate it from the Islamic Literature proposed by Shahnon Ahmad were listed by Affandi in his article entitled "Mengapa Saya Menulis *Aligupit*" (Why I Wrote *Aligupit*). These features are:

a.   Genuine Literature prioritizes knowledge, thought and wisdom.

b.   Genuine Literature uses a style of writing that is described as being academic "for its academic content" as well as beautiful "for being presented in an artistic way".

c.   Genuine Literature stresses on ideas, where writers discuss an idea in depth, and through "strong" characters. "Strong" characters are those who are morally upright, religious, knowledgeable and the like. Genuine Literature rejects characters such as prostitutes or "characters who are insignificant and shallow". Affandi stresses that characters depicted in a literary work should be outstanding and exemplary.

d.   Genuine Literature prioritizes a "creativity that is high in quality, controlled and ethical". This means that any works written by Malaysian authors that contain elements of superstition or imagination have no place in Genuine Literature. It only accepts a "stylization of ideas", and rejects the "drifting imagination seen in works of Magic Realism" (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1994b:11-13). A discussion on "stylization of ideas" will be later presented in detail.

Affandi highlights that in Genuine Literature, "the story itself is secondary." The most important aspects are "idea and thought". He stated that the Qur'an did not only narrate stories but also delivers messages through them. An excerpt of his statement (1994b:13) is presented below:

> *Novel tidak lagi bercerita, tetapi untuk menyampaikan gagasan dan pemikiran… saya tidak berminat untuk hanya bercerita, kerana dalam kajian saya, al Quran tidak pernah bercerita sekadar bercerita. Cerita digunakan untuk menyatakan sesuatu gagasan atau pemikiran, untuk memberi peringatan dan amaran.*

(Novels are no longer merely for telling stories but are there to state ideas and thoughts… I am not interested in telling a story for the sake of telling a story because according to my reading, the Qur'an never tells a story for the stake of telling a story. Stories are used to express an idea or a thought, or to remind or admonish.)

Mohd. Affandi summarises three bases of Islamic aesthetics, extracted from the views of Ismail al Faruqi (1992):

a. The first principle is the understanding that "reality has two dimensions" where the first dimension is transcendental or divine in character. Its existence is known but impossible to be experienced via the intellect. The second dimension is described as "natural" where it can be experienced by the senses and physical experience. These two realities are separated and can only be connected through a process of intellection. Thus, it is impossible for humans to establish any dialogue on the transcendental dimension in any way.

b. The second principle is an implication of the first principle. Hence, the godly or divine realm cannot be presented in any form, whether through one's personal experience or the natural world.

c. The third principle is an implication arising out of both previous principles. Considering that godly or divine art cannot be clearly expressed, the art that is created based on these two principles is "abstract art that is stylized, expressing infinity and inexpressibility". This also means that Islamic art has to go through the process of intellection, making it different from Western works of art (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1992:39).

This "abstract art" must be presented employing a specific technique known as "stylization". Affandi borrows this term from Ismail al-Faruqi to strengthen the concept of Genuine Literature. According to this technique, the process of intellection, thought and presentation of meaning becomes something unique and beautiful. Affandi is of the strict belief that "Islamic art prioritises thought and meaning; but thought and meaning are given a perfect and unique form through stylization". As regards stylization, he encourages one to observe and interpret the natural world in the search for the Real Truth (Mohd. Affandi Hassan, 1992:39-40). Translating the term "stylization of ideas" into the Malay language as *siratan makna* (implying of meaning), Affandi (2008:188-94) explains that the term can be understood as a "technique and style of writing that prioritizes intellect and knowledge, not

stories or experiences that produce pleasure". He continues by emphasizing that apart from producing works where importance is given to intellectual content, *siratan makna* balances the aspect of beauty "in terms of delivery or presentation".[12]

Based on the arguments above, just like the efforts of Kuntowijoyo and Abdul Hadi W.M. in Indonesia, and Mohd. Affandi's efforts in Malaysia to contribute to the existing postcolonial literary discourse through Genuine Literature prove that Islam is regarded by authors and literary scholars in both countries as the cure to the problems faced by people in modern society.

COMPARING THE TWO DISCOURSES

Based on the above discussion, a number of similarities and differences between Transcendental Literature and Genuine Literature can be surmised. The nearest and only similarity between both is their philosophy. Transcendental Literature is deeply rooted in "transcendental structuralism" and a "prophetic vision" that has its origins in verse 110 of Surah Ali Imraan. As stated before, the objective of Transcendental Literature in general is to guide its readers towards a more universal spiritual awareness. Among its suggested themes are "humanization" (*amar makruf*), "liberalization" (*nahi mungkar*) and "transcendence" (faith in God). This is the closest point shared by both movements. Genuine Literature in its effort to reject the materialism and total freedom offered by the West (which Kuntowijoyo refers to as liberalization) emphasizes that creativity must not be a measurement for the freedom of a writer. To replace this kind of creativity, Affandi suggests the concept of *kalam*. Genuine Literature also rejects the Western concept of fiction that is based on fantasy and imagination, which then leads to rejection of any elements of *fasad* (wrongdoings), forbidden actions, evil, and approaches that can lead to flights of the imagination. In his discussions about Genuine Literature, Affandi often refers to the works of classical Sufi literature, especially the writings of Hamzah Fansuri. This wish to return to the golden age of classical Sufi works has also been expressed by Kuntowijoyo and the supporters of Transcendental Literature, as is clearly shown in their application of the term "transcendental", a term frequently associated with Sufi literature.

The most evident difference observed in both ideas lies in their methods or practises to reject "Westoxication" (*Westoksikasi*, or poisoning by the West). Kuntowijoyo's Transcendental Literature strictly rejects any form of

preaching, long-winded facts and directness in style. The interpretation of the term *makna* (meaning) is highly emphasized and expressed through the use of symbolism in writings. It also places great importance on writers' freedom of imagination. Kuntowijoyo encouraged writers to use their creativity by promoting the element of "inclusivism" (the inclusion of outside influences). Transcendental Literature also rejects the use of literature as a mere tool of religious propagation. Affandi's Genuine Literature, on the other hand, rejects ambiguity and confusing symbolism. Affandi argued that the term and concept *persuratan* (writing) is used to indicate a difference from the term "literature" used in the West. According to Mohd. Affandi, *persuratan* contains elements of knowledge and rejects of superstition. He also makes *adab* (ethics) as the basis of *persuratan*, where it forms the roots of Islamic Literature, which in turn encompasses the relationship shared between Allah and human beings. Genuine Literature suggests that literary works should be didactic and thus what is important in a work is no longer the story it tells but rather the knowledge it contains. Further, "beauty" in Genuine Literature means "the unity of aesthetics and intellect", and therefore a work must be meaningful. For this reason, Affandi introduces what he terms the "espen"–a combination of *esei* (essay) and *cerpen* (short story)–and includes sermons as a genre in Genuine Literature. While "beauty" to Affandi is completely dependent on the component of knowledge that is imparted in a work that is direct, didactic and without ambiguity, Kuntowijoyo sees beauty as achievable only when human beings can be brought closer to God, that is, to be united with "truth" itself. This "truth" is hidden behind meanings that appear in literature and is to be inferred by the readers themselves. Another important point is that while he refers to the classical works of Sufi literature in his discussion of Genuine Literature, Affandi (1992:39) dismisses the principle of transcendence found in Sufi writings because "human beings are incapable of discussing the transcendent dimension in any form". He asserts that "the godly realm cannot be symbolized in any form, whether through using personal experience or the natural word". Whether or not Affandi is confused about the concept of transcendence in Sufism is a matter that should be discussed elsewhere.

These similarities and differences between these two movements have not diminished the intentions of their founders to reject the colonial literary mould. Both Transcendental Literature and Genuine Literature are intended to be alternatives to whatever has been offered by the West. However, as stated in the paragraph above, each is distinctively different in its approach

and method. Among the exemplary works of Transcendental Literature are Kuntowijoyo's *Khotbah di Atas Bukit* (Sermon on the Hill) (2000) and *Mantra Penjinak Ular* (The Spell of the Snake Charmer)(2000) while the best example of Genuine Literature is Mohd. Affandi Hassan's *Pujangga Melayu* (A Malay Poet) (1997).

CONCLUSION

The colonization of Eastern countries, including Muslim nations, led to Islamic Literature being forgotten albeit temporarily. In the 1970s, Islamic Literature in Malaysia and Indonesia with its discourse and products was seen as a tool to counter Western ideology. In Indonesia, Prophetic Literature, *Tasawuf* Literature and Sufi Literature developed on track with the major Transcendental Literature which was begun by Kuntowijoyo. The basis and philosophy of this movement lies in *tasawuf*, spiritual or mystical teachings, and *Kejawen*, all of which emphasise spiritual experience and the tireless effort to find Divine Love. The emphasis on traditional elements such as returning to the "roots of local tradition" include using *Kejawen* as a source, and formed a response to the discourse of post-colonial literature. In contrast, the Genuine Literature movement in Malaysia pioneered by Mohd. Affandi Hassan attempted to create a distinction between the term and concept of *kesusasteraan* (literature) and *persuratan* (writing). The term "literature" and the concept associated with it forms the basis for Western fiction and is to be replaced with the term and concept of *persuratan*, which is knowledge-based and free from influences of superstitions and imagination. Genuine Literature also proposes that the idea of beauty in a literary work is a meaningful "combination of aesthetics and intellect". Therefore, genuine Literature emphasises on a knowledge component in all works of literature and rejects limitless creativity as a measurement of a writer's freedom.

As this is an early discussion, this article sheds light on a number of aspects from both Transcendental Literature and Genuine Literature which have been presented as counter-arguments to the West. It can now be seen that these two movements from Malaysia and Indonesia have formulated an Islamic Literature with its own unique characteristics to make a more meaningful contribution to postcolonial discourse.

NOTES

1   The translation of the term *Persuratan Baru* to Genuine Literature used here was introduced Mohd. Affandi Hassan in his blog entry titled "Penilaian Berdasarkan Gagasan Persuratan Baru" that was uploaded on 13 June 2010 (and accessed on 12 May 2011 at 9.20 a.m.).

2   Please refer to Mohd. Faizal Musa, *Javanese Sufism*, 2011 for an in-depth discussion on the relationship between Kuntowijoyo's Transcendental Literature and Abdul Hadi W.M.'s Prophetic Literature.

3   For a better understanding of the features of Islam Kejawen or *Javanese Sufism*, see Mohd. Faizal Musa, *Javanese Sufism*, 2011; Mohd. Faizal Musa, *Kejawen (Javanese Sufism) and Perennial Philosophy*, 2011 and Mohd. Faizal Musa, *Wacana Sastra Transendental*, 2011.

4   Refer to Th. Sumartana, *Wali Songo di Jawa*, 2001 and Azyumardi Azra, *Wali Songo Esoterisme Islam*, 2001.

5   See also Muhsin Labib *Mengurai Tasawuf Irfan Dan Kebatinan*, 2004, pp. 155-63.

6   A good reference for this subject is A. Teeuw's writings. He comments that even non-Javanese Indonesian readers have difficulties understanding Danarto's works. Refer to A. Teeuw, *Khazanah Sastra Indonesia*, 1982 and, for more detail, A. Teeuw, *Indonesia: Antara Kelisanan Dan Keberaksaraan*, 1994, pp. 192-223.

7   Refer to the Report on the Hadiah Sastera Berunsur Islam ke-X (10th Islamic Literature Award) organized by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

8   Refer to the Report on the Peraduan Cerpen Berunsur Islam IX (9th Islamic Short Story Writing Competion) organized by the Religious Affairs Division, Prime Minister's Department.

9   An equally important reference is Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, *Dinamika Pemikiran Sastera Melayu*, 2009.

10   In his book *Medan-medan dalam Sistem Persuratan Melayu*, Mohd. Affandi stresses on rejecting Western theories.

11   In the same book, Affandi rejects the poetic theory presented by Muhammad Haji Salleh and suggests that Muhammad analyse three literary theories: the theory of Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, of Braginsky, and Affandi's own theory i.e. his theory of Genuine Literature.

12   It should be mentioned that Mohd. Affandi's idea of *siratan makna* was positively received by Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir in her paper entitled "Persuratan Baru oleh Mohd. Affandi Hassan: Satu Sambutan Awal" presented at the Kolokium Membina Teori Sastera Sendiri, 6-8 December 1999 organized by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, as well as in another paper entitled "*Pujangga Melayu* oleh Mohd. Affandi Hassan: Satu Perbincangan Awal", presented at the Majlis Diskusi Buku, 27 February 2002, organized by Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. It would not be an exaggeration to state that Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir is a scholar who has consistently upheld and polished Genuine Literature to make it a strong literary theory.

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