

After Ten Years: The Establishment and Growth of Writing

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This volume of ARISA demonstrates the establishment and growing proliferation of Muslim writing and writing on Muslims in differing spheres of South African society. These twenty-four articles reflect the diversity and volume of activity taking place in differing facets of contemporary life. A year after the celebration of ten years of democracy, this volume moves away from politically and identity-centered articles to reflect on a wider variety of topics.

The **Art & Literature** section aptly exemplifies the popular maxim that “a society has reached maturity when it delves in the arts”. Four book reviews reveal the growing number of Muslims writers and writing on Muslims. Khadija Magardie’s review of Jonny Steinberg’s *The Number*, based on the life story of prison gang member Magadien Wentzel, is a reflection on the brutal realities of crime in South Africa and an effort to understand its roots and its future. On the other hand, Anne Bang’s review of Rayda Jacobs’ *The Mecca Diaries*, takes us to a completely different world, that of the experience of the religious pilgrimage from the perspective of a South African Muslim writer, who puts her unique literary seal on the voyage. The crimes of the Apartheid regime and the failure of time and the new democracy to heal wounds surface in the review and introduction of Imtiaz Cajee’s *Timol: A Quest for Justice*. A similar theme is pursued in Ishtiyag Shukri’s first novel, *The Silent Minaret*, where the ‘disappearance’ of a South African Muslim in London post-September 11th brings back memories of police raids in Apartheid South Africa. Gabeba Baderoon’s poems as well as the interview with the poet Don Mattera take us to another realm, of how personal experience interacts with belief, seen in the former’s touching poetry and in the latter’s recent community involvement. Finally, a young writer’s personal experience of ‘coming to age’ in the South African literary scene is explored in “Why I Wrote *The Story of Maha the Mad*.”

The **Media & Society** section explores other issues of relevance in contemporary South African society. President Mbeki’s Address at the SA-Mali Project Fundraising Dinner and an architect’s article on the Building of the New Library in Timbuktu, are both centered around this Presidential Project which has attracted much media attention, and which is focused on the preservation and promotion of the invaluable legacy of African Muslim scholarship. Again taking up issues of the country’s troubled history and its effects on contemporary society, Khalid Shamis, Imam Abdullah Haron’s grandson writes about the experience of making a documentary on his late grandfather. Two different but in a way inter-related articles touch on issues of identity: “Transforming the Iziko Bo-Kaap Museum” explores the efforts of the museum to challenge its ‘Orientalist roots’ in its depictions of “Cape Malay/Muslim” society, while President Mbeki’s reply to the President of Indonesia affirms South African Muslims’ Indonesian roots as well as their African identity. The last article in this section is a description of Dallas College, a new tertiary education Muslim Institution which opened up in Cape Town recently.