

ISLAM IN BRITAIN, 1558–1685

This book examines the impact of Islam on Britain in the period from the accession of Elizabeth I to the death of Charles II. Professor Matar provides a new perspective on the transformation of British thought and society by demonstrating how influential Islam was in the formation of early modern British culture.

Christian–Muslim interaction was not, as is often assumed, primarily adversarial and oppositional; rather, there was extensive cultural, intellectual and missionary engagement with Islam in Britain. The author documents the conversion of Britons to Islam and Muslims to Anglicanism, and surveys reactions to these conversions in British writings and society. He examines the role of the Arab-Islamic legacy in the *prisca sapientia* and the impact of the Qur’an on Anglican–Puritan political discourse; he also shows the role of Islam in the extensive debate over coffee during the Restoration period. Professor Matar demonstrates that in churches and in coffee-houses, in sermons, plays, and pamphlets, Britons engaged the civilization of Islam in a manner that superseded their engagement with any other non-Christian civilization in the early modern period. Finally, he turns to the theological representation of Muslims in British eschatological writings and contrasts it with the representation of the Jews.

Nabil Matar is Professor of English at the Florida Institute of Technology. He is the author of over sixty articles on seventeenth-century English history, theology and literature and editor of *Peter Sterry: Select Writings* (1994).

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*For my mother,
and in memory of my father*

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Transcription

In this book, the name of the Prophet of Islam will be transcribed as “Mohammad,” and the text of Islam will be transcribed as “Qur’an.” In the Renaissance, “Mahomet,” “Mohamet,” “Alcoran,” “Alcharon” and numerous other forms were used. Only in quotations will these forms be retained.

I have used the term “Britons” for all the inhabitants of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Although England, Scotland and Ireland were separate kingdoms in the period under study, and although they were ruled by the same monarch in London, I have used the term Britain (rather than England) in recognition of the fact that some of the writers, travelers, and captives mentioned in this book came from outside the borders of England proper.

I have retained the original form of all quotations. No changes have been made in spelling, syntax or punctuation.