

framing of the war as the “Mother of All Battles” (*umm al-ma‘ārik*). Through the use of novels by ‘Abd al-Karim al-‘Ubaydi, Hadiya Husayn, Nasif Falak, and Najm Wali, Masmoudi reveals how depictions of the Iraqi soldier continually reflect Agamben’s notion of *homo sacer*. The novels’ antiheroes emerge as victims, easily slaughtered on the ground by forces loyal to the Iraqi government or from the air by US forces.

Chapters 3 and 4, on novelistic depictions of life in Iraq in the shadow of war and occupation since 2003, are the most wide-ranging studies to date of post-2003 Iraqi fiction and its treatment of the violence the country continues to endure. Masmoudi reveals how novelists such as Nasif Falak, Jasim Rasif, Shakir Nuri, Ina‘am Kachachi, and Najm Wali have sought to make sense of the violence affecting their country. Their novels repeatedly reach pessimistic conclusions that end in death for the protagonist or his eventual departure from the country to live a life of exile, with no other option available. Indeed, the image that emerges of the new Iraq is dark, dominated by all-around helplessness and death.

The publication of Masmoudi’s book is an important contribution to the study of modern Iraqi fiction, although it also raises some questions that remain unanswered for readers, particularly concerning the reception and readership of the works she has chosen to analyze. Who is reading these novels and how have critics writing in Arabic engaged with them in journals, newspapers, and online forums? In addition, while the book surveys a large number of novels, it ignores short fiction and relies heavily on works written by men who for the most part reside abroad. Masmoudi acknowledges this in the introduction (only two of the authors whose works she examines reside in and write from Iraq—Nasif Falak and ‘Abd al-Karim al-‘Ubaydi), but nowhere else is the idea addressed. This gives the impression that the strong division between literature written inside Iraq and that written abroad (*adab al-dākhil* and *adab al-khārij*), is no longer as important a category of analysis as it was, particularly during the years of Ba‘thist rule. Perhaps this is true, but it leads me to wonder if Iraqi writers and critics also see this division as obsolete. If so, are the aesthetics of “inside” and “outside” literature now the same? Does the “testimony” (a word used frequently throughout the study) of the writer addressing the violence of post-2003 Iraq from the relative comfort of, say, Western Europe, carry the same weight for critics and readers as that of the writer who has witnessed the carnage firsthand in Baghdad?

*War and Occupation in Iraqi Fiction* is a welcome addition to scholarship on Iraqi fiction published in recent years. The book performs the difficult task of not only providing a critical appraisal of some notable works of recent Iraqi literature, but also introducing those works to an English-speaking audience for the first time. In many ways, Masmoudi’s study picks up where Fabio Caiani and Catherine Cobham’s *The Iraqi Novel: Key Writers, Key Texts* (also published with Edinburgh Studies in Modern Arabic Literature, 2013) and Stephan Milich, Frederike Pannewick and Leslie Tramontini’s *Conflicting Narratives: War, Violence and Memory in Iraqi Culture* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2012) leave off. It gives readers a clear sense of how violence has shaped the direction of the Iraqi novel in the past decade. I have no doubt that *War and Occupation in Iraqi Fiction* will lead to more scholarly engagement with modern Iraqi literature, as well as further encourage its translation.

HANADI AL-SAMMAN, *Anxiety of Erasure: Trauma, Authorship, and the Diaspora in Arab Women’s Writings* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2015). Pp. 294. \$39.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780815634027

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*Anxiety of Erasure* is a groundbreaking monograph on Arab fiction by women, intertwining issues of gender, trauma, politics, and war. At a time when the Arab Middle East suffers the grievous

tribulations of the Arab Spring and its aftermath and is in the throes of sectarian wars, civil wars, and proxy wars threatening the erasure of nation and society, this book comes as a fresh diagnosis and analysis of cultural discourses on women's subjectivities, bodies, and roles in reconstructing the nation and revisiting tradition to help fight local and global oppression and to heal traumatic wounds.

The overarching trope of this book dedicated to the study of Arab women's writings in the diaspora is the ancestral pre-Islamic act of female infant burial, or *wa'd*, which was practiced in Arabia and then condemned by Islam. It is a practice that still resonates today in collective Arab culture not only as a traumatic memory of female body erasure but also as an act revived today and extended symbolically to the realm of politics, society, and freedom in the current political context of the Arab Middle East. The book is an extensive and ambitious literary investigation of a rich fictional output by Arab women authors living in the diaspora who have focused their literary and critical gaze on the social and political ills of the homeland left behind. As al-Samman shows, their voices are an extension of the voice of their ancestor storyteller, Scheherazade, who stands here not as a symbol of feminism but as an agent who inscribes change and combats bodily and literary erasure.

*Anxiety of Erasure* draws on these two important cultural tropes: the figure of the *maw'uda*, the female infant buried alive in pre-Islamic culture, and the figure of Scheherazade, the mother of storytelling who tries to go beyond the orality where history has confined her in order to combat death and to ignite social and political change. The book examines the resurfacing of these two cultural tropes and their manifestations through the study of a corpus of work that has defied previous approaches and limitations owing to its transnational and intergenerational character. Covering a rich literature that falls within the domain of *adab al-mahjar*, diaspora literature, *Anxiety of Erasure* examines texts penned by Arab women writers in Europe and in North and South America from 1920 to 2011, including Ghada al-Samman, Hanan al-Shaykh, Samar Yazbak, Hamida Ne'na', and Huda Barakat, among other Syrian and Lebanese female writers exclusively using Arabic in their work. Since it first appeared in the Americas in the early 20th century, *adab al-mahjar* has consisted mostly of poetry and is largely a male-dominated field, despite the existence within the field of many women writers of fiction, whose work is consistently ignored and dismissed. Uniquely, then, al-Samman's monograph establishes itself as a book intended to redress the gender imbalance in the study of Arab women authors, especially Syrian and Lebanese women authors in the diaspora. The value of al-Samman's investigation of the persistence of the collective trauma of *wa'd* burial, depicted in diaspora women's literature as personal and especially as political erasure in the context of Arab culture and politics, is indisputable. But it must also be noted that the scope of her examined corpus, albeit rich and consistent, fails to cover the important role played by Iraqi women writers in the diaspora and their many literary contributions in addressing the woes and trauma of successive Iraqi wars, and the politics of erasure in Iraqi society. This lacuna does not diminish the importance and merit of the book, particularly the novelty of its approach in focusing on the authors' liberating and critical diasporic gaze on their homelands, free from censorship and essentialist concepts. In this regard, *Anxiety of Erasure* is a pioneering work on Arab women writers in diaspora. To my knowledge, it is the first book to address Arab women authorship in diaspora outside of outworn frameworks and from an angle different from the often-privileged Western feminist approaches.

Perhaps the most original contribution of this book is its analysis and discussion of the persistence, vestiges, and transformations of the trope of *wa'd* trauma in Arab culture through a literary corpus that spans almost a century, highlighting the intergenerational and collective latent trauma of *wa'd* burial. This investigation places the book at the intersection of cultural, literary, anthropological, and *adab al-mahjar* studies.

To explain and analyze the persistence and latency of *wa'd* trauma in the collective psyche of Arab women authors' imaginary, the author makes excellent use of contemporary theories of trauma (Freud, Caruth, and Felman) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. She shows how

the collective, lateral, and intergenerational trauma of *wa'd* burial is resurrected and manifested, despite temporal and spatial distances, in novels about personal and political suppression. Whether discussing female identity construction through a “mosaic autobiography”; the Lebanese civil war where the *wa'd* metaphor extends to all, women and men alike, city and country; the problems of Lebanese immigrants haunted in their exile by the trauma of the war, and torn between life in diaspora and the memory of home; or, examining the recent political disappointments and the perennial alienation of the Arab individual from society and state, the in-depth analysis of *Anxiety of Erasure* delves into the multiple modern recastings of the *maw'uda* trope in Arab women's fiction, which unfolds today before our own eyes in the suffocation of the Syrian people, the torture of activists, and the burial of the city of Aleppo. It demonstrates how the authors' imaginary is bent on the necessity and importance of excavating archives, resurrecting memories, recognizing trauma, and revealing how burial imagery and vestiges in Arab culture extend from women to men to cities, nations, ideas, dreams, literary archives, and aspirations for change and progress. The corpus of this extensive study extends to some of the most recent writings by women living in the diaspora, such as those by Samar Yazbak, the Syrian writer and activist who documented the first few months of the Syrian uprising, when *wa'd* trauma spread to an entire people and perhaps through a larger extension to the collective Arab population.

Throughout the eight chapters in *Anxiety of Erasure*, moving along a trajectory from the personal to the political, al-Samman compellingly argues that the recognition of pervasive traumatic memories heals women, tradition, and the nation. However, although she draws on the trope of Scheherazade as a cultural myth early on in the book, she does not give this trope the same level of treatment and attention she dedicates to the trope of *wa'd*. Nevertheless, in the book's postscript she recognizes Scheherazade as the literary mother of Arab women diaspora writers and emphasizes how her voice is spread beyond orality and saved from erasure through the writings of her granddaughters.

*Anxiety of Erasure* is a long-overdue fresh look at Arab women authors. It should be read as a methodology to help decipher contemporary Arab women's literature, spread their words, and increase their impact in a world where their voices can make a difference.

ILANA FELDMAN, *Police Encounters: Security and Surveillance in Gaza under Egyptian Rule*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016). Pp. 207. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780804795340

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The Gaza Strip's modern history has been unique: a territory carved out by war and armistice lines, governed by a care-taking administration followed by an occupying military regime, hovering as a space outside of any nation-state, where substantial numbers of the population are refugees. Between 1948 and 1967, Egypt's administration functioned as a placeholder until, presumably, Gaza would be included as part of a Palestinian state. While Egyptian rule was neither a colonial nor occupying force, its forms of governmentality were nonetheless robust and significant.

Ilana Feldman's *Police Encounters* considers the specificity of this exceptional political feature while placing it in the context of what are considered “normal” conditions of government: the role of security in modern rule and everyday life. A number of questions are central to Feldman's analysis: How do governing and policing apparatuses work? How do subjects participate in and influence such a totalizing project? What forms do political talk and action take under such a