its elevation of the literal world above the meaning embedded within. For European Christians, this false felicity was a microcosm of all that was wrong with Islam, its fetishization of the beautiful surface making it the epitome of what must be rejected." (248). Muslim literalism parallels that of Judaism and misses the truth of the more subtle spiritual essence, but also serves as a foil to critique certain contemporary expressions of Christian heterodoxy.

Akbari notes the correspondences between premodern and contemporary Orientalism on the religious alterity of Islam as a false, deceptive religion of sensuous surfaces lacking substantial truth. She also notes how the "the vector of geographical diversity, in which bodily differences of anatomy, physiology, and behavior were thought to be dictated by variations of climate [has been replaced by] notions of race based on 'blood' (later, genetics)" (282). This is a very important book. It is smart, accessible, and an enjoyable read without losing its scholarly tone. Especially given the recent rise in and greater consciousness of Western Islamophobia, this book shows just how deeply prejudice is imbedded within culture.

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Abdullah Al-Arian. *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Sadat's Egypt*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. xx + 298 pages, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth US$55.00 ISBN 978-0-19-993127-9.

In this intriguing and fact-filled volume, Abdullah Al-Arian not only fills an important gap in the growing literature on the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, but also provides us with an engaging and culturally-sensitive text. It reads like a story—his-story, since it is about the Brothers (although Al-Arian does give a nod to Zaynab al-Ghazali and her role in the Muslim Brotherhood)—as it rivets our attention with an expressive and comprehensible prose style. Almost every chapter begins with an insightful anecdote that not only epitomizes the complex relationships found therein, but demonstrates the richness and depth of the author's knowledge and data-gathering. He also eschews scoring points in the Western political narrative that verges on Islamophobic, but rather presents an objective, yet respectful, and critical, yet well-reasoned account of the Brotherhood's "triumphant return [in the 1970s] from the dustbin of history to the fore of Egyptian society and politics" (215). He not only tells us *what* the highly

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developed Brotherhood doctrines were about, but he also explains *why* the Brothers followed them—a small point, perhaps, but such clarifications are sorely missing from many of the recent attempts to comprehend the Muslim Brotherhood.

Al-Arian's volume falls between Richard Mitchell's classic *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, which ends with the Brotherhood assassination attempt against Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1954, and Hesham Al-Awadi's *In Pursuit of Legitimacy: The Muslim Brothers and Mubarak*, which documents the Brotherhood under the recently toppled dictator. Yet the 1970s are pivotal, as John Voll points out in his introduction: "In many ways, it was the transformation of the Brotherhood in the 1970s that made the electoral victories of the Brotherhood in 2012 possible" (xii). For this reason alone, it is a must read. This book provides critical insight into understanding how the Brotherhood, crushed, imprisoned and tortured in the 1950s and 1960s, could rise to the heights that it did when it received 45 percent of the 2011–12 Parliament seats and won the presidential race in 2012.

Al-Arian weaves together two parallel but independent strands in explaining the emergence of a re-commissioned and re-invigorated Muslim Brotherhood. First, there is the story of the university student movement that is for the most part co-opted by the Nasser government, but re-emerges when Anwar Sadat assumes the presidency. Sadat gives birth to campus Islamic associations, by nurturing them politically and financially in his efforts to strangle the leftist students who still dominated the university. The subsequent Islamist turnaround, defiance, and presidential assassination border on the Oedipal. Second, Sadat releases the Brotherhood leaders who remained in prison. Like blindfolded old men squinting from suddenly seeing the bright sun, these seniors don't know what to do. First they attempt to pick up the pieces of their lives, then they debate whether or not to re-launch the Brotherhood, and then they decide just where they want the reborn organization to go. Enter the student movement. The result becomes (if I can be allowed to appropriate an otherwise objectionable phrase): activists without an organization looking for an organization without a membership. The Brotherhood appears as a hollow shell filled by (some) Islamist students active in the university and graduating into the real world of national politics. The students lose their care-free independence, but they also lose their excesses. They gain organizational continuity and learn from the experience of their elders.

Al-Arian's analysis provides the intellectual and ideological context for the absorption of one fairly populous student movement into the ranks of one rather empty, member-less association. This enables us to appreciate the

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wide variety of options these Islamist students had in front of them, and understand why, while most chose the Brotherhood, others decided to opt for a militancy targeting the government while others adopted the trappings of a Gulf-fueled Salafi trend.

I remain a bit wary of his claim that the "first" group of students dedicated to "political Islam" was the *Shabab al-Islam* ("Youth of Islam"). Al-Arian himself gives us all the evidence necessary to conclude, to the contrary, that the Youth was not the only student Islamist organization on campus, although this seems more true just for the Engineering faculty where it first appeared. But even if it were the first, others Islamist groups were not far behind—by weeks or months, from what the author reports. Delightfully, Al-Arian leaves the argument dangling as to which Islamic organization—*Shabab al-Islam* or its successor two years later, *al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*—was the "true" government (-sponsored or -infiltrated) creation. So we are left wondering if it was the first, the second, both, or neither, in a shadowy world of government deception, co-optation, surveillance, manipulation, and arrest.

More needs to be done, in my opinion, with relating this multi-campus, university-wide *al-Gama'a* with the one in the south (which Al-Arian does do in cursory fashion) and, perhaps more importantly, with the one found in nearby Imbaba in 1992 that declared itself an Emirate that sparked a brutal government clamp down. This point leads to a second that also needs more follow-up: where university students went after graduation. Was their trajectory simply Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi, or Jihadi? My reading is "none-of-the-above," and that many groups created small local associations for performing good deeds and charitable acts funded by *zakat* donations. Additional funding came in the form of remittances from working in Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf. This matter points to a third issue that needs more exploration: the exiled Brotherhood that relocated to Arabia and Europe. I believe these fugitives provided a much more substantial bridge spanning the gap from Mitchell to Al-Awadi than Al-Arian gives them credit for. We need to better appreciate the role the Brotherhood played in the Gulf in providing the first teachers, doctors, and lawyers in the late 1950s and who are now being rounded up and arrested for this very association. Perhaps a sequel is in store.

All in all, this is a major addition to our understanding of the regime, student, and Islamic politics of the 1970s, but also to our understanding of what the Brotherhood is about in general, what it stands for, and what its raison d'être is. As the Arab Springs throughout the Middle East fail, this last

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point becomes extremely critical, and Al-Arian is to be commended for this important contribution.

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Hanadi Al-Samman. *Anxiety of Erasure: Trauma Authorship and the Diaspora in Arab Women's Writings.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015. ix + 256 pages, works cited, index. Cloth US$39.95 ISBN 978-0-8156-3402-7.

Two very different female figures from Arab cultural and literary history structure *Anxiety of Erasure: Trauma Authorship and the Diaspora in Arab Women's Writings*—Shahrazad (Scheherazade) and the *mawʾūdah* (the buried infant girl). Hanadi Al-Samman's study uses these figures and the tropes they activate—female infanticide by burial and women's storytelling traditions—to read a range of fictional works by contemporary Arab women authors, all of Syrian and Lebanese origin, who write in Arabic but live in the diaspora (Paris and London). Al-Samman states that her "paramount goal" in *Anxiety of Erasure* is "an examination of how diaspora Arab women writers activate these two tropes to reflect the endless possibilities of death and rebirth, of social and political engagement, in order to ignite a revolution on the personal and political levels" (9). She further explains that her intention in amplifying these women's voices it to reclaim the corpus of "their foremother Shahrazad through revisiting the traumatic sites of the pre-Islamic *waʾd* tradition" (13).

The book opens with three relatively short introductory chapters: the first sets up the *mawʾūdah* and Shahrazad as, in Al-Samman's words, "icons of erasure and revolutionary resurrection;" the second is an overview of Arab women writers and the diaspora experience, including North and South America in addition to Europe; and the third looks at how these figures help to understand Arab women's authorship as trauma and working against "erasure." The five chapters that follow are more detailed readings of novels by Ghada Samman, Hanan al-Shaykh, Hamida Naʿnaʿ, Hoda Barakat and Salwa al-Neimi. The last of these discusses Neimi's poetry as well as two novels. The book's very interesting postscript briefly discusses the work of Samar Yazbek.

The book is well structured and argued, offering rich readings of these texts that benefit greatly not only from the framework Al-Samman develops

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