... constructive interventions audible” (p. xviii). For this reader, at least, his accessible and scholarly approach proved more successful.

Claire Dwyer
University College London


Brigitte Maréchal’s study on the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Europe is based on extensive research conducted between 2001 and 2006, when she interviewed leaders and activists, and participated in conferences, congresses, and seminars connected with the movement. Her project is ambitious and demanding. She aims to contribute substantially to a field where “very little research of high quality exists” (p. 7). Maréchal is well aware that she is dealing with a controversial topic, noting that as soon as one speaks about Islamism “the organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood... draws fire because of popular stereotypes” (p. 1). She refuses, however, “…to allow the many prejudices that cloud the issue to continue to go unchallenged” (p. 11). Intended to present ideological aspects of the MB, the book “analyses the manner in which a certain heritage has been appropriated and even actualized by members of the Muslim Brotherhood movement” (p. 10).

The book has three parts. The first is a historical survey from the founding of the MB to its migration and implantation in Europe. Part two deals with the role played by various important personalities within the MB, and the contribution made by individuals, from the founding period up to the present day. Part three analyses MB discourses “[...] to display the lines of tension that exist with regard to certain important topics, such as global Islam, the necessity of a militant attitude, a quest for recognition, etc.” (p. 11).

The book, then, covers a number of topics in MB discourse. Maréchal has focused mainly on the movement’s ‘timeless’ questions, not on the development of its thought on how to face the European reality. Notably, gender is not included as a separate issue, even though, since the Fiqh Conference at Chateau Chinon in 1992, women’s issues have developed from being considered a secondary matter to being a core question to be dealt with in Western Europe. As it stands, Maréchal
limits herself to topics linked to a certain image of the ‘Muslim woman’ as presented in the Islamist literature. Exploring the issue more fully, by looking, for example, at perceptions of women, gender relations, marriage, divorce and child custody, and women’s political participation, would risk exceeding the limits of this work, but could have given interesting insights into how the European context gives rise to fresh interpretations of Islamic texts.¹

To advance this field requires a willingness to get close to the subject, to mingle with the movement’s followers and listen to them in the field, through participant observation, interviews and follow-up over time, in order to learn their actual concerns and the trends of thought among them. This is the particular strength of this book. It also requires fresh analytical angles; Maréchal has found a promising one in her structuring of the discussion around key personalities as points of reference in present discourses, and she nicely describes the MB tradition as a “reservoir of repertoires of meaning” based on “a line of descent of witnesses” (p. 168). Finally, it requires precision and accuracy both in definitions and of descriptive accounts, but in this regard there are some weaknesses.

A definitional question that must be addressed in order to give an account of MB discourse is which speakers belong to the movement, to what extent, and how do we know this. Maréchal distinguishes between sympathisers and actual members, and often identifies a speaker as one or the other. One wishes, however, that she had discussed the criteria applied and the non-trivial problem of a membership that in principle is secret.

With regard to living figures of reference for the MB, Maréchal identifies three categories: those outside Europe, who form “the referential framework in the largest sense”; those within Europe, who have “the most concrete effect upon the European scene”, and those personalities who “take on the role of a bridge between two worlds” (p. 144). In a passage that alludes to the notions of the MB as an organisation (tanzim) and as a trend of thought (fikr)—a terminology widely used among insiders that oddly is not discussed in the book—Maréchal

¹ Anne Sophie Roald’s Women in Islam: The Western Experience (London/New York: Routledge, 2001) could have been a useful reference both in this context and because Roald, drawing on her previous research on the MB’s educational programme in Jordan, develops useful concepts to describe trends such as the ‘post-ikhwan’ (former members of the MB who remain within ikhwan thought).