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CAMILA PASTOR, *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate* (Austin: University of Texas, 2017). Pp. 352. $90.00 cloth, $29.95 paper. ISBN 9781477314623.

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Pastor's work of historical anthropology is a critical contribution to the study of race, citizenship, and nationalism in the Americas, as well as that of Arab or Mashriqi global diasporas. Her rigorous examination of cross-continental archival sources is enriched by ethnographic segments and expositions of fiction, travel writing, communally published histories and cookbooks, and popular culture. Although this broad sampling of texts reaches into the twenty-first century, those from the earlier twentieth receive the full force of the author's analytical skill. The book is rare in its inclusion of Muslim and Jewish subjects for consideration, in addition to the most visible Maronite Christian population. However, not all receive equal treatment, as the subtitle would imply. Nonetheless, Pastor's elucidation of migrant experiences, and their representation by various social actors, is essential reading for understanding the often-hidden diversity of modern Mexico.

In the introduction, Pastor defines the term *Mashriq*, which refers to Arabic-speaking regions of the Eastern Mediterranean, and *Mahjar*, which is the transnational "space of migration . . . the term used by Arabic speakers to describe the geographies and sociabilities inhabited by *muhajirin*, migrants" (4). She avoids the pitfalls of methodological nationalism by making her unit of analysis the migrants themselves. She alternates using Mashriqi with Mahjari in referring to her subjects. While this sometimes causes confusion for the uninitiated, her use of these terms is important toward eschewing colonial regional designations (such as "Middle East") as well as imprecise or anachronistic terms such as Arab, Levantine, Syrian, and Lebanese, among others.

The introduction and first five chapters constitute the strongest part of the book. Dedicated to the examination of twentieth-century documentary sources, they form a coherent portrait of the diversity of Mashriqi experiences in Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century. Pastor effectively dismantles the mythologized narratives that still often pass for official history, such as those of migrants' "Phoenician" wanderlust, their innate knack for commerce, or their uniform rise from rags to riches. Instead, she demonstrates how migrant destinies were shaped by the imperial and nation-building projects of the Levant, Europe, and the Americas, as well as networks of patronage operating at multiple scales. Particularly in her analysis of official communiqués, Pastor is adept at drawing out the intertwined discourses of race and class that served in classifying individual Mashriqis as desirable or undesirable, deserving or undeserving; as subject, citizen, protégé, or none of the above.

Chapter 1, "The Mexican Mahjar," lays out the "numbers, pulse, and patterns" of Mashriqi migration to Mexico (23). This includes a panorama of push factors compelling migration from the Ottoman Empire/French Mandate Syria and Lebanon, as well as conditions in Mexico under a liberal dictatorship at the end of the nineteenth century and a post-revolutionary government starting in the early twentieth century. We are introduced to the Mahjari "notables," whose pre-migration wealth and status positioned them as patrons of their poorer compatriots, as well as intermediaries between these and more powerful Mexican and French actors. Pastor underscores that notables were both colonizers vis-à-vis poor and indigenous Mexican populations, as well as colonized in their vulnerable positions within the Mexican nation-state and French Empire (17). In this nuanced account of Mashriqis' differential positioning within multiple social fields, the author avoids the reductionist tendency of many social histories to depict binaries of good versus evil, rich versus poor, or dominant versus dominated. Chapter 2, "Managing Mobility," continues to trace the evolution of classificatory schemes applied by mostly French officials to Mashriqi migrants. This is when distinctions of wealth, phenotype, religion, political allegiance, and place of origin were used to grant or deny official privileges. Chapter 3, "Race and Patronage," explores how Mexican officials applied the (il)logic of scientific racism toward calculating immigrants' relative desirability. Although their features were described as "dark" and their skin as "tan" in the National Registry of Foreigners (1932–1952), most Middle Eastern immigrants

were categorized as "white" (99). At the same time, Arabs of all religions (and Jews of all nationalities) were often lumped with other Eastern Europeans under the derogatory racial label of "Semites." Under this term, "Arabs and Jews were indistinguishable from Eastern European migrants in popular discourse and the press in Mexico"; all were associated with "peddling and poverty in Mexican popular imaginaries" and seen as essentially unassimilable within the idealized *mestizo* melting pot (89–90). Accusations against such immigrants proliferated in times of economic crisis, such as the depressions of 1921 and 1929. As a scholar of contemporary (Jewish) Mexicans of Syrian-Lebanese descent, I found Pastor's presentation of the racist language of official memos striking in its similarity to contemporary Orientalist discourse in Mexico City (e.g., "wily and tenacious, lacking scruples and dignity, insinuating, lusting for profit" (92). To distance themselves from these associations, Mashriqi notables cloaked themselves in the label of "Lebanese," which denoted Caucasian whiteness, Christianity, and noble Phoenician origins (95). Successfully invoking this pedigree, as well as one's connections, was key to circumventing immigration restrictions and expulsion orders in the 1920s and 1930s. Chapter 4, "Migrants and the Law," presents court documents to demonstrate how migrants navigated multiple, concurrent jurisdictions, noting that "legality, though constantly evoked, was malleable for all participants" (104). Notables sought protections of French Mandate authorities, whose unequal granting of said protections consolidated the stratification of migrant society, permanently excluding the subaltern from the Mexican Mahjar (105). As Pastor details in chapter 5, "Modernism," successful protection by Mexican officials against popular and official discrimination and violence hinged on "recovering an Arab past suitable for the migrant present" and establishing "Mahjari Whiteness . . . and civilizational equivalence to the Spanish" (and distinction from indigenous and presumably Afro-descent Mexicans) (133). Pastor examines these discursive strategies as they appear in novels, travelogues, and book-length histories of Lebanon. She links them to the global project of crafting an Arab modernity among both emergent Arab nation-states and their diasporas.

The remaining chapters are more loosely tied together, both to one another and to the rest of the book. Chapter 6, "Making the Mahjar Lebanese" traces the twentieth- to twenty-first-century evolution of voluntary associations like the multiple Centros Libanés across the country. Most serve to reinforce the normative parameters of a

specifically Lebanese (Christian) Mahjar, excluding the non-Christian, the non-wealthy, and those Mashriqis who identify as something other than Lebanese. Chapter 7, "Objects of Memory," catalogs communally produced commemorative histories, cookbooks, and individual memoirs and novels, zeroing in on what they reveal about women's experiences in the gender hierarchy of the Mexican Mahjar. The examples are numerous; each could easily be its own chapter. Chapter 8, "The Arab and Its Double" explores representations of the Arab Orient in Mexico. This begins with the Spanish conquistadores' view of Tenochtitlan as "bristling with mosques" and continues through the twenty-first century, visiting phenomena like US and Mexican visual media, popular folklore in the form of jokes, the singer Shakira, and the alignment with Palestinian causes by the Latin American Left (213). While the breadth of these latter two chapters demonstrates Pastor's keen awareness of the scope of the analytical field, they lack the depth and coherence of the first several chapters. As a fellow anthropologist, I am sympathetic: we are trained to take a broad view of the forest, seeing linkages everywhere. In this case, a closer reading of fewer texts may have been preferable. However, in addition to several pithy insights, the author at least provides a comprehensive research agenda for her own or others' future work. I very much look forward to it.

The book falls short in its laudable ambition to undertake a truly comparative analysis of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Mashriqis in Mexico. Instead, Jews and Muslims often appear as afterthoughts (with several important exceptions; for example, chapter 3's discussion of Jews and Arabs as "Semites"). The Jewish Damascene and Aleppine communal institutions in Mexico City, for example, are missing in chapter 6's treatment of voluntary associations. But as mentioned above, the book is already chock-full of cases lacking the space to be fully unpacked. Pastor, at least, raises reader awareness of the existence of these other, non-Christian Mashriqis and points to their divergent experiences. At times, she does much more, as with her considerable attention to Jewish-authored volumes in chapter 7. I would have been more than satisfied with a simple disclaimer at the outset acknowledging the book's primary focus.

Overall, the book is a powerhouse. It is dense reading, but well worth the effort. I will be citing Pastor heavily in my own work on Syrian-Lebanese Jewish Mexicans and expect many of our colleagues to do the same.