The briefest mention of the Arab populations that live on the border between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay is enough for policymakers and journalists to evoke the ever-threatening specter of money laundering and terror. That has also been the concern of too many scholarly works on the Arab communities of the “triplice fron‐teira” (triple frontier, in Portuguese). In this con‐text, John Tofik Karam’s *Manifold Destiny* is an ex‐ceptional work that goes well beyond security dis‐courses and delves deep into the histories of Arab migration to the region.

Arabic-speaking populations started migrating to the Americas—mainly Brazil, Argentina, and the United States—in the late nineteenth century because of catastrophic economic crises. Among such plights was the collapse of the silk market that had fueled Mount Lebanon’s integration into the world economy. At the turn of the century, most Arab migrants came from what later became Syria and Lebanon, and the majority were Chris‐tians. Moreover, although they spread throughout national territories, they were simultaneously concentrated in large urban centers like São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and New York.

Of those early migrants, there is a rich and growing literature. The same is not true of the later waves that brought Muslim Arabs to the bor‐der between Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, due to various economic crises and the Lebanese Civil War fought between 1975 and 1990. Furthermore, as stated above, there exists a fixation for either confirming or challenging the US suspicions that Muslims at the triple frontier finance the Le‐banese faction Hizbullah, which several countries—including the United States and Israel—accuse of terrorism. Karam does not remove himself from the debate on international security. Throughout the book, he repeatedly and convincingly repudi‐ates such allegations.

Ideas about security, however, are secondary to *Manifold Destiny*. Karam’s engagement with them is almost a nod to conversations overheard and then dismissed. Instead, he is particularly in‐terested in the role played by Arab migrants in fostering commerce between nodes like Brazil, Ar‐gentina, Paraguay, the United States, China, and Panama. Karam argues, in this sense, that Arab communities were central in animating “a semi‐peripheral America that neither simply led to nor derived from US sway in the hemisphere” (p. 26). Karam “provincializes” the United States, taking it out of the center of inquiry and privileging region‐al actors.

Another of *Manifold Destiny*’s central argu‐ments is that Arabs at the triple frontier lived un‐der exceptional circumstances, even after the democratic transitions that toppled regimes in the
region. Military dictatorships fell in Argentina in 1983, Brazil in 1985, and Paraguay in 1989. After the 1994 AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires and the 9/11 attacks in the United States, Arab migrants and their descendants—who often remit dollars to their homelands—became suspects of extremism and money laundering. As such, Karam writes, “during the second half of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century, Arabs experienced not democratic fulfillment but rather exceptional measures in this hemispheric America” (p. 203). Local and global governments monitored their presence, movement, and economic activity.

Karam’s *Manifold Destiny* has two parts that largely map onto these two primary concerns. The first section focuses on the authoritarian period the region experienced from the 1960s to the late 1980s, during which “Arab transnational traders connected and were connected by continental marches,” that is, Brazil’s expansion to the west and Paraguay’s to the east (p. 53). The second section deals with the region’s democratic transitions and the years since then, during which liberal governments monitored the Arab community’s alleged threats, failing to fulfill its promises.

Many scholars claim to do transnational work, but they sometimes fall short of overcoming methodological nationalisms and regionalisms—that is, the assumption that historical phenomena unfold according to national and regional borders. Karam, however, succeeds at his attempt. Relying on archival and ethnographical research done between 2007 and 2011 and 2019, *Manifold Destiny* showcases the potential of transnational studies (p. 18). Citing Ella Shohat, Karam adheres to a different approach to area studies in which scholars do not take particular regions as “‘a point of origin or final destination’ but rather ‘a terminal in a transitional network’” (p. 5). Karam highlights border crossings and international commerce as forces of nation- and region-making (p. 6). The histories of South America, in particular its southern cone, would not be the same if not for the Arab populations that crossed borders since the mid-twentieth century.

*Manifold Destiny* is a rich addition to the growing scholarship on Arab migration and the historiographies of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. It is, moreover, a good read along with Karam’s previous book, *Another Arabesque* (2007), which deals with Arab communities in neoliberal Brazil. Students of the Middle East and Latin America will benefit from Karam’s transnational approach, which is a necessary reminder that history does not respect national borders—rather, it thrives when people cross them.