

RUBÉN HERNÁNDEZ-LEÓN: *Metropolitan Migrants: The Migration of Urban Mexicans to the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Once the violent course of the Mexican revolution subsided, and political stability cemented on a strong state apparatus took hold, Mexico entered a steady path of economic growth. Between about 1940 and 1970 the state intervened forcefully to propel urban industrial development. Those were the golden years of import substitution industrialization (ISI), which for working class manufacturing workers in Mexican cities meant a living wage, subsidized housing and health care, social security, and various perquisites, all supported by a strong state that mediated between industrialists and unions. Since the early 1980s, ISI gave way to export-oriented industrialization (EOI). EOI features a smaller and retreating state, labor “flexibilization,” weak unions, insufficient wages, and the rise of the informal urban economy as a poor substitute for the relative economic security of the past. The ISI-EOI story is, of course, well known to anyone familiar with twentieth-century Mexico – or, for that matter, with twentieth-century Latin America. But the link between the macroeconomic model and urban Mexican migration to the United States is not. Rubén Hernández-León addresses this connection. In a field replete with studies of rural Mexican migration to the U.S., his book is groundbreaking and a refreshing read. *Metropolitan Migrants* is the result of ten years of research on the Monterrey-Houston migratory circuit. Hernández-León’s analytical lens zooms in on a Monterrey industrial working class neighborhood, La Fama, and its counterpart in the Summerland section of Houston. His methodology mixes qualitative and quantitative tools – with an emphasis on ethnography – and keeps a constant dialogue between the macro and the micro and between the two sides of the border.

Because of its primary importance as a heavy manufacturing industrial center, the transition from ISI to EOI meant very significant changes for Monterrey. This is vividly illustrated by the stories of middle-aged men from La Fama who lost their jobs (and their benefits) of twenty years as factory floor supervisors, furniture upholsters, maintenance mechanics, industrial drafters, welders, machinists, and the like. Many ended up in Houston, but migration to the U.S., as Hernández-León clarifies, was not an automatic response to the demise of ISI. The Monterrey-Houston migratory circuit grew very rapidly in the 1990s because a few decades earlier the active recruitment of Monterrey skilled industrial workers for the Houston oil industry made it possible for clusters of La Fama residents to accumulate migration-specific social capital, which was put to use once the crisis called for it. Nor was migration the only response to the crisis.

The two most common responses were ubiquitous throughout Latin America: growing female labor force participation and informal employment.

Thus, the seeds for the Monterrey-Houston migratory circuit were planted in the 1960s and 1970s, but what made it possible for migration to accelerate? Enriching migration theory, Hernández-León presents a compelling narrative on the efficiency of urban-based networks in the production and sustenance of international migration. Unlike their rural counterparts, these urban residents mix strong (family) ties with weak (friends and neighbors) ties. (The strong-weak distinction, after all, is not that meaningful for rural migrants because of endogamic marriage.) Hernández-León cautions that this reliance on weak ties in an urban setting has a flip side: the unreliable enforcement of social sanctions, particularly those that regulate reciprocity.

The book's second major contribution to migration theory concerns the role of the state. Within the broad umbrella of the transnational approach to international migration, some scholars emphasize border-spanning activities in a way that sometimes suggests a declining significance of borders and states. Contrary to this view, Hernández-León shows that immigration law and its enforcement have the very real consequence of stratifying migrants by legal status. The gap in quality of life between those legally in the U.S. and those without documents is simply enormous, whether we look at their wages and work conditions (e.g. skilled manufacturing vs. asbestos removal), their freedom to move around or visit Mexico, their ability to deal with banks, health care, shopping, and so on. Occasionally, those restricted by their legal status can engage in border-spanning activities through association with those who are not constrained. Consider Guadalupe, a migrant who could not risk visiting Mexico for fear of being unable to re-enter the United States. As she struggles to purchase household appliances in the U.S., she realizes she can use her Sears card, issued in Mexico, to buy a washing machine in a Houston Sears store. The charge was billed to her home in Monterrey. Here, Hernández-León pointedly writes, "the true transnational actor was not Guadalupe but Sears" (141).

A captivating chapter is devoted to the migration industry, "the ensemble of entrepreneurs who, motivated by the pursuit of financial gain, provide a variety of services facilitating human mobility across international borders" (154). The focus is on Transportes García, which for about twenty years shuttled twice weekly between Houston and Monterrey carrying remittances, packages, and people. As an unregulated income-generating activity, Transportes García was an informal business. In the most common approach to informality, however, an informal job is supposed to be a poor substitute for a formal one, and illegality tends to be circumscribed to tax evasion. Jorge García evaded taxes, regularly bribed enforcement officers in Mexico, "hired" a Monterrey policeman to in-

timidate a pesky Treasury officer, and closed his business amid accusations of embezzlement. And all of this he did in the pursuit of profit and not as a result of his inability to hold a formal job – which he had, and eventually quit. I am tempted to generalize that, when it comes to the migration industry, informality – and the concomitant illegality – is a choice rather than the result of lack of choice. While Hernández-León puts the stress on the business opportunities created by the Monterrey-Houston migratory circuit, he cannot draw big conclusions on informality from just one case study. Yet, he does provide a detailed account of the mix between informality and illegality, the changing nature of social networks as Jorge García transitioned from labor migrant to entrepreneur, and the ways in which the migration industry “not only facilitates human mobility across borders but also helps realize material and symbolic goals associated with international migration” (173).

**Mariano Sana**

*Vanderbilt University*

JEFFREY L. GOULD and ALDO A. LAURIA-SANTIAGO: *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920-1932*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

*To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920-1932* contributes to a clearer understanding of a complex period of political, social, and cultural history, including how its contemporary interpretation reveals the dynamics of individual and social memory. In January 1932 a popular insurrection in western El Salvador was met with swift and brutal state-sanctioned retaliation resulting in the massacre of at least 10,000 mostly indigenous Nahuat-Pipil individuals followed by a long period of national military dictatorship. Over the years, interpretations and memories of the episode, commonly referred to as the *Matanza* (“the slaughter”), associate the violence with both pro- and anti-Communist discourse and mobilization, and the evanescence of an indigenous people and culture. Due in part to the scarcity of research on the topic, popular understanding about the *Matanza* may have exaggerated the number of victims, perpetuated misinformation about immediate government policy toward indigenous culture, and attributed innocence or a lack of agency to indigenous people. *To Rise in Darkness* takes on the above-referenced associations and misunderstandings by examining a period of national history remarkable for its alignment of subaltern interests and revolutionary zeal.

The authors connect the *Matanza* with the growth and widespread popular movements involving labor unions, urban, rural, and indigenous populations