



Cristina Salinas. *Managed Migrations: Growers, Farmworkers, and Border Enforcement in the Twentieth Century.* Historia USA Series. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. xii + 272 pp. \$45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4773-1614-6.



Reviewed by Samuel Klee (Saint Louis University)

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Commissioned by Daniella McCahey (Texas Tech University)

Cristina Salinas's *Managed Migrations: Growers, Farmworkers, and Border Enforcement in the Twentieth Century* is a splendid analysis of farmworker mobility in the US-Mexico borderlands, focused largely on Texas during the decades between 1920 and 1960. Salinas combines booster literature, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and Border Patrol records, diplomatic documents, and oral histories to tell a lively narrative of movement and restriction. As lucid, interdisciplinary work, *Managed Migrations* should be prized by scholars of migrations, environments, and the carceral state.

Environmental historians will read three familiar threads through Salinas's work. First, by showing that agriculture directed the timing of labor migrations and growers' demands for laborers with cyclical planting and off seasons, this book consistently features nature as a character with agency. Sociopolitical relationships between planters and growers only make sense through their mutual ties to soil and plant timetables, and so Salinas echoes environmental historians' call

“to listen to people listening to nature.”[1] Second, Salinas engages environmental historians' concern for textually and visually represented nature by foregrounding depictions of landscapes and laborers in booster literature, grower memoirs, and legal proceedings. Growers and borderland authorities animalized Mexican migrants, controlled their movements, and dominated their bodies through nature discourses and imagery. Third, Salinas's attention to the multivalence of material structures facilitates her argument that farmworkers reoriented infrastructure, created for their suppression, to support their own financial and community goals. Farmers used deliberately poor housing to remove migrants at the ends of seasons, but migrants repurposed these buildings, as well as American transportation infrastructure, to achieve their own vision of mobility. *Managed Migrations* thus masterfully centers nature within the vast “web of labor controls” encircling twentieth-century Mexican migrants (David Montejano, quoted on p. 119).

Salinas's book is divided into six chapters, with an introduction and epilogue. After outlining her argument and intervention in the introduction, chapter 1 analyzes boosterism in the US-Mexico borderlands. This chapter thrives on portrayals of nature. Salinas demonstrates that, in the 1920s, land boosters positioned laborers as part of the nature of the place, whose bodies and movements could be purchased, manipulated, and cultivated with the landscape. Salinas's vivid description of prospective land buyers' curated train journeys is most fascinating. There, boosters manipulated passengers' socio-material experience both in transit and on-site in the borderlands, representing nonwhite bodies as commodities specific to the borderlands in order to achieve buy-in. Ultimately, Salinas argues that this discursive act about landscapes helped push plants past livestock as the border region's primary export.

Chapter 2 moves from portrayals created for outsiders to interpersonal borderland relationships between growers and laborers. Here, Salinas demonstrates that growers and farmworkers used paternal kinship language to negotiate mobility; both parties claimed growers' protective and providential roles to achieve their respective expectations and goals. Key for environmental historians, however, Salinas foregrounds the built environment and its role in managing worker mobility. Barracks, tents, and the lack thereof reflected and enforced growers' relationship with farmworkers; growers sustained their workers in season and pushed workers to leave afterward by only providing farmworkers with bare structural necessities.

Chapter 3 then integrates the role of law, the Border Patrol, and the INS into farmworker mobility. This chapter covers familiar ground in immigration historiography—landmark federal acts like those of 1917 and 1924 receive treatment akin to Torrie Hester's *Deportation: The Origins of US Policy* (2017) and Deborah Kang's *INS on the Line: Making Immigration Law on the US-Mexico Border, 1917-1954* (2017)—but Salinas foregrounds fed-

eral acts and agencies' responsiveness to agriculture. Growers relied on deportation, voluntary departure, and Border Patrol raids to manage farmworker mobilities—and these federal measures were responsive to growers' input. Agricultural leaders informed the "contours" of Border Patrol practice and shaped federal actions on the ground (p. 113).

Having discussed growers and federal authorities, chapter 4 centers labor contractors to complete the triplet of analyses about different parties claiming control over farmworkers. Echoing Gunther Peck's work on *Pardones* in the American West, in *Reinventing Free Labor: Pardones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West: 1880-1930* (2000), Salinas argues that, more than exploiting their workers, Mexican contractors and their personal fortunes were deeply intertwined with their workers' success. Farmers and government officials, then, proliferated reputations of exploitative labor agents to solidify their own control over farmworkers' mobilities.

Chapter 5 acts as a case study of the 1948 El Paso Incident, wherein Mexican farmworkers crossed the Rio Grande in defiance of Mexican military personnel to contract with American growers. Salinas's work shines in this chapter. While the event has long been used to understand transnational migration controls, Salinas centers nature discourses as key to the incident. American officials dismissed furious Mexican authorities by painting farmworkers with the "imagery of [uncontrollable] animal migrations" (p. 152). As seen in chapter 1, Americans portrayed mobile creatureliness as part and parcel of the borderland landscape, while simultaneously obscuring "the role [they] played in facilitating such movement" (p. 153). On the other hand, farmworkers were aware of the bargaining power they possessed in numbers; as both Mexican and American authorities worked to control their movements, mass movements afforded farmworkers agency. Capturing this tension, Salinas closes the chapter with a

symbolic anecdote about a Juarez resident who fell while crossing the Rio Grande over train tracks; the farmworker was a precarious figure, accomplishing mobility on American infrastructure built for other purposes.

Chapter 6 concludes by returning to representation and its role in restricting mobility. Addressing the midcentury divide between Mexican migrants and Mexican Americans, Salinas deconstructs “What Price, Wetbacks?”—a booklet published by the GI Forum and Texas State Federation of Labor. Here, Salinas demonstrates that midcentury Mexican American restrictionism depended on animalizing mobile migrants as a kind of invasive species—blaming migrants for “poverty, disease, and marginalization” in the United States (pp. 192-93).

Salinas’s epilogue brings the border into the present by reflecting on her own oral history work in the region and encounters with the walls and bridges that structure border movements. Since she has substantially documented past depictions of the borderlands, concluding with her own experiential knowledge is an appreciated rhetorical move. But the epilogue also misses an opportunity—particularly by foregoing a conversation with the carceral state. Having described the duality of restriction and mobility managed by both private and government authorities, Salinas’s work appears deeply relevant to carceral state scholarship. Consonant with her book’s take on the Border Patrol and INS, for example, how would Salinas envision borderlands agriculture informing mass migrant detention centers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries? The looming carceral state felt present yet unaddressed.

Salinas’s book is, nevertheless, excellent. *Managed Migrations* deftly connects immigration and environmental histories to explore borderland farmworkers’ mobilities. While never losing sight of farmworker agency, Salinas demonstrates that a system of relationships, representations, and policies instrumentalized nature to dominate mi-

grant bodies and the plantations they cultivated. The book is comprehensive, beautifully crafted, and worth consideration by scholars across the discipline.

Note

[1]. Emily Wakild and Michelle K. Berry, *A Primer for Teaching Environmental History: Ten Design Principles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 8.

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