

## Book Review

*Paradise Transplanted: Migration and the Making of California Gardens.* By Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. 314 pages. \$65.00 hardcover. \$29.95 paperback.

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Throughout southern California, lush, water-thirsty gardens are found in a number of contexts: private residential homes, poor, densely populated neighborhoods, and elite botanical gardens. The making of these gardens has been shaped by waves of successive migration flows and migrants' interactions with these small plots of land. In *Paradise Transplanted*, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo relies on participant observation, in-depth interviews, and historical analysis to explore the social processes linking migration and gardens. The book includes three empirical chapters that cover different, but interrelated, themes: labor, community, and status. In addition, it discusses a range of topics including urban planning, economic inequality, social mobility, gender dynamics, history, and geography. Gardens in southern California, the book argues, are inextricably linked to migration processes.

*Paradise Transplanted* begins with an interesting take on southern California's history. Waves of internal and international migrants brought with them seeds, as well as ideals of Edenic beauty, that have shaped the esthetics and practices of gardening today. These waves of migration, Hondagneu-Sotelo argues, are visible in the types of trees and plants that grow currently, and these plants in turn reflect the hierarchies of pleasure and power associated with each historical period. Since the Spanish conquest of southern California, gardening has involved the labor

exploitation of racialized immigrants. But gardens have also been used by immigrants for subsistence and to create spaces of autonomy and economic livelihood. Hondagneu-Sotelo tracks the invention of residential maintenance gardening by Japanese immigrants due to both the 1913 California Alien Land Law and the demand for cheap labor by estate gardens and the later succession of these jobs by Mexican immigrants.

The next chapter focuses on (mostly) Mexican men that work in the gardens of single-family houses. Using in-depth interviews, it provides unique insight into the interrelationships between homeowners and the men trimming and watering their gardens. While some homeowners want workers to "mow, blow, and go," others take a more hands-on approach and place specific requests on these workers. Hondagneu-Sotelo uncovers how homeowners communicate their demands and how informal contracts are made. Mexican landscapers often use homeowners' gardens as advertisement for their services, and friends and neighbors of homeowners often inquire directly with migrants about their services. Immigrants, in turn, rely on enforceable trust of kin to expand their services to other houses. While this proves to be a useful business model, Hondagneu-Sotelo notes that Mexican gardeners may not experience the same upward mobility that their Japanese predecessors did because of occupational crowding. Indeed, homeowners often fire gardeners whom they have relied on for years in order to hire someone cheaper. Researchers interested in labor dynamics and social mobility will find this chapter of particular interest.

Residential maintenance gardening is performed by men, but community gardens are often enjoyed by women. In the next chapter, Hondagneu-Sotelo immersed herself in two inner-city community gardens in Los Angeles. Here, women have transformed urban plots to grow homeland vegetables, cultivate plants for

herbal remedies, and share community ties. Many of the women are undocumented, and participating in community gardens has given them a sense of empowerment and belonging. Community gardens have also brought people from mostly Mexico and Central America together to share transcultural exchanges. This chapter would be most interesting for researchers interested in community building among undocumented women.

The final chapter discusses the historical legacies of Huntington Botanical Garden in Pasadena, California, and the development of its new Chinese Suzhou-style scholar's garden. Chinese and Taiwanese elites, with transnational ties, have developed a common project to transform an institution that previously catered to Eurocentric cultural tastes. Hondagneu-Sotelo notes that the development of this new garden, which will be the largest at Huntington, signals the rising power of Asian nations and transnational immigrant elites. She then ends her book by providing

policy changes that could make gardens more sustainable and provide better working conditions for immigrants.

Although *Paradise Transplanted* is mostly about Los Angeles, the processes it uncovers are not just an LA story. Immigrants continue to move into urban areas, and middle-class families have begun to rely more heavily on immigrant gardeners. These migrations are transforming other cities, much as they did LA. However, this book does not address what will happen as homeowners and cities move to drought-resistant gardens due to water restrictions — an increasingly pressing issue in places like southern California. While the shift to AstroTurf, woodchips, rocks, and succulents has created a large demand for different types of labor associated with tearing out grass and other plants, these gardens will require less maintenance, possibly affecting immigrants' futures. Nevertheless, scholars interested in labor, community, and status will find this book a worthwhile read.