Monica Perales. *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010. $29.95.

Monica Perales, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Houston, chronicles the creation and demise of Smeltertown, a Mexican American community formed at the base of the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) in El Paso, Texas from the end of the nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century. The arrival of the railroad in the 1880s and the subsequent establishment of a number of smelting and refining companies including ASARCO, one of the largest mining and smelting conglomerates in the nation, transformed the border town of El Paso into an industrial city. The demand for labor in the refining companies resulted in the migration of many Mexicans including entire families. Perales uses court papers, census data, employee records, and newspapers to argue that Smeltertown was more than a town company, it was a place where people forged a new identity and a sense of community.

The book is thematically divided into three parts. The first part, "Making Places," describes the establishment of ASARCO and the formation of Smeltertown and how the smelting company profited from its proximity to the Mexican border. *Esmeltianos* (people of Smeltertown), were Mexican immigrants working for ASARCO. Immigrants were a good source of cheap labor that contributed to El Paso's successful economy. However, they occupied the lowest place in society and lived segregated. In part two, "Making Identities," Perales analyses how *Esmeltianos* forged a new identity and created a sense of community in a place considered to be temporary housing for the company employees. Although Smeltertown was built by the company, *Esmeltianos* created their own world and established their own institutions. The company town was re-imagined by the people as a permanent community where they claimed their ethnic, gendered, religious, and political identity. Even when pressured to be Americanized by the company, they created a unique citizenship that was neither Mexican nor American but a combination of both. In "Remembering Smeltertown," Perales attempts to reconstruct a historical narrative. Smeltertown ceased to exist in the 1970s due to lead contamination in the air. Perales uses memory as a principal tool and relies in oral history interviews. She even gets personal with her readers when she talks about her grandparents who lived in the company town for many

years. She acknowledges that using memory can be problematic, but in the case of Smeltertown, memories proved to be an important tool in reconstructing the town's past. In the 1970s the city of El Paso sued the smelting company for air pollution and the town agreed to relocate the residents in public housing projects throughout El Paso. However, when residents learned about their exposure to lead contamination, they complained not because of their health but because they opposed the relocation plans. *Esmeltianos* had crafted a community and refused to leave the place they called home for so many years. *Smeltertown* is a great addition to Chicano historiography in addition to El Paso's history. ASARCO was fundamental in the economic development of El Paso. The story of *Esmeltianos* matters because it teaches us that the borderland is a dynamic place where citizenship is determined. Perales is successful in supporting her argument that Smeltertown was meaningful to all its residents. Although her interviews are a combination of nostalgia, myth, and misinterpretation, it is through memory that *Esmeltianos* find their silenced voice and place themselves in the history of El Paso.

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