

The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail

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One day a few years ago, 300 migrants were kidnapped between the remote desert towns of Altar, Mexico, and Sasabe, Arizona. A local priest got 120 released, many with broken ankles and other marks of abuse, but the rest vanished. Oscar Martinez, a young writer from El Salvador, was in Altar soon after the abduction, and his account of the migrant disappearances is only one of the harrowing stories he garnered from two years spent traveling up and down the migrant trail from Central America and across the US border. More than a quarter of a million Central Americans make this increasingly dangerous journey each year, and each year as many as 20,000 of them are kidnapped.

Martinez writes in powerful, unforgettable prose about clinging to the tops of freight trains; finding respite, work and hardship in shelters and brothels; and riding shotgun with the border patrol. Illustrated with stunning full-color photographs, *The Beast* is the first book to shed light on the harsh new reality of the migrant trail in the age of the narcotraficantes.

Oscar Martinez writes for *ElFaro.net*, the first online newspaper in Latin America. The original edition of his book *Los migrantes que no importan* was published in 2010 by *Icaria* and *El Faro* and a second edition by Mexico's *sur+ Ediciones* in 2012. Martinez is currently writing chronicles and articles for *El Faro's* project, *Sala Negra*, investigating gang violence in Latin America. In 2008, Martinez won the *Fernando Benitez National Journalism Prize* in Mexico, and in 2009, he was awarded the *Human Rights Prize* at the *José Simeón Cañas* Central American University in El Salvador. NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY *The Economist* & *The Financial Times*

"Harrowing ... The graceful, incisive writing lifts *The Beast* from being merely an impressive feat of reportage into the realm of literature. Mr. Martinez has produced something that is an honorable successor to enduring works like George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* or Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives*."

-New York Times

"The most extraordinary (and harrowing) book I read this year. Beautiful and searing and impossible to put down."

-Junot Diaz

"The world that Oscar Martinez, a Salvadoran journalist, set out to report on five years ago is so violent, depraved and hellish, you can hardly believe he survived to tell the tale... rugged prose, beautifully translated."

-The Economist

"Martinez is a powerful storyteller and his approach to investigative journalism is closer to anthropological immersion: He walks with migrants through bloody forests, eats with them at spartan shelters, and rides with them atop speeding trains."

-Columbia Journalism Review

"*The Beast*, like so many great books, lands on you with a revelatory frisson, the arrival of a story we didn't know we were waiting to hear."

-Los Angeles Review of Books

"... Oscar Martínez's debut is the hard-won result of immersive journalism."

-Kirkus

"This searing account of the hardships suffered by Central American migrants headed through Mexico to the United States comes from true shoe-leather reporting."

-Publisher's Weekly

"To understand the dramatic realities faced by the migrants who flee northwards to find work in the United States, Oscar Martínez literally jumped trains and dodged killers. He deserves praise not only for his efforts, and for what he writes about, but because he writes so very well."

-Jon Lee Anderson, staff reporter for the New Yorker

"A heartbreaking book about the world's most invisible people. A revelatory work of love and hair-raising courage."

-Alma Guillermoprieto, Latin America correspondent for the New York Review of Books, author of *Dancing with Cuba*

"Oscar Martínez is a journalist of uncommon bravery and a writer of prodigious talent. *The Beast* is a powerful, necessary book, one of the finest pieces of journalism to emerge from Latin America in years."

-Daniel Alarcón, author of *At Night We Walk in Circles*

Other Books

Mapping Memory. In *Mapping Memory*, Kaitlin M. Murphy investigates the use of memory as a means of contemporary sociopolitical intervention. *Mapping Memory* focuses specifically on visual case studies, including documentary film, photography, performance, new media, and physical places of memory, from sites ranging from the Southern Cone to Central America and the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. Murphy develops new frameworks for analyzing how visual culture performs as an embodied agent of memory and witnessing, arguing that visibility is inherently performative. By analyzing the performative elements, or strategies, of visual texts—such as embodiment, reenactment, haunting, and the performance of material objects and places Murphy elucidates how memory is both anchored in and extracted from specific bodies, objects, and places. Drawing together diverse theoretical strands, Murphy originates the theory of "memory mapping", which tends to the ways in which memory is strategically deployed in order to challenge official narratives that often neglect or designate as transgressive certain memories or experiences. Ultimately, Murphy argues, memory mapping is a visual strategy to ask, and to challenge, why certain lives are rendered visible and thus grievable and others not.

Mapping Memory. In *The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail* (2013), Óscar Martínez provides an extensive overview of the hellish violence and relentless precarity migrants endure as they make their way north. ..."