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Book Review: *Telling Tales: Essays in Western Women's History*

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This new collection of essays is a welcome contribution to the literature on women in the Canadian West from 1880 to 1940. It continues the fine work the editors started in their 1993 collection Standing on New Ground: Women in Alberta. Both the essays themselves and the editors’ cogent and insightful introduction “show the diversity of newcomer women’s experiences while highlighting com-
mon themes in the construction and reshaping of gender relationships during the colonization and settlement of western Canada." This volume will be of interest not just to scholars of Canadian women's history but of women in the North American West and in colonial and post-colonial settings.

As the editors themselves note, the collection has taken a while to complete, and the resulting impression is less of groundbreaking new work than an overview of studies in the field completed over the last decade. That is not a bad thing; the volume captures the mixed state of the literature. Again the editors warn readers that the range of articles reflects the range existing in women's history as a whole; while some scholars are pressing ahead with the re-theorization of the field in terms of post-colonial analysis, techniques of literary criticism, and gender analysis, others continue to toil in the archives to retrieve women's voices, adding the stories of small groups of women to the emerging narrative of women in the West.

Three chapters explore the way language was used to shape the hierarchies of power around gender, race, and class: Myra Rutherdale's "'I Wish the Men Were Half as Good': Gender Constructions in the Canadian North-Western Mission Field, 1860-1940," Sarah Carter's "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada," and Nancy Pagh's "Imagining Native Women: Feminine Discourse and Four Women Traveling the Northwest Coast." The majority of the chapters focus on women's experiences, including Nanci Langford's work on childbirth on the Prairies, Beverly Boutilier on the Victorian Order of Nurses, Sheila McManus on the work and politics of Alberta farm women, Frieda Klippenstein on Mennonite domestics, Frances Swyripa on sex and gender in the Ukrainian bloc settlement, and Sherry Edmunds-Flett on African-Canadian women on Vancouver Island. Two chapters bring new methods of analysis to the biographies of prominent Westerners: Catherine Cavanaugh's piece on Irene Parlby, and Ann Leger-Anderson on Gertrude and John Telford of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation.

The editors have brought us a carefully balanced, well-produced volume that conveys both the broad diversity and the common concerns of Western women's history: the ongoing struggle to recapture the lived experiences, the imagined terrain, and the rhetoric and discourses of colonization and settlement, shaped by the power dynamics of gender, race, class, and ethnicity.

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