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Book Review: Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West

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articles are organized in three parts: "Images of the West," "Challenging Western History and Frontier Myth-Making," and "New Frontiers." A scholarly introduction and editorial analyses between the various sections bind the articles to key themes of community building and an always-spinning web of human connection. This makes the significance of the collection greater than most of the articles would be alone. Authors from the disciplines of history, English, musicology, folklore, art history, architectural history, and sociology focus on fluidity in time and space. The editors perceptively note that "frontier" has suffered from "both vague and overly precise usage of the word" and explain that the concept informs this collection for practical reasons of "habit and history" and so old usages can be challenged. Some essays also touch on "metropolitanism" which the editors nudge usefully into a global framework.

Many articles engage classic topics involving the Canadian West, but push for a new human complexity. Sarah Carter contributes another of her captivity narrative studies to show how the communities of Plains and Woods Cree at Frog Lake in 1885 look differently when the focus is placed on two white women who saw penumbras and individual actors, not black-and-white racial divisions. Max Foran provides one of the best mini-histories of ranching, from its nineteenth-century "halcyon years" to today, using the themes of land use and market forces; there's a constructive presentism in this piece (and others) that does not sacrifice historical context. Lorry Felske sees the roots of modern debates on health care and global markets in multicultural coal mining communities whose remains (along with stories of Mounties interacting with waged workers) have all but disappeared from contemporary landscapes. The Reform and Alliance parties are analyzed with an eye towards "options that are now available to western Canadian voters." Using census records, Madeline Kalbach traces Asian immigration, from isolated Chinatowns of the nineteenth century to the development of wealthy Asian suburbs in the post-1962 era, and Lloyd Sciban

Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West. Edited by Lorry Felske and Beverly Rasporich. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2004. vii + 375 pp. Photographs, illustrations, references, index. \$44.95 paper.

"To me what is most important is to come to grips with both colonial history and contemporary life," writes Emma LaRocque in her essay, "When the 'Wild West' Is Me," on de-mythologizing the cowboys and Indians of popular culture. What makes this new collection fresh is its emphasis on connections between past and present communities in the Canadian West. Eighteen thought-provoking

examines flourishing Chinese-language media in the contemporary West.

A “constantly intense geography” makes a traditional appearance, but geographic thinking breaks new ground. R. Douglas Francis contributes a summary of classic definitions of region (formal, functional, mythic, and postmodern), yet newly emphasizes their coexistence. Geoffrey Simmins recounts the history of regional vision, tracing wooden grain elevators up to 2003, while Marcia Epstein suggests how region shapes hearing in her exploration of Allen Gordon Bell’s Albertan music. A challenging and satisfying article is Brian Rusted’s on the Nova Scotian, western-dressed, country music singer Hank Snow. Rusted suggests that part of the “work” of regions is to assist communities in the formulation of selection mechanisms to incorporate materials from outside cultural sources (here global-reaching recording and radio).

Not all of the articles succeed in demonstrating the complexity of community connections demanded by contemporary social life and current scholarly conventions (toward multiple perspectives and gray areas), but most do.

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