critiques Lummis’s negative characterization of New Mexico’s Brotherhood of Penitentes. The exaggeration and distortion surrounding the Penitentes was fueled by those who tried to link the murder of Carl Taylor, a freelance writer, to this religious group. In chapter four, Meléndez also discusses the photography of Russell Lee who came to New Mexico employed by the Farm Security Administration and whose photographs served to depict the poverty and devastation that the Depression had left in its wake in the nuevomexicano communities. He then contrasts the films Salt of the Earth (1954), a progressive semi-documentary film about a miners’ strike, and And Now, Miguel (1953), a United States Information Agency-sponsored film that tends to romanticize New Mexico’s Hispano population. In chapter five, Meléndez provides a nuanced discussion of two Hollywood feature-length films, Giant (1956), set in Texas, and Red Sky at Morning (1971), set in New Mexico. He analyzes how both films confront matters of race, class, and social hierarchy.

In chapters six, seven, and eight, Meléndez investigates how key Chicano/a and non-Chicano/a filmmakers and writers such as Moctesuma Esparza, Esperanza Vásquez, John Nichols, Danny Lyon, and Paul Espinosa began in the 1970s and 1980s to develop what he calls a “new proxemics,” which, in part, is an aesthetic of “locating the source of Borderlands concerns and the stories these concerns have engendered” (p. 245). Some of the films discussed in these chapters are: Tijerina (1969), Llanito (1972), Agueda Martínez (1978), The Lemon Grove Incident (1986), The Milagro Bean Field War (1988), La Llorona (1991), and Los Mineros (1991).

Although there are several other studies of the individual filmmakers and photographers covered in this book, Meléndez’s monograph is the first to provide a theoretical framework—proxemics—that illustrates how the image-making of the Borderlands changed from the early to the late twentieth century.

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Colorado Women: A History offers a compelling narrative of how women significantly impacted the historical changes in the land now recognized as Colorado. Gail M. Beaton presents readers with an absorbing narrative and in-depth analytical view that places Native, Hispanic, Asian, Anglo, and African American women and their descendants in the center of the Colorado story.
State and territorial histories present chronological monographs of the people, events, and policies that contributed to state growth and development. Publishing a state history is not an easy task, especially if you are ambitious enough to piece together a narrative from scratch. Traditionally, women have made sparse appearances in these accounts, usually with the purpose of playing supportive roles in a story dominated by an all-male cast of characters. Beaton’s exhaustive research finally moves Colorado women beyond the suffrage movement, Baby Doe Tabor, and Dust Bowl experiences. The fascinating stories she presents overlap and emerge as “Layers through time” (p. xii). Beaton unravels these layers to show how Colorado women’s community engagement made important national and international contributions outside the Rocky Mountain State.

Beaton provides a road map of how to accomplish the difficult task of telling a women’s state history, while also addressing the vital themes of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, labor, and activism. Beaton appropriately begins the book with indigenous women. There is a noted absence of oral tradition and the unfortunate use of the anthropological term “pre-history”; however, this section provides a compilation of interesting discussions on Native gender dynamics in the Colorado region prior to European contact. Subsequent chapters discuss pioneer women, western expansion, Anglo settlement, and the women’s club movement, wherein Beaton weaves new evidence to inform a familiar narrative. For example she includes sections on the establishment of the Negro Women’s Club Home, the involvement of women in the Ku Klux Klan during the Progressive Era, and the inclusion of environmental concerns. Such topics include fresh interpretations of Colorado’s formative years. Beaton weaves this narrative together with biographical vignettes, which illuminate the voices of women that remain prominent throughout the text.

Some of the most fascinating sections of the book appear in the chapters that cover the years following World War II. In the “Modern Era” chapter, Beaton introduces readers to facets of social history that rarely appear in state histories. Here she uncovers layers of history on the discrimination of gay and lesbian communities, the role of Coloradoan Patricia Scott Schroeder in the rise of the U.S. Women’s Movement, Latina/Hispanic activism, and Ute women’s involvement in the National Congress of American Indians.

Students and scholars of Colorado and western women’s history will find this book very useful for both the classroom and research. Beaton’s intricate research and accomplished storytelling make a welcoming impression that further complicates women’s history in the American West. Colorado Women is certainly an indication that scholars have just started to scratch the surface of this crucial field.

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