Book Review:

**Making Men, Making History:
Canadian Masculinities across Time and Place**

by Peter Gossage and Robert Rutherford (Eds.)

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Making Men, Making History: Canadian Masculinities across Time and Place situates the study of masculinities within the Canadian cultural context. Through a carefully-selected collection of essays, Gossage and Rutherford open a vista onto the Canadian landscape. This vista is made all the richer by its range, as the collection draws on a divergence of both time and place in order to address gendered constructs. Beyond these temporal and geographical glimpses, the anthology is divided into six sections: expertise and authority, masculine spaces, performing masculinities, boys to men, men in motion, and faces of fatherhood. What may on first glance seem an arbitrary structuring, the collection takes on the tones of a symphonic arrangement, enticing the reader to listen for those notes that strike a relevant chord within one's own understanding of gender within Canada. Ultimately, of course, it invites researchers to sound those chords that are the most intriguing and relevant to their own research. The anthology offers an orchestration of complex and far-ranging variations on the theme of manhood, and it is in this variety and richness that one finds a book which lends a compelling contribution to the field of masculinities.

The high-interest content of this volume renders it just as relevant and accessible to the casual reader as to the historian or scholar. This anthology can easily be imagined as a core text in a course offered within gender studies, Canadian history, or more specifically, the history of masculinities. *Masculinities* is in itself a relatively recent category of historical research and the attempt to plant its seeds on Canadian soil has, through this anthology, been both fruitful, and one would imagine, quite sustainable. From the middle-class men of the Edmonton packinghouses (1947-1966), to the dynamics of the gay bars of Montreal, the book leads the reader through a

historical portal to the past. Whether it is examining the eco-masculinity of the Canadian seal hunt, or the lives of the blue-collar boys who grew up on the periphery of Motown, or even the eternally boyish masculine ideal embodied by our national hero, Terry Fox, this anthology binds these men together into an eclectic and complicated brotherhood. In so doing, it weaves an intricate and multi-tonal tapestry of masculinity as diverse and sometimes fraught as the history, culture and landscape of Canada itself.

The book begins with an introduction which acknowledges that while the conversation surrounding Canadian manhood and masculinity is not new, this anthology seeks to offer directions for further study by providing a thematic framework to the conversation. The volume stops just shy of explicating these themes, and the summaries before each section tend towards the descriptive rather than providing an exegesis. In the afterword, drawing heavily on musical metaphors, the editors thoughtfully reflect on the “harmonic variations” of the themes that each section elicits. The editors also trace some of the seminal critics’ contributions to the study of masculinities, such as Raewyn Connell’s (by way of Gramsci) hegemonic masculinity, John Tosh’s contributions on the Victorian family and masculinity, and Robert Griswold’s work on the history of fatherhood.

Further to this, each essay itself provides a portal into each time and place. Such glimpses, while interesting in and of themselves, simultaneously underscore the complexity of gender studies. For instance, Chapter 3, entitled, *The Spiritual Aspect: Gordon A. Friesen and the Mechanization of the Modern Hospital* addresses the undertaking of re-structuring and de-centralizing the working space of the nurse so that she (and it was most often she in the days of Friesen’s hospital-planning firm, 1954-1976) can spend more time with the patient. While on the one hand, this attempt to elevate the nurse’s status may be seen as liberating, the Friesen concept of the nurse as the “low man on the totem pole” (Theodore, 2018, p. 73) belies the complexity involved within the realm of masculinities discourse. By way of contrast, Chapter 10, *Sea Shepherds, Eco-Warriors, and Impresarios: Performing Eco-masculinity in the Canadian Seal Hunt of the Late Twentieth Century* demonstrates a softer, gentler alternative to the traditional masculinity of the warrior. Robert Hunter’s activism invokes “an eclectic spiritualism,” as he becomes the “mystic, the guru, (indeed), the shaman of the group” (Keough, 2018, p. 220). Sometimes contradictory, and often unexpected variations on the theme of masculinity are offered in this anthology. The result is often incongruous, sometimes paradoxical, and always quite revealing to read.

The notion of men making history, while relatively commonplace and unremarkable in its own right, is imbued with new meaning through this volume. *Making Men, Making History: Canadian Masculinities across Time and Place* deconstructs the very mosaic of the Canadian identity through the narratives of men. With accounts as varied as Skwxwú7mesh Lacrosse and the performance of indigenous nationhood to the gender politics of the draft dodgers during the Vietnam War, to the outlaw motorcycle clubs in Post-war Ontario, this compilation leaves the reader to imagine vast channels yet to be navigated. Gossage and Rutherford take us on a journey through time and place, and yet, as we return to the here and now, we are left to wonder: what

next? There is ample space here for the reader, for the critic, and for the curious to forge ahead in any one of many different directions.

References

- Keough, W. G. (2018). Sea Shepherds, Eco-Warriors, and Impresarios: Performing Eco-masculinity in the Canadian Seal Hunt of the Late Twentieth Century. In P. Gossage & R. Rutherford (Eds.), *Making men, making history: Canadian masculinities across time and place* (pp. 218-237). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
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