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Davies, Adriana A. *From Sojourners to Citizens. Alberta's Italian History*. Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2021. Pp. 416. ISBN 978-1-7718-3654-8. \$34.95.

Adriana Davies's volume fully highlights the outstanding importance of Italians in the migration history of Western Canada, particularly in the Province of Alberta, a topic scarcely addressed by scholars. The book represents one of the first comprehensive studies about the Italian presence in Alberta from the arrival of the Sardinian Oblate missionary Father Nicolas Coccola at St. Mary's mission near Kamloops in 1880 up to the second postwar waves of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Davies, an Italian emigrant herself (from Grimaldi, Cosenza), downplays the role of Canada's two major metropolitan centres, Toronto and Montreal, as migrant and immigrant destinations for Italians up to the First World War. In this sense, the book aims to help "thaw the wasteland"—in the words of historian Gabriele Scardellato—of the Western Canada history of Italian experience. The pivotal contribution of this volume to the knowledge of the Italians in Alberta is beyond doubt.

The author has handled a very diverse and complete array of literature and archives sources (e.g., a wide variety of examples of personal, family, and village migration experiences), being a result of her decades-long commitment in the museum sector of the province and Alberta's Italian community. The use of these extraordinary sources resulted from the rich and ample first-hand material kept in Alberta's archives, state and family (private) records, oral history collections, and community histories. Thus, an index of names of persons and an index of place names would have been very useful.

The book is divided into ten chapters, prefaced by the introduction and completed by a select bibliography. The first four chapters (2, "Working on the Railways"; 3, "When Coal Was King"; 4 "Settling the Land"; and 5 "Shopkeepers, Tradesman and Entrepreneurs") mirror the prevalent areas of employment filled by Italians, particularly up to the First World War. The author clearly describes the average working trajectory of Italians in Alberta: "The building of the CPR [Canadian Pacific Railway] and branch railways brought Italian migrant workers to BC and Alberta. Once the bulk of the railways had been constructed, the coal mines provided ample employment" (20). The "lure of the land" and the promised returns of agricultural settlement did not attract many Italians, even though small agricultural colonies were set up in Naples (1906) and Venice-Hylo (1914–15). While railway and mine work represented a kind of entry point into the labour market, Italians

who possessed a trade or skill attempted to pursue them “once they made the transition from sojourners to citizens” (22), in other words when they decided to settle on a permanent basis in the new land, especially in urban areas. Railway building contributed to the development of urban centres and “Calgary was thus a natural destination for Italian immigrants leaving railway jobs” (54).

Meaningfully, Davies points out that “in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the majority of immigration to Alberta was from Northern Italy” (139). However, according to the author, “very few immigrants came directly from Italy to a Canadian destination in the period 1896 to 1914 [...] it was the US that was the destination of choice” (19). Migration flows from Italy and step-flows from the United States widened the Italian community in the province, which grew heavily from 109 people in 1901, to 2,150 in 1911, to 4,028 in 1921.

Information about the presence of the first Italian emigrants in Alberta is scarce but the assignment in 1883 of an Italian-speaking priest (Father Nicolas Coccola) to minister Catholic railway workers in the area of Calgary, the Rockies, and the BC interior proves the early appearance of Italian workers in the province. Recruitment of railway workers for Western Canada committed the CPR and other railway companies to turn to labour agents who served as “middlemen” between potential workers and employers (Antonio Cordasco and Alberto Dini were the primary suppliers of Italian labour). Other Italian workers reached Alberta thanks to informal networks, which included both family and labour connections. Among the family and labour chains Davies mentions are the case of the Montalbetti family from Lombardy and the Welch/Veltri family from Calabria; among the village networks the author mentions the massive recruitment by labour agents in the “region of Venice,” specially from 1901, when the CPR increased its recruitment of Italian workers to break a strike in Vancouver.

The large presence of northern Italians in Alberta’s coal mining workforce is undisputed. “Coal mining was the Province of Alberta’s first resource industry and it is clear that Italian workers played a vital role” (112). In the early decades of the twentieth century, Italian men made up from 14 to 19% of the workforce of the 600 mines operating in Alberta, particularly in the Crowsnest Pass, which epitomized what the author defines as a “resource-based community” (67). Other mines attracted a disproportionately high percentage of Italian workers (e.g., Nordegg) where Italians exceeded that of miners of Slavic origin. Compared with the other mining communities,

Davies stresses the distinctive trait of the Drumheller Valley mines, where “ownership of some of the mines by Italian immigrants” (103) was widespread.

Some Italians who reached Alberta to work on the railways and the mines turned to agriculture, but “their numbers may have been small” (118). The settlement of Venice-Hylo in the Lac la Biche area of northern Alberta emerges as the only planned colony in the province, promoted by the Italian government and the Italian fraternal society Vittorio Emanuele III. Even if conditions in southern and northern Alberta were different for agricultural settlers, Italian immigrants in rural areas “gained greater acceptance and integrated more quickly into the community at large” than in the mining communities (161).

Skilled Italians craftsmen were also to be found among the labourers of the earliest waves. Chapter 5 focuses on prominent Italian hoteliers, grocers, tradesman, builders, restaurateurs, chefs, barbers, and retailers. Italian craftsmen and labourers played a significant role in the early twentieth century’s first building boom, and in the Alberta’s building boom resulting from the 1947 discovery of oil in Leduc. The Gallelli company—a construction business established by Nicola in the early 1900s—“became the first place of work for many Italian men arriving in Calgary” (187). While some would succeed in setting up their own construction firms, other skilled artisans (masons, stucco and terrazzo workers, plasterers) left their prints on the most important buildings of the province, such as the Alberta Legislature where Antonio Zucchet worked on the execution of the terrazzo floors. “Italian shopkeepers, retailers and builders also appear to have moved into the middle class more quickly than their counterparts in labouring work or on their own farms” (208).

Chapter 6 (“Enemy Alien Designation and Internment”) discusses the involvement of Italians in Alberta’s Fascism. Even if “Fascism was a significant force in Alberta’s immigrant communities” (258), an estimate of Mussolini’s supporters in the province would not have surpassed 3% of the Italian population in 1940 (144 out of Alberta’s total Italian population of 4,802) (255). Davies argues that the visit to Canada and Alberta by Italia Garibaldi in 1923 was the catalyst for the formation of the provincial *fasci*, later tied up with a few charismatic figures such as F. De Angelis, I. Rader, P. Colbertaldo, and A. Rebaudengo. Focusing on these figures and a few others (“the number of internees in Alberta was small”; 259), Davies describes the harsh experience of interment and enemy alien designation. The anti-fascism movement

in the province is barely addressed and concentrates on Friulian-born Attilio (Alex) Picco and his involvement in the Ordine Indipendente Fior d'Italia Society in Fernie.

The great surge of Italian migrants to Alberta after the Second World War, the regional character of Italian settlement, and stories about Italians whose immigration was facilitated by labour agents, federal government work programs, and family sponsorship are highlighted in Chapter 7 ("Strength in Numbers"). According to census records, in Alberta there were 5,996 individuals of Italian ethnic origin in 1951; 15,025 in 1961; 24,805 in 1971; and 26,605 in 1981. "Thus, Alberta's Italian community more than quadrupled in 30 years" (265). Comparing with the flows that occurred in the first decades of the twentieth century, Davies pinpoints the uniqueness of the postwar immigration "not only in the sheer numbers that came to Canada and Alberta but also the speed in which the movement from working class to middle class occurred" (306). Of special interest are stories devoted to the experiences of migrant women who often succeeded in the professions, in business, in education. Many examples on how this movement materialized are presented in Chapter 8 ("Child Immigrants and the First Generation"): the ascending trajectory regarded particularly the cohort of "child immigrants" who received some or all of their education in Canada. The largest number of young Italians became teachers, others became lawyers and accountants, and others took over family businesses and excelled in, for example, the food service and the construction industry.

The early establishment of the Italian mutual aid societies, followed by cultural, social, recreational, educational, and religious societies proves that, even in the early times, many migrants decided to settle on a permanent basis. As is discussed in Chapter 9 ("Organizations and Institutions"), the early Italian mutual aid societies were established in the province to support mine workers (e.g., the Società Italiana di Mutuo Soccorso in Lille, the Società Emanuele Filiberto Duca d'Aosta in Michel, the Cristoforo Colombo Lodge in Trail, and the Ordine Indipende Fior d'Italia in Fernie, BC, which would eventually become the grand lodge embracing all of the Alberta mutual aid societies). These fraternal societies "ceased to be relevant with closure of many mines in the 1950s and also the introduction of workers compensation and health benefits" (373). Davies underlines the fact that the "immigration boom from the 1950s to the 1980s was accompanied by a parallel boom in organizational development" (333). This positive context changed in the 1980s when regional divisions in the Italian community began to emerge and

culminated in the establishment of new (regional) organizations that challenged the supremacy of the former Italian clubs. Moreover, as the Calgary experience shows, “a large number of members of the Italian community were well-established and economic betterment signaled an exodus from inner-city areas [where Italian clubs were generally located]. In addition, they no longer needed the benefits that the club provided” (350).

In the last chapter (“Cultural Identity and Belonging”), Davies discusses the changing relationships of Italian Canadians to all levels of government in Canada and Italy and highlights the impact of the Government of Canada’s multicultural policy on the process of assimilation and integration for the postwar Italian migrant waves. The Italian community “moved very quickly from a sense of being ‘outsiders’ to being more-or-less integrated into Canadian society” (395), notices the author. The passage from discrimination to assimilation was not painless: “the very success of Italian immigrants in professionalizing and becoming Canadian has eroded the sense of a distinct Italian community” (396).

Given the long time span studied and the various social, economic, political, labour, etc. aspects covered, this volume is a very useful tool for those who want to investigate the Italian presence in the province of Alberta. Students of immigration history, scholars of Italian immigration and, in general, readers of the Italian Canadian community, will find Davies’s volume a valuable text.

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