

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

1994

Review of La frontiera del grana (1896-1918): L'Ovest nella storia canadese.

Walter Centuori

University of Nebraska..Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Centuori, Walter, "Review of La frontiera del grana (1896-1918): L'Ovest nella storia canadese." (1994). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 840.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/840>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

La frontiera del grano (1896-1918): L'Ovest nella storia canadese. By Valeria Gennaro Lerda. Roma: Bulzoni, 1992. Introduction, maps, photographs, bibliography. 253 pp. \$20.00 paper.

Since 1976, Valeria Gennaro Lerda has been a professor of American and Canadian history at the University of Genova, Italy. She is the author of a number of studies, has spent a great deal of time as a researcher in the United States and Canada, and is currently on the Editorial Board of the *Canadian Studies Review* and Vice President of the Italian Association for North American Studies.

La frontiera del grano (1896-1918): L'Ovest nella storia canadese (*The Frontier of Grain: The West in Canadian History*) focuses, as indicated by the subtitle, on the presence and influence of the western frontier on Canadian history. The book is a crystallization of the author's long-standing professional interest in "la storia canadese . . . [and] agraria dell'Ovest" (Canadian and agrarian history of the West). Supported by over two decades of research, this monograph is a response to a composite of perplexing questions related to the "eredità politica del populismo americano, il movimento di protesta agraria che aveva percorso le campagne del Sud e dell'Ovest per un ventennio" (the political inheritance of American populism and the movement of protest which had raged across the Western and Southern territories for over two decades). More specifically, since the configuration of the Populist movement in the South and West was strategically diverse both at the level of "struggle" and "organizational proposals," the author directs her attention "da un lato verso il Sud" (towards the South), in conjunction with which she investigates "il retaggio riformistico agrario nel movimento per le riforme sociali che caratterizzò l'Età Progressista negli meridionali, e dall'altro verso le organizzazioni agrarie che si trasferirono dall'Ovest americano in terra canadese" (the tradition of agrarian reform inherent in the movement for social changes

that characterized the Age of Progress in the southern states, and towards those agrarian organizations that moved from the American West to the Canadian territory). The official closing of the frontier in 1890 and the consequent spiraling of farmland prices in the United States, coupled with the failure of Populist programs, prompted needy midwestern farmers to migrate northward across the 49th parallel. There, the colonization of uncultivated lands resulted in the formation of what has become commonly known as the final frontier on the North American continent, or *The Last Best West*.

From the Dakotas, Montana and Minnesota, farmers migrated to the north, transplanting to the Canadian prairies their knowledge of dry land farming while harboring in the consciousness a "culture of protest" rooted in a Populist matrix destined to influence political and social developments in the Canadian West. The first and second chapters of the book deal with the historical and institutional configuration of this influence. In this context, the author addresses the question of regional autonomy or the *western identity* of Canada's Northwest and examines the principal causes of dissention among the inhabitants of the prairies. An analysis of the cooperative movements follows, accompanied by an analytical overview of the legislation generated by these movements. An entire chapter is devoted to the examination of the *Grain Growers' Guide* (1908-1913) which constituted the official voice of the cooperative movement.

The second segment of the monograph is almost exclusively devoted to the role of women in the colonization of the Canadian West. Indeed, through four lengthy chapters the author proceeds to examine the perception of women by the agrarian media, the role of *The Country Homemakers* under the editorship of Francis M. Benyon (1912-1917), the existential lot of adolescent females on the prairie, and the social involvement of women as reflected in the *Grain Growers' Guide*.

In the third and final part of the book, Professor Lerda presents a very brief history of Canada followed by a number of helpful observations on the archival collections of research materials pertinent to the Canadian West. A bibliographical panorama ends the work.

Professor Lerda's prose is most readable and instructive.

Translations by reviewer.

WALTER CENTUORI
Department of Modern Languages and
Literatures
· University of Nebraska-Lincoln