



EDITED BY
WACŁAW M. OSADNIK
AND ANDRZEJ PITRUS

**BORDERLINES:
STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND FILM**

**edited by Wacław M. Osadnik
and Andrzej Pitrus**

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INTRODUCTION

This collection of papers follows a pattern which was initiated in our first publication in 1994 (*S-European Journal for Semiotic Studies: From 'Translatio' to 'Interpretatio'*, Wien-Barcelona-Budapest-Perpignan). The series is a broad forum which made possible the exchange of ideas between students and professors, between researchers and teachers and between artists and art critics, predominantly from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. This idea was continued in 1995 in *Rosyjska Ruletka*, vol. 2, Katowice, University of Silesia Press, in *Forum*, vol. 1, University of Silesia and University of Alberta Press, 1998, *Forum*, vol. 2, University of Silesia and University of Alberta Press, 1999, as well as in *From Kievan Prayers to Avantgarde*, Energeia Press, Warszawa, 1999. Forty-two students in total from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta published articles and critical reviews in our series. Students from Poland and staff members from both countries added their literary contributions to the discussion of current trends in the humanities. This volume is no exception. Proceedings from the 2002 conference, organized by graduate students from the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies (Germanic, Romance and Slavic), form the core of the volume. The articles are devoted to literature, cinema and culture. A separate issue is in print containing papers regarding methods of teaching modern languages, translation theory and practice, sociolinguistics and comparative linguistics. This publication was made possible due to the financial support of the Polish-Canadian Society of Edmonton, The Polonia Foundation of Alberta, The University of Alberta Polish Students' Club as well as my Self-Funding Research Grant.

Wacław M. Osadnik
Edmonton, February 2003

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Sheena Wilson

**ITS TELLING:
 WHAT BARBED WIRE AND MANDOLINS DOES NOT
 SAY ABOUT ITALIAN CANADIAN INTERNMENT**

Introduction

Barbed Wire and Mandolins is a 1997 National Film Board of Canada documentary that tells only part of the story of the WW II Italian Canadian internees. Using archival photographs, newspaper articles, radio broadcasts and interview footage of aging survivors and their families, director Nicola Zavaglia presents the collective community-based memory of the Italian Canadian war experience, in which hundreds of Italian Canadians were unjustly interned at the hands of a Canadian government practicing fascist politics at home, while fighting for democracy abroad.¹ This collective memory is based on an incomplete history that was popularized through the redress campaigns of the Italian Canadian community in the 1980s, and has been maintained until the present. As Franca Iacovetta and Robert Ventresca discuss in their article "Redress, Collective Memory, and the Politics of History," bad history is not necessarily bad politics. In presenting history as they did, the leaders of the redress campaigns were performing their political duties quite well. However, needless to say, they were not being accurate historians. "Political campaigns, including progressive ones, need to be strategic and offer clear messages uncluttered by nuance or detail" (Iacovetta & Ventresca, 381). *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* fulfills the criteria for good politics, and thus is uncomplicated by the nuances of history.

Unfortunately, *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* reduces a complex moment in Canadian history to a simple dichotomy, complete with clear heroes and villains; the Italian Canadian internees are the heroes and Mackenzie's (English) Canadian wartime government is the villain. In this way, director Nicola Zavaglia and producer Sam Grana are great politicians and the film is an excellent revisionist

tool.² However, meant to fairly represent the history of the Italian Canadian wartime and internment experience, *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* is incomplete and thus flawed.

This paper will address in detail what *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* achieves, how it achieves it, and what its failings are. It convinces the viewer of the injustice of the internment situation through an emotional appeal that has created a successful community memory. How it achieves this goal is twofold. First, it establishes trust by presenting the information in documentary style and skillfully using the associated film techniques; culturally, documentaries are associated with truth-value and the format thus imbues the many subjective voices with historical authority. Secondly, in the manner of oral story telling, the film appropriates mythologizing techniques to create convincing hero stories about the internees.³ Where this documentary fails is that its stories, and its grand narrative deconstruct themselves in certain instances. However, the greater failing of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* is that its narrative eliminates the complexity of the prewar and wartime Italian Canadian communities, which clearly included fascists. Its version of history excludes any implication of guilt on the part of the internees or their associated Italian Canadian communities. Therefore, the viewer is left with a sense of the injustice suffered by fellow Canadians, without any regard for the complex position the government of the day was forced into. The injustices presented by *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* are a significant part of the reality of the Canadian internment situation, but injustice is not the whole story. Academia acknowledges that there is no objective version of reality, whereby one can simply collect the facts and present them. The past is survived only as it is fallibly remembered and retold. But, responsible history includes all known facts and excludes the influence of specific politics as much as is possible. In *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*, the politics of Nicola Zavaglia and Sam Grana are clearly revealed, as much by what they subjectively present as by what they fail to present.

What *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* achieves, and how

Barbed Wire and Mandolins arouses the viewer's emotional trust at the outset and continues to maintain its hold throughout. Proceeding as an austere warning, the film promises to reveal a dark secret by beginning with a landscape shot of a forest clearing and the following voice-over narration:

It happened over fifty years ago. But the painful episode, which took place in this desolate terrain, remains vivid in the memories of those who survive. As their numbers dwindle, their story will slowly disappear.

The clearing is the offered proof. We could be anywhere in the world, but combined with the voice-over, the viewer believes this clearing to be the location of the unpleasant mystery. We, the viewer, make the association between the visual and the aural. Whatever the event is, the narrator claims that this mysterious part of our Canadian history is about to be lost, and thus, creates a sense of urgency. As a result, we infer that whatever it is that might have been lost has been preserved in this documentary. Drawn by our desire to discover and learn from the past injustice, we begin to trust the film. Moreover, we feel Zavaglia has done the deed of rescuing a part of Canadian history – clearly important although not yet revealed – from being obliterated. Wondering what this mystery could be, our curiosity is channeled by this opening sequence.

Next, bleak visual imagery effectively directs our aroused curiosity. The time of day and of the year – autumn – was chosen for its dim lighting, making for a dull and foreboding atmosphere. The camera angle used to shoot the clearing impacts mood, because it is filmed through hampering foliage. It is as though we are voyeurs, spying on the clearing, through the dead trees and underbrush. We are investigators uncovering the truth, finding out about something little known and very important. This is all emphasized by the narration, encouraging the viewer to question what happened, and why. What that something is, will be filled in by the later narration, but the bleak imagery will stick with us, allowing the viewer to locate the scene of the original events when

provided with more information. The director has grabbed our attention by simultaneously eliciting our curiosity and apprehension. The viewer also begins to trust the narratorial authority because of the visual proof provided, but that trust is not yet secured. The director must provide more evidence and at the same time solve the mystery. So, playing on the sense of foreboding and secrecy, the director jolts the viewer to attention by making a startling shift in the tone and tempo of the piece.

Suddenly, the subsequent segment bombards the viewer with archival newspaper articles and photos, while sound clips from a number of 1940 radio news programs fade in and out. Easily recognizable as archival footage, such a montage sequence effectively establishes a subconscious trust; thus, it serves as historical evidence for the film's claims. The truth-value of the images is reinforced by the crackling archival radio-news reports: "The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation brings you an address by the Prime Minister, the right honorable W.L. Mackenzie King" (archival newsreel in *Barbed Wire & Mandolins*⁴). As we hear, "Canadian Broadcasting Corporation" (CBC), we see, "National Film Board of Canada and The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation presents" (*BW&M*) appear in bold white lettering. The CBC government titles refer to the producers of the film, *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*. However, the simultaneous presentation of these two pieces of information, one contemporary (and visual) and the other historical (and aural) blurs the distinction between the two eras. The official press release from the Justice Department of 1940 read by the Prime Minister of Canada announcing the internment of Italian Canadians merges with the present-day CBC. Being crown corporations, the NFB and CBC are associated with the government of past and present. By merging the aural reference to the CBC in the archival sound bite with the visual CBC titling, the film subconsciously establishes itself as a confessional; that is, the CBC, as a representative of past and present governmental policy, is admitting its guilt in Italian Canadian internment. Such an opening not only positions the government as the antagonist, but also implies that the government is openly admitting its own historical guilt and thus, through such a documentary, is asking forgiveness. Overall, this prepares the viewer for the emotional testimonials to come, which

all invoke viewer guilt, similar to the government guilt subconsciously implied by the opening.

In the opening sequences, all of the above mentioned techniques have allowed the director to establish his credibility. The viewer has been provided with enough evidence to *trust* what s/he sees and will therefore *accept* what s/he sees. The director will work to maintain this trust, but he is now able to begin using subjective testimonial evidence to support the position that the Italian Canadian men were interned unfairly, without due process of law, based on little more than the "Italian cast to their features" (Narrator in *BW&M*).

When Il Duce marched to war Monday he threw the switch, setting in motion machinery, which carried out the largest most thorough and smoothest round up of enemy aliens and suspects in the history of Montreal. Those who had an obvious Italian cast to their features were rounded up, identification or not. (Narrator in *BW&M*)

As is evident in this quote, the guilt of the government and their blatant abuse of power is established, while the tragic innocence of the Italian Canadians is championed. Building upon our initial emotional allegiance to the interned Italian Canadians, the documentary effectively empowers the subjective testimonials to follow.

Zavaglia creates trust through the interviewees by carefully selecting whom to include in the documentary. He maintains that trust by weaving the testimonial anecdotes into a grand narrative that creates heroes out of the tragic victims (the internees) and mythologizes the Italian Canadian internment. Testimonials are a legitimate and commonly used tool of documentary, and in this case Zavaglia has carefully composed and edited the material so that it might simultaneously maintain trust while providing a very subjective, personalized version of history. He has used a balanced mix of ex-internees, family members of internees and respected Italian Canadian citizens active in the fight for redress – historians, authors, and newspaper publishers – to speak on behalf of the Italian internee experience. The four main internees that he uses to provide historical facts and personal stories are Domenico Nardoccio, Benny Ferri, Bishop Andrea Cimichella, and Osvaldo Giaco-

melli. Each is an innocent victim that becomes a hero through the narration, and each man represents the faceless mass of hundreds of men who were also allegedly innocent internees.

Barbed Wire and Mandolins reiterates collective notions within the Italian Canadian community's folk memory. One of these notions is that hundreds of men were wrongfully interned simply because they belonged to Italian social clubs. These organizations are represented as having mainly consisted of community choirs and Sunday card games, and certainly nothing illicit. People belonged to these organizations because of their nostalgia for the old country, Italy. A handful of men belonged to the Italian fascist party, but even these men are portrayed as having been harmless:

When the lists were being drawn up of those who would be picked up, the people who were overseeing it, mainly a man named Norman Robertson who was a very high placed civil servant, he knew, and wrote, that most of the men who were associated with the party, (pause for emphasis) and certainly those who were associated with the Sons of Italy were not threats to Canada. But the police carried the day. (Kenneth Bagnell in *BW&M*)

Barbed Wire and Mandolins claims that the men who joined the Italian Fascist party were merely misguided, taking pride in the rising reputation of their homeland. "Few had been back to witness brutal fascist politics first hand. When Italy entered the war, their misguided pride became an instant liability" (Narrator in *BW&M*). The four interviewed internees – Nardoccio, Ferri, Cimichella, and Osvaldo – are ambassadors for the hundreds of heroic men who were interned unjustly due to their misguided enthusiasm for Italy, at a time when the official position of the Canadian government ran contrary to that sentiment. These heroes, in all their reputed innocence, are also held up as representatives of all WW II Italian Canadians, interned or not, who may have had a naïve pride in Mussolini's accomplishments and the rising international status of Italy.

The first innocent victim of the internment camps that *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* introduces to us is Domenico Nardoccio. He is the loveable trickster hero, a spirited, young Italian laborer. His shocking arrest meant that he left behind a young loving wife who suffered unnecessarily because he was falsely reported dead

two weeks after being taken into custody. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) unpredictably snatched him from his small cobbler's shop on June 10th 1940, only hours after Mussolini declared war on France and England. This aging shoemaker of small stature is the embodiment of a non-threatening victim. Nardoccio reiterates that he did not understand why he was taken into custody:

"We are not criminals." (...)

"The one that sent me here are the criminals."

We believe him when he simply states that he was never a criminal, because it reinforces the film's and the spectator's sympathy for the internees, and thus their lack of sympathy for the government. The internees were never given any reason for their internment, and in the spirit of the trickster hero, Nardoccio expresses his cynicism; his visually unimposing stature and his age soften the political potency of his sarcasm. According to his reports, we know that the Italian Canadian men thought the whole process, from arrest to internment, was ridiculous. Nardoccio tells of how the RCMP officers acted like heroes, wearing their Stetson hats, red coats and arrogant attitudes. He tells of how one officer attempted to threaten the Italian men with his gun, in order to discourage them from behaving in any way that might jeopardize their survival. The Italian Canadian men just laughed at the RCMP, because of the absurdity of the situation; simple, innocent men such as themselves being treated as a security risk, or worse, as felons. Nardoccio's interpretation of events and his utter bewilderment at the whole experience establishes his credibility as an innocent victim. In the style of the harmless troublemaker clown, he sees the humor in these events, both when they took place and in retrospect. His ability to endure the ordeal of being separated from his young wife while retaining his 'joie de vivre' makes him a loveable trickster hero.

Benny Ferri is the hard working innocent young hero that was punished as an example to the others:

I was taken October 31. From June the 10th, near three months after. So, just to give you an idea, the happening of this day, they just were

picking one or two to keep the people at peace. I don't know how they go about it. If was by luck or was (throws hands up). If you ask me the question I cannot answer you. (...) I had led my good life, my good family life, a good worker for this country. How all at once I am an enemy? (Ferri in *BW&M*)

In addition to being a hardworking family man, his honesty is foregrounded through editing. Of all the interviewed subjects, it is he alone who mentions the presence of fascist troublemakers in the internment camps. This confession makes him seem credible, distracting us from Zavaglia's generous editing. Ultimately, proof of Ferri's honesty is the most plausible reason for Zavaglia's inclusion of that portion of edited interview at all, because despite the fact that this information raises questions in the mind of the viewer, the director devotes no further attention to the presence of a fascist element in the camps. It is important to note that this anecdote by Benny Ferri is not expanded by a voice-over, like so many other anecdotes are. Instead, a quick cut is made away from the burst of fascist information, to a pen sketch of Ferri, and then seamlessly back to his interview. This allows for the topic switches from the existence of fascism circa WW II, to Ferri's present-day interview process, and back in time to his role as soldier, with no overt sense of being misled. The editing, which juxtaposes the two contrasting topics that Ferri speaks about during his interview, his internment and his military service, allows *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* to maintain the accepted Italian Canadian collective belief about the limited fascist activity in their Canadian community. The documentary perpetuates the belief that any semblance of fascist activity was only misguided faith in Mussolini as a great leader of nations, dragging Italy out of the depths of economic despair and raising its international reputation. In retrospect, belonging to a local chapter of The Sons of Italy and/or the fascist party is seen as naïve pride, as opposed to a true understanding and belief in fascist political agendas.⁵ What is noteworthy about this particular montage of Benny Ferri, is that the editing choices make a silent association between all internees and Ferri, implying that the fascist troublemakers are as innocent as Ferri, who was falsely interned and later served in the Canadian army.

The everyman hero, Benny Ferri, has an interesting personal history to act as proof that he was not a fascist. He had two inte-

views with a review board during his time in the camps. He was finally released after several months in the internment camp.⁶ What is interesting is that a voice over states, "Only a week after his release, Benny Ferri was drafted into the Canadian army" (*BW&M*). This statement is then unpacked by an edited clip of Ferri, himself, uttering his disbelief that one moment he could be an enemy alien and the next moment an ally:

I say to myself, "Jeez, one time I'm dangerous enemy aliens and next I'm good soldier. What makes me?" Sometimes if you think about it it's complicated. Because you yourself are in the positions. How you can be enemy today and tomorrow...? Friendship enemy it's one thing. War enemy it's another. That is how I see it. I could be wrong."

Benny Ferri's testimony is credible because he is a reasonable, lucid witness. In addition, he does not seem to have been jaded by his ironic experiences. Benny Ferri is presented as a trustworthy man, like any other respectable community member that tends to his garden, but who, for incomprehensible reasons was another innocent victim of injustice at the hands of the Canadian government.⁷ His heroism is more than doubled because he was not only interned by the government, but also after his release, willingly became the government's representative, as a soldier. He fights for his beliefs and he does not hold a grudge, proving that he is not a fascist, but a good man, a good patriot, and above all else a good Canadian.

Bishop Andrea Cimichella is the pristine image of an innocent victim, and a heroic religious man, suffering alongside his people. He is the tragic victim hero, martyr-like. Of greater importance than what he says, is the image he presents of an aging priest, crying at the memories of hardships and injustices endured at the hands of the English government.⁸ We hear his story, in which he is interrogated by the RCMP and forced to report monthly, much like a convicted parolee does. However, his image is much more impressive than his story. He is a man of God, not a political or a warring man. He is gentle, in favor of "peace with the Pope" (Cimichella in *BW&M*). His Catholicism is a testimony to the veracity of what he says, and his tears evoke compassion for the truths that he has suffered.

Oswaldo Giacomelli is the patriotic hero; he tells his story, but there is a specific shot that is fascinating cinematographically. After he tells the story of his sudden and unexpected release – which we are meant to infer was as surprising as his five year internment had initially been – he stands on his porch at dusk with the light of the doorway framing his figure. He radiates with light, an awe-inspiring image. A small Canadian flag attached to the banner of his home flutters in front of his chest, evidence that he is a trustworthy, patriotic, Canadian man. A victim of war, he suffered here on home soil, as opposed to the front lines, and the film's cinematography iconically establishes his heroic character.

We are also given insight into the communities and families left behind during internment, through the testimonies of Dora Scozzafare and Mary Lou Melillo (wife and daughter of Dr. Scozzafare), Dan Ianuzzi (son of internee A.D. Ianuzzi), Antonio Mazza (author), Kenneth Bagnell (author and historian). What is significant about all of these interviews and interviewees is that, in their own ways, they are all interested in mythologizing the internment history of the WW II Italian Canadians, and heroicizing the internees. The two women speak of Melillo's father and Scozzafare's husband – one and the same man – in glowing terms. They tearfully remember the RCMP thieving him from the idyllic home environment, and the long arduous year in between that day and his joyous return. The community, in storybook fashion, mysteriously knew of his return and lined up early the next morning, asking Dr. Scozzafare to treat them again. The idea that he might treat them, or heal them, is dually layered. On the literal level, he is a doctor who tends to his patients. On the symbolic level, his mere return to the community will begin the healing process. Dr. Scozzafare is the heroic healer returning to do his life's work, his calling.

Kenneth Bagnell's stories about Dr. Pancaro are also noteworthy because they are narrated much in the style of oral stories and myths meant to transmit history to the next generation. Dr. Pancaro is certainly a hero in these stories. Pancaro is the devoutly religious man dedicated to the service of healing the masses, much like Jesus himself had done:

Among them [the internees] was Luigi Pancaro, medical doctor from Sudbury. Pancaro had come out as a young man too. Years before. He

realized there was a fledgling Italian community and as a devout Christian he felt that this would be his priestly vocation, to come to Canada to work with the Italian people. And then on that terrible day in June of 1940, he was in his clinic treating an elderly couple who had come when suddenly the knock came at the door, and without him even getting up to answer, the door burst open and several police officers came in. They went through his files and then one of those officers went to the wall where Dr. Pancaro had a painting of the Virgin Mary – being a devout Catholic – and the officer reached up, tore it from the wall and tore it up in front of him. Then they took Dr. Pancaro into custody. (Bagnell in *BW&M*)

Bagnell presents Dr. Pancaro as a Saint, tending to the weak, when he was undeservedly and violently ripped from his community. Bagnell does not end the story here. At the end of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*, we learn that upon return from the camps Pancaro worked hard, resumed his medical practice, and even offered his assistance to other doctors in the area. This was how he happened to find the Virgin-Mary-shredding-perpetrator, years later, on his surgery table prepped for an operation. Even in the face of his enemy Dr. Pancaro made the loving Christian choice, and performed the surgery, unflinchingly healing the man. Dr. Pancaro is remembered as a saintly-healer-hero.

These heroes are also immortalized through the pen sketches of themselves done in the same manner that the image of any hero is commissioned by the community or nation that honors him. Throughout *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*, pen sketches of the four interviewed internees are often flashed. In addition, the documentary ends with images of several internees – not chosen for interview – shown both as youths in internment photographs, then in their present day condition as aged figures, juxtaposed with their artistic renditions, that capture them as they were at the time of their internment. These men are visually immortalized as mythic young heroes through their portraits and the associated stories.

In the way that epic poems, mythologies, and hero stories create a sense of community and national identity, so does this documentary. Similarly, it presents an idealized version of history that fosters pride in post WW II Italian Canadians. Setting up the internment as a tragic mystery, the narrative slowly alleviates the suspense by piecing together the puzzle through a variety of subjective voices. Nardoccio, Ferri, Giacomelli, and Osvaldi are meta-

morphosized by the narrative, from tragic victims into hero figures. These specific heroes represent the hundreds of innocent-faceless-WWII-Italian-internees. Simultaneously, the film identifies the enemy at whose hands these men suffered: Canadian government bureaucrats, politicians, and the RCMP. Through such mythologizing, *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* is successful propaganda. When it was shown on the CBC television program *Eyewitness* on March 4 1997, it rejuvenated the Italian Canadian redress campaign that had been maintained through the 1980s, and encouraged by the apology of Brian Mulroney in 1990. Part of the political agenda of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*, that of clearing the Italian Canadian community of the stigma attached to the internment and of obtaining redress for those wrongfully interned, is a worthy cause. However, one cannot ignore this documentary's historical inaccuracy. This documentary has internal flaws, where it contradicts its own narrative, and ultimately jeopardizes its own structural integrity by simply ignoring critical facts about the presence of fascist activity in pre WW II Italian Canadian communities. Attention to detail and external research exposes Zavaglia's shocking omissions in *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*.

Places where *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* deconstructs itself

One instance of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* blatantly contradicting its grand narrative is when Zavaglia includes the interview clip of Nardoccio speaking of the illiteracy of the internees. Nardoccio says that the men were illiterate, and therefore too simple to have been spies or fascist activators:

I tell you that there was some of them were illiterate. I had to write letters to their wives. Some of them in Italian, and some of them in English. They were illiterate. Now tell me. What kind of a spy men will do? (...) One folk couldn't even write his name. Now that's a disgrace. And that's why the RCMP got disgusted. When they see that, that's crazy. You know, to be a spy for a country you got to have a (points to his head) upstairs. Those people didn't have nothing in their mind. They were just local working men, citizens. They didn't do anything wrong. They took pride when they heard that there were good things in Italy. And you know Mussolini did a lot of good things for the Ita-

lians you know. They can say what they want, but he is the man that started Medicare in 1927. If Canada doesn't know, let them know.

Nardoccio's claim that illiteracy was common among the internees is refuted by the narrative position of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*, because the documentary refers to two doctors (Dr. Pancaro and Dr. Scozzafare), a priest (now Bishop Cimichella), a newspaper publisher (Dan Ianuzzi's father), and Nardoccio himself who could read. We can only assume that the other interviewees can also read, but this is never stated nor called into question.⁹ Signifying its own weakness *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* makes both contradictory claims, the first being that the interned men were respectable, important members of society and thus innocent; the second being that they were innocent because they were common men, too simple to organize political revolt. Of great interest, is how Zavaglia could have committed such an obvious error when editing his narrative. I feel that the answer is quite simple. The collective community memory of internment has long perpetuated these same two contrasting notions. This idea of the illiterate man interned because he had neither the money nor the power to defend himself is not the invention of Nardoccio. Mario Duliani, internee, and author of the postwar novel *A City Without Women* (1947) was the first to publish the contradictory claim that the men were naïve, while simultaneously referring to community leaders: doctors, famous chefs and even the past-Montreal mayor, Camillen Houde. Yet, this claim is not Duliani's invention either. These contradicting notions are an accepted part of the collective belief system, notions that easily deconstruct themselves.¹⁰ Therefore, Zavaglia has been culturally preconditioned to accept both ideas without sensing the inherent contradiction. This points directly to a polemic lack of objectivity in the documentary, as well as in the mythologizing collective community memory.

Another moment when the documentary deconstructs itself is when Bishop Andrea Cimichella speaks about his experiences with the police during the Second World War. Regardless of what political position he may have held, or activities he may have participated in to alert the RCMP to his existence and his possible connection to fascist organizations in Montreal, we can still analyze what he says and see his comments as the Canadian government

would have interpreted them in 1940. In his own words, Cimichella explains the importance of Mussolini's peace pact with the Vatican in 1929:

At the beginning Mussolini was a savior because of 1929. 1929, the famous pact with the Vatican by Mussolini, and the French papers extolled Mussolini as the savior of the Church in Italy. And so we in Montreal, we repeated the official position of the council of Italy. That was why Mussolini was hailed as a great.

Then Bishop Cimichella reiterates for us what he said to the RCMP officer that had investigated him, and found him to be suspect of fascist beliefs. When asked if he was in favor of war, he said, "No I am not it favor of war. I am in favor of peace, with the Pope" (Cimichella in *BW&M*). It seems a simple enough statement, but it had a complex underlying meaning that he either never realized, or now downplays. Cimichella himself feels his error was to say that he was not it favor of the war. He believes he should have said "I am in favor of war ... for the Queen. You see he [the investigating RCMP officer] was of the English government" (Cimichella in *BW&M*). However, fifty years later, the viewer is able to realize that his grave mistake was to say that he was in favor of peace with the Pope. In 1940 people made a direct association between Mussolini and the phrase «peace with the Pope». One meant the other. That is, Mussolini had restored the relationship between the Church and the Vatican, imbuing the phrase «peace with the Pope» with connotations of Italian nationalistic pride. Therefore, Bishop Cimichella had hinted at an ideological allegiance with Mussolini. Uttered naively or not, his statements lent themselves to arouse government suspicion; the government's investigation of Cimichella seems less random than the film would suggest. Even more revealing, Cimichella's tearful testimonial is further undermined by the fact that he was never actually interned. Rather, he was merely questioned periodically by the RCMP. Ironically, of the four internment heroes interviewed his reaction is the most emotional, and yet he was never even taken into custody. Armed with this information, the critical viewer will question his emotional breakdown, bringing the status of the other emotional testimonies into question.

What *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* has eliminated from its version of internment

Barbed Wire and Mandolins is a compromised version of the history of the WW II internment, as experienced by the Italian Canadians, because of the information and testimony that it neglects to include. At the most basic level of argument analysis, a critic will quickly realize that this film presents only one point of view, disguised as several perspectives. It repeats the same ideological position through a variety of sources, each with their own personal anecdotes as supporting evidence. The documentary has not included any testimony from RCMP officers that were involved in the 1940 round-up of internees. Neither has any government documentation of the events been provided, save the official address by Mackenzie King used in the second sequence of the film to bolster the sense of horror experienced by the Italian Canadian communities of the day. Should there be no living government employees, who had been involved in the decision to intern enemy aliens, there is certainly a plethora of official, if not personal, documentation by government officials on the matter. Such blatant omissions jeopardize the credibility of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* as reliable.

Whatever credibility the documentary does establish is shattered either when the viewer does research on Canadian internment, or knows extraneous information on the topic. Research easily reveals that Zavaglia created *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* with intentional historical gaps, resulting in a successful revisionist piece as opposed to the reliable, didactic, historical documentary that it claims to be, both in the opening sequences and when Ianuzzi speaks of the necessity to educate Canadians about the past in order to avoid similar transgressions in the future:

This is a question that history has to be written in a way that our children will understand it. Not that they should have any rancor against this country, or their identity. We are Canadians. We're Canadians. We're talking about what has happened in *our* country, to *our* people (pause for emphasis) by bureaucrats and politicians and policemen who justify. (...) and that's how Canadians end up in, call it college, call it concentration camps. (...) It happened, it can happen again. (Ianuzzi in *BW&M*)

If we are truly anxious to avoid repeating the past, a more encompassing truth about the history of the Italian Canadian pre-WWII community and the subsequent internment of hundreds of Italian Canadian men needs to be elucidated.

Zavaglia's most obvious omission from *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* is an honest representation of fascism in the internment camps. I uncovered, in an article called "Images of Internment" by Gabriele Scardellato, that there are seven unofficial photographs of the Petawawa and New Brunswick internment camps, taken with an illicit camera. The creators of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* are well aware of these photos, because they are the property of Osvaldo Giacomelli, one of the men interviewed in the documentary. The film's slipcover even exhibits one of these underground pictures (see appendix 1).¹¹ This particular photo is a non-incriminating group-shot of the camp orchestra. Nevertheless, there is suspicious evidence of fascist propaganda found in several of the other unofficial photos. Paraphrasing Gabriele Scardellato, in one of these photos, there are nine internees posed in the camp garden, and at the bottom of the photo one can see that two of the men are holding an illegally made banner of black cloth with the words 'Me ne frego' embroidered on it in white. This is an early fascist slogan. In one photo a man wears a hat embroidered with the fascist logo and motto 'ME NE FREGO', (see appendix 2). This early nihilistic fascist phrase roughly translates to «I don't give a damn». The man is seen wearing that same hat in another picture, when the embroidery is only partially completed. In that photo only the word 'FREGO' and the fascist logo are visible (see appendix 3). Nicola Zavaglia clearly made a conscious decision to leave the incriminating fascist activity and photo evidence out of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*. This was not a simple oversight, because we know that the information was available to him through Giacomelli. I do not suggest that these facts need to be included in *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* in order to demonize the Italian Canadians or to justify the Canadian government, but to encompass the complexity of the situation that existed between the Italian Canadian community and the Mackenzie government.

Zavaglia is not the only person guilty of the exclusion of historical evidence in *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*. Consider the following testimony from Dan Ianuzzi:

So that's how they think of you. One year you are sitting at the table with the King and the Queen (as his father had). The next year you are in a concentration camp. Something changed, the world's mood changed. And that is how Canadians end up in, (...) concentration camp, (...). But the fact is, you are being detained. Your liberty is being taken away from you. It happened. It can happen again.

Ianuzzi, while discussing the precarious position of every Canadian subject who could become a victim of the whims of the government does not mention that his father was a known fascist, and that this was the reason for his government arrest. It is safe to assume that this misrepresentation of Ianuzzi's father is not only the product of Zavaglia's editing. Dan Ianuzzi – publisher of the Italian Canadian newspaper *Il Corriere Canadese* – is active in the redress campaign of the Italian Canadian community and is hardly open about his father's personal relationship with fascism. He has made the issue of redress a matter for both his own personal politics and those of his newspaper.¹² Ianuzzi has kept his father's fascist past quiet both before and after November 4th 1990, when he shook hands with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in appreciation of the apology made to the Italian Canadian community for their internment. Ianuzzi has freely adopted the innocent voice of the internees who claim they have no understanding of why they were listed as fifth columnists. It is also safe to say that other Italian Canadian authors have kept his family secrets for him. There is little mention of his father anywhere in the Italian Canadian internment literature, despite the fact that his father was the manager and publisher of an important fascist pre-WW II Montreal newspaper *L'Italia*, and that he ran in Montreal's 1933 municipal elections as a fascist party representative.¹³ The community refusal to expose his father's biography, one that includes a known political public life, may be attributed to Ianuzzi's influence in the publishing world, and/or the fact that his work on the redress campaign will benefit the entire Italian Canadian community, if successful. Damaging the Ianuzzi family reputation would damage the community's entire campaign. Either way, the Italian Canadian community seems to be co-operating with him to hide his father's past. Zavaglia may not have had to selectively edit this man's interview, but the choice to leave out known facts makes *Barbed Wire*

and *Mandolins* a co-conspirator, perpetuating the pristine innocence of Ianuzzi's father and the entire community.

Ianuzzi, Antonio Mazza and Kenneth Bagnell actively participate in the mythologized history of Italian Canadian innocence during WW II, both in the documentary *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* and through their own work as published authors. The viewer of Zavaglia's documentary needs to be aware that these other two men are also actively in support of the redress campaigns. Mazza is the translator of Mario Duliani's novel *A City Without Women*, which asserts the innocence of all the Italian Canadian internees. However, Duliani was no naive sheep, following the lead of others in a celebration of nostalgia for Italy at their chapter of the Sons of Italy.¹⁴ Research reveals that Duliani, much like Ianuzzi's father, was working as a newspaperman in Montreal, leading the pack with his fascist propaganda. In his post-war novel, Duliani painted all internees with the brush of innocence, in a self-serving effort to clear his own name. Translator Antonio Mazza has fallen prey to the wolf in sheep's clothing, writing articles in *Il Corriere Canadese*, speaking in *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*, and ultimately perpetuating the Italian Canadian myth of innocence about their own community. Kenneth Bagnell is another author writing from a perspective similar to that of Mazza. His works include *The Italian-Canadians* and *Canadese: A Portrait of the Italian Canadian*. The subjectivity of his historical story telling, in which he romanticizes the experience of the internees, is obvious to the critical viewer of *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* if they are not drawn in by the emotional pull of his oral story telling techniques.

Revealingly, in Bagnell's, Mazza's, and Zavaglia's common mythology, no mention is made of the fact that the internment was a carefully orchestrated procedure; it was not merely the arrest of any man with an Italian cast to his feature, as they claim. According to Iacovetta and Ventresca in "Redress, Collective Memory, and the Politics of History", the internment was based on solid RCMP intelligence:

That information had come via a network of paid agents and volunteer informants, including anti-fascists who had kept track of fascist activities. The accuracy of the RCMP's intelligence was evident in the list of names that it first compiled, on the eve of war, when it was ordered

by Ottawa to identify who might be interned in the event of war with Italy: approximately 100 men from across the country, most of them described as leaders or active Fascists, as well as suspected Fascist agents, including informants of the Opera Vigilanza Repressione Antifascismo. (402)

What the Italian community blocks from its history is the shameful fact that many of the innocent Italian men taken into custody by the RCMP were interned, not solely at the fault of the English government, but by the deceit of their own Italian neighbors.

The RCMP's list grew by leaps and bounds when Italian 'informants' began supplying the police with additional names of hundreds of alleged Fascists. The RCMP was actually disinclined to believe many reports on the grounds that the information came from Fascist agents deliberately trying to 'misinform' the enemy. Others, they reckoned, were 'ex-fascists' trying to protect themselves from arrest by quickly renouncing Fascism and betraying former colleagues. And some were bitter rivals of the people whom they fingered. Before the RCMP could investigate the names, war broke out, and those listed were arrested and some interned. (Iacovetta & Ventresca, 402)

This part of the community history may be even more sordid and horrifying than the internment itself. Expressing a sentiment close to that of Ianuzzi's, one can see that such betrayals are also a part of history that can be learned from. Unfortunately, the film does not give us a nuanced portrait of Canadian history. By aiming to mythologize, the film fails to teach us anything; as a result of its reduction of complex historical events to myth's binary opposition of good and evil, the film is ultimately insulting to the discerning spectator's intelligence. History is anything but simple; unfortunately, *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* reduces a complex historical moment to the desperate simplicity of political prejudice.

Conclusion

The year 2000 revealed that some change is taking place in the Italian Canadian community. The book *Enemies Within: Italian and Other Internees in Canada and Abroad* (pub.2000), edited by Franca Iacovetta, Roberto Perin, and Angelo Principe presents a more complete history of Italian internment during the Second World

War, than had been previously available. Furthermore, this book demands that more work be done to reveal the complete history that led up to the unfolding of events on June 10th 1940 and afterwards. Iacovetta and Ventresca declare:

The Italian Canadians, rather than being fed a streamlined version of the past meant to serve contemporary political ends, deserve full disclosure of all the evidence and interpretations so far available. They can then decide for themselves, through informed reflection and debate, how best to understand the dramatic events of these years. To expect less is shameful. (402)

This being the case, *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* is not an inclusive rendition of the past. It is a great story of heroes and villains, but not a great representation of the real, despite its disguise as a truth-telling documentary. Perhaps one must look deeper to find the true villain in this documentary, the one who wears the ugly face of politics.

Largely a collection of subjective testimonials, what *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* narrates may be predominantly authentic, but due to its propagandist agenda, it does not reveal all that it should in order to give Canadians a fair representation of the past. What the documentary emphasizes is the ineffectual means used to identify threats to Canadian security among the Italian Canadian community, and the many innocent men who suffered at the hands of this ineffectuality. But it avoids illuminating the role that Italian Canadians played in their own incarceration, through their fascist activities, and their betrayal of one another. Whether any of the internees would have been a true threat to national security is not for speculation. All that we can know is that there were Italian fascists active before the outbreak of war. Some adamantly retained their political beliefs throughout the duration of their internment. We also know that many innocent men were interned, perhaps more innocent men than men truly allied with fascism. What is presented in *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*, and by the redress committee in regards to the Italian Canadian internment situation may be *nothing but the truth*, but it is *not the whole truth*. Ultimately, it is so blatantly partial that it undermines its own cause.

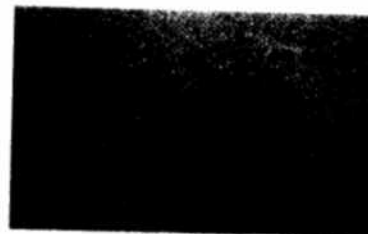
Appendix 1



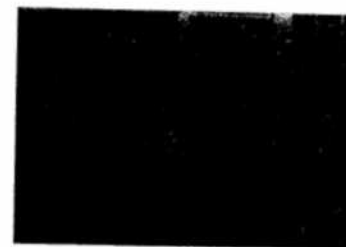
From the cover of the NFB documentary *Barbed Wire & Mandolins*:

Appendix 2

From Gabriele Scardellato's article „Images of Internment“:



The flag being held bottom center says „Me ne frego“. (348)



The man in the back row on the far right is wearing a hat embroidered with 'Me ne frego', which roughly translated means 'I don't give a damn'. (Scardellato, 350)

Appendix 3



The man in the back row second from the right is wearing the aforementioned embroidered hat. However, in this photo, the embroidery is only half finished. (Scardellato, 349)

Notes

- ¹ The notion of a collective Italian-Canadian memory is borrowed from Franca Iacovetta and Robert Ventresca's essay entitled "Redress, Collective Memory, and the Politics of History".
- ² The documentary was shown on the CBC-TV program *Witness* on March 4th 1997. "The film's showing provoked new discussions among Italian Canadians and re-energized the redress lobby (which had by no means ceased, regardless of little publicity since the 1980's)" (Iacovetta & Ventresca, 394).
- ³ Kenneth Bagnell had already laid the foundation for these hero stories in his book *Canadese: A portrait of Italian Canadians*. Bagnell portrays individual stories as hero stories within a historical framework; through the mythologizing process Bagnell neutralizes the historical importance and credibility that these stories would otherwise have.
- ⁴ *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* will be subsequently referred to as *BW&M*, when quoting.
- ⁵ The Sons of Italy is the name of an Italian social club found in a variety of cities across the pre WW II Canadian landscape. Some, but not all, of these chapter of The Sons of Italy received funding from the fascist government in Italy.
- ⁶ "Ferri was not a 'fifth columnist,' and he did not pose any other threat to Canada. Authorities decided as much when eleven months into his incarceration they released him. Some months later, he was conscripted into the Canadian army. The 'civilian internee' and 'enemy alien' had become a loyal Canadian" (Iacovetta & Ventresca, 379).
- ⁷ One of the early interview clips of Benny Ferri included shots of him tending to his lettuce & parsley out in the garden. The use of this visual is meant to establish and reinforce his image of innocence. Save his heroism, he is like the rest of his neighbors.
- ⁸ Bishop Cimichella uses the term 'English government', and as a Quebecois he expresses affiliation with the ethnic French more so than with the English. "The French Canadians understood my position. It was different because I was born Italian. My blood was bad, not the person, not me. I was Italian" (Cimichella in *BW&M*).
- ⁹ Although Zavaglia's interviewees present a unified narrative, it must be noted that his interview choices would have been limited to those men still alive and willing to speak on camera.

- ¹⁰ "Divided by the mythical mosaic, ghettoized communities live under the pretense of acknowledgement by the dominant discourse. This happens when mediators are imposed on these communities. These mediators are often members of the community itself who are people selected to become media agents through the allocation of government funds; they, therefore, occupy power spaces between the dominant discourse and the ghettoized communities. The notion of the mediator, or go-between, imposes a communicative system that, on the one hand, satisfies the working stereotype that the dominant system has strategically developed and, on the other, produces a working model for the member/s of the individual community, ultimately a means of false self-representation" (Anselmi & Gouliamos, 14).
- ¹¹ In *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* Giacomelli explains that when he was finally released from the camp, he was summoned very suddenly. All he had time to do was gather his things. But he really had nothing to take except his bugle. We can assume that he also had the illegal photographs stashed somewhere on his person or in his baggage. The omission of this fact brings into question his credibility.
- ¹² After *Barbed Wire and Mandolins* was shown on CBC's television program *Witness* in 1997, the "widely read *Il Corriere Canadese* devoted much space to the issue in the days following: staff and guest columnists voiced opinions, described Congress's activities, and featured history articles and interviews with ordinary Italian Canadians. Among contributors, there is virtually total agreement over the version and meaning of the wartime events described [in *Barbed Wire and Mandolins*] and on the need to win financial redress" (Iacovetta & Ventresca, 394).
- ¹³ Both of these facts are mentioned in passing in Angelo Principe's *The Darkest Side of the Fascist Years: The Italian-Canadian Press: 1920-1942*, published in 1999. However, it is noteworthy that A.D. Ianuzzi's name is mentioned in this book only twice - in an unobtrusive way - despite his important roles in society. His importance has been downplayed, and the focus is rather on what the newspaper was doing at the time, rather than how his role as the head of that paper may have influenced the contents. In a similar fashion Principe emphasizes Ianuzzi's defeat in the 1933 election as "an open wound in the body politic of Montreal's fascists" and not as a reflection of the man's personal and powerful role in the fascist community (Principe, 80).
- ¹⁴ Robert Perin, in his article "Actor or Victim? Mario Duliani and His Internment Narrative", outlines the chronology of Duliani's life, based on the compilation of official documentation, which shows that Duliani came to Canada from Europe in February of March of 1936, to avoid criminal persecution for fraud; his entrance into Canada was facilitated by the Italian embassy, as Duliani was an avid promoter of the fascist government in Italy. He was also a paid agent of OVRA, the Italian secret police.

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ALEXANDRA MIĘKUS

THE ARTIST DEFINED

AN ESSAY ON GABRIEL AXEL'S *BABETTE'S FEAST*

Is it possible to give a particular definition to art? Is it possible to determine what makes someone an artist? Many have attempted to answer these questions and thus far there seems to be no agreement on a specific characterization. This leaves the interpretation and description of art and true artistry wide open. Specific definitions may vary; However a few similar references or associations can be found. Many speak of beauty, integrity and mystery, others of divine perfection, of self-donation or of boundless passion when they talk about art and artists. If these traits can, indeed, lead towards a conception of art and the artist, then they should make possible the depiction of Babette as an artist in Gabriel Axel's film entitled *Babette's Feast*. In order to bring out these traits and portray Babette as an artist, the filmmaker uses a particular viewpoint, a specific structure and creates a detailed setting.

The viewpoint used in the film establishes Babette as a mysterious character. She is often filmed from a distance and with a limited point of view. From the night Babette arrives at the sisters' house the camera seems to be trying to approach her, but never really succeeds in entering her own private world. The only information about Babette that is presented comes from the letter that she brings with her on the day of her arrival. Instead of focusing on Babette, more attention is given to the two sisters. The film clearly exposes the sisters' background and therefore, reveals their thoughts and feelings about their lives as well as the values and culture of the village in which they live. The many close-ups of the faces of the sisters allow the audience to enter their world and notice their tranquility and their apathy. The other characters are also focused on, in a similar way, and thus presented in a comparable light. We are invited and even made a participant around the little dinner table at the pastor's house, where characters are discussing and revealing their opinions on various subjects. While most of the characters of the film, especially the sisters, are deve-