

in the end suggest that all that the law produces is a sense of entitlement and a parallel sense of disillusionment among the descendants. As one of the interviewees brilliantly remarks: “Those descendants who come with the myth of fatherland roots are bound to be disappointed since they take for granted a form of belonging that is not automatic at all.” Individual paths of success are potential engines of change, but in a condition of subalternity they cannot lead to any integration unless they are supported by a collective fight for rights. This involves immigrants (descendants and nondescendants) and Italians alike in what is a crucial social “conflict” toward legalization and full social recognition, as Sergio Zulian from the Migrants Office in Treviso maintains.

*Merica* is an ideal resource to open a course on immigration in Italy or to conclude one on emigration from Italy, but it can also be used in a class on international migrations in order to consider European colonial legacies as well as citizenship theories and policies. Within a seminar on film, it also represents an interesting example of innovative documentary-making for the nonsynchronous use of the sound (including radio program excerpts); a large palette of language mixtures and dialect inflections; and the painting-like quality of the shots of industrial, rural, and urban landscapes dialoging with the collage of interviews. Finally, the documentary – with its ability to speak to different generations from personal and institutional perspectives, productively bringing together the individual and the citizen – would certainly be appropriate for a film series, especially one geared toward both academic and nonacademic audiences.

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### *Ricordati di noi!*

By Paul Tana.

École des Médias at the Université du Québec à Montréal, 2007.

26 minutes. DVD format, color.

This short documentary is in many ways a film about film. More specifically, *Ricordati di noi!* is about *Teledomenica*, an Italian-language television program broadcast for thirty years in Montreal beginning in 1964. It is the story of how a recent chance encounter between the director of the documentary and the host of the show led to the salvaging of over one hundred reels of film that had been lying forgotten in the basement of a television studio. The documentary shows spools of film being cleaned, cataloged, synchronized, and stored in the vaults of the Cinémathèque Québécoise, a film archive founded in 1963 and supported by the Québec provincial government. Two weeks after the move, we are told through a voice-over narration, a flood badly damaged the film’s original repository. Fate, it seems, wanted *Teledomenica* preserved for posterity.

After World War II, Canada received as many immigrants from Italy as did the United States. But, unlike the United States, this wave completely overwhelmed the over-100,000 Italians listed in the 1941 census. By 1971, Italians numbered 730,000 and

were concentrated in Canada's two major cities, Montreal and Toronto. A new breed of ethnic entrepreneur emerged to serve their needs. *Ricordati di noi!* throws the spotlight on one of these promoters, Alfredo Gagliardi, *Teledomenica's* mastermind. Owner of a successful travel agency, editor of the weekly *Corriere italiano*, occasional speech-writer for Quebec's conservative Union Nationale Party, Gagliardi quickly realized the enormous potential in advertising revenues represented by this expanding and consumer-oriented audience. He was part of the vanguard of what was then commonly and unashamedly termed "foreign-language" or "ethnic" television, which the federal government officially allowed only in 1964.

Broadcast on Sundays at noon, *Teledomenica* was a community information program. It covered news relating to local organizations, parishes, and businesses, as well as family events such as weddings and baptisms. A particularly popular segment of the show, called *Saluti dall'Italia*, featured Italians in small towns and villages in southern Italy sending their greetings to kith and kin in Montreal. Some of these clips have been incorporated in *Ricordati di noi!* But a separate, longer version, lasting 51 minutes, forms part of the DVD—it is a montage of greetings emanating from five localities in the province of Cosenza in Calabria. Some of these are quite moving, as when some older participants, so overcome with emotion at the prospect of instantaneous communication with a departed relative, are unable to speak. Nevertheless, the overall effect is one of tedium. In fact, the repetition in *Ricordati di noi!* fails to hold the viewer's interest, in part because of the editing and lack of a compelling musical score.

At a distance of almost half a century, the documentary's juxtaposed images of the *paese* and Canada's metropolis, a status Montreal still enjoyed in the 1960s, unwittingly reinforce stereotypes of immigration. The *paese* appears to be poor and backward, relatively untouched by Italy's budding Economic Miracle. Its inhabitants are awkward, inarticulate, and unschooled peasants. Many of them address their good wishes to the microphone rather than the camera. These greetings, however, remain unreciprocated since no Italian equivalent of *Saluti* was ever made, nor would most *paesani* have had the means to acquire a television set to receive them. *Ricordati di noi!* instead features their relatives in Montreal seemingly enjoying the good life, eating abundantly at perennial banquets, dancing to the latest music, and sporting fashionable clothes, hairstyles, and accessories. The Italian shops they frequent are bright, airy, and inviting. To them family members back home often repeat the imprecation *Ricordati di noi!*, reminiscent of Dido's celebrated aria *Remember me* in Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*. Like the Queen of Carthage abandoned by her ambitious lover who is determined to found an empire, their only power lies in the ability to stir up memory. Like Aeneas, the immigrants are single-mindedly focused on the goal to *fare l'America*, that is, to establish their personal empire. The future clearly belongs to them. They embody modernity. The black-and-white sequences of the Old World tellingly contrast with the colored footage of the New. (Indeed, who could have guessed that, as Gianni Amelio's 1994 film *Lamerica* so forcefully shows, Italy would become *l'America* for Albanians, Romanians, and, later, Africans and Asians.)

*Ricordati di noi!* makes reference to another film, the 1963 epic *Pour la suite du monde* by Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault. Both it and *Saluti dall'Italia* are documentaries made in black and white using a hand-held camera. Because they were both produced

in the early 1960s, they now lie side by side in the Cinémathèque Québécoise. In their own way, both capture the passing of a way of life. But the similarities end there. *Saluti dall'Italia* does not pretend to record life in Calabrian *paesi*. If it does so, it is quite by accident and ineptly. In one scene, for example, an impatient interviewer snatches the microphone from an elderly woman who is having trouble remembering the names of the relatives she wishes to greet. We miss the respect that Perrault and Brault show to the fishers of l'Isle-aux-Coudres and their way of life. The Italian film is also very anxious to showcase Cosenza's modernity through images of spanking new businesses, high rises, and automobiles, an aspect completely ignored by *Ricordati di noi!* *Saluti* also highlights the petit bourgeois, in the guise of priests, local politicians, entrepreneurs, and travel agents, perhaps to neutralize the voices of an embarrassingly premodern peasantry. If the 1960s were the golden age of the documentary in Canada, *Saluti dall'Italia* is unlikely to stand out as an example of the genre.

What in the final analysis is *Ricordati di noi!*'s appeal? Those who like me grew up in Montreal at the time will feel stirrings of nostalgia when presented with long-forgotten images of the past. But the documentary's very local focus will also limit its potential to attract a wider audience. Moreover, like so many *images d'Épinal*, its unmediated and uncontextualized treatment of postwar Italian immigrants will only reinforce sentimental and distorted notions of this subject. Sadly, the opportunity to deal authentically and meaningfully with this important aspect of immigration has been missed.

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*If Stone Could Speak (Se la pietra sapesse parlare).*

By Randy Croce.

Labor Education Service, University of Minnesota, 2007.

67 minutes. DVD format, color.

Of the millions of Italian job-seekers who emigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most worked as unskilled laborers, often in construction or on the railroads. Indeed, the conventional image of the New Immigrant—not just Italians—is that of the unschooled manual worker. This fascinating documentary by labor educator Randy Croce tells the story of a lesser-known immigrant group: the stone carvers, or *scalpellini*, who left their homes in northern Italy to work in the “Granite Capital of the World,” Barre, Vermont.

It is a story, first and foremost, of the search for employment. In the Italian north, the earth yielded itself up to quarrying easier than to farming, and generations of men in villages such as Viggìù took up the *scalpello*, or stonecutter's chisel, as a way of feeding their families. In the telling phrase of a local historian, “Stone was the bread of these people.” After passing a long apprenticeship in the village design school, a *scalpellino* could be relatively well paid and might even be hired to work on the Milan