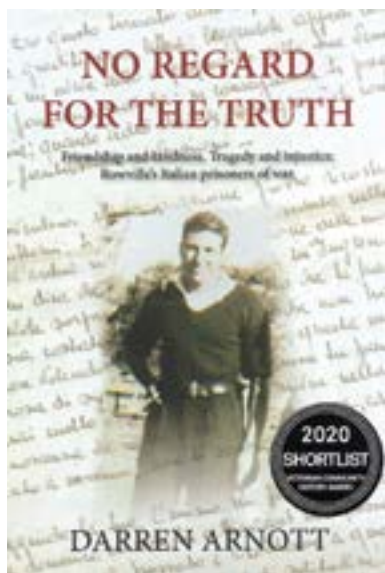


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No Regard for the Truth

By **Darren Arnott**

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Review by Sean Reid,
Emerald Secondary College

No Regard For The Truth by Darren Arnott is a book that grabbed this reader from the very beginning. It was like being transported back to the final days of World War II as the Australian Armed Forces wrestled with what to do with the thousands of Italian Prisoners of War who no longer posed a threat and had endeared themselves to the local community of Rowville in Melbourne's east, where their POW camp was situated.

Arnott focuses on the true story of POW Rodolfo Bartoli, a tall, charismatic and handsome 26-year-old from Florence, who had a romantic interest in a local girl. *No Regard For the Truth* tells of Bartoli's needless death at the hands of the loathsome Australian Captain John Waterston, who wanted to 'kill an Eye-Tie (Italian)' before the war was over. *No Regard For The Truth* has all the key ingredients to make for a gripping read: romance, murder, tragedy and political intrigue. It is also a complex study into the Australian psyche in the final stages of World War II and into the early post-war era.

Arnott's prose is engaging and highly readable as he takes us back to the Italian POW camp at Rowville in 1945 and 1946. We follow Rodolfo Bartoli and his friends as they work on farms near the POW camp in a mutually beneficial arrangement that sees the POWs earn some money while helping Australian farmers struggling with a labour shortage caused by the war. The relationships between the Italians and local farmers are very good, and strong friendships and even romances form.

But all is not well in Rowville as corruption, drunkenness and mistreatment of Italian prisoners is rife among the Australian commanders at the POW camp. Ultimately Bartoli is shot and killed by Captain Waterston in an alleged escape attempt. This event is the catalyst for an investigation to examine the conduct of the camp. It is here that we see Justice Simpson suggest that Captain Thomson,

who was the officer responsible for overseeing a number of the Italian POW camps, including the Rowville camp, had 'no regard for the truth' in his testimony.

During his research, Arnott located and interviewed two former local residents, including Bartoli's romantic interest. Their memories as well as photographs and letters from Bartoli, which are featured in the book, had been tucked away for more than seventy years and add a personal element to the story.

No Regard for the Truth is not only a great read but a very useful tool for teaching source analysis. This book is rich with primary sources ranging from historical accounts of events from different perspectives, official military reports, newspaper articles and court transcripts of testimony from POWs and Australian servicemen. It encourages students to examine the motives behind sources and their inherent bias, and also asks students to question their reliability.

This book deserves its place on the bookshelves of History teachers and students alike.