

BOOK REVIEWS

La stoffa dell'Italia. Storia e cultura della moda dal 1945 a oggi, by EMANUELA SCARPELLINI, Bari-Rome, Editori Laterza, 2017, ix + 237 pp., €20.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-581-2762-9

La stoffa dell'Italia. Storia e cultura della moda dal 1945 a oggi charts the rise of Italy as one of the great beacons of fashion in the second half of the twentieth century, connecting the industry's upward trajectory to key cultural, political, economic, and social developments in the peninsula. The book concludes with a look at the Italian fashion industry's place in the globalised, digital, and social media driven world of the twenty-first century. In this cultural historical examination, Emanuela Scarpellini explores the various entities involved in the fashion industry – businesses, stylists, producers, influencers, and consumers – as well as its technical, economic, and social aspects. Furthermore, Scarpellini goes beyond clothes (seen by some as merely items to be worn), to illustrate how fashion can be a window into a society, serving to delineate its economic health, its technological development, and most importantly, its values and symbols.

The first chapter is dedicated to laying the theoretical foundations for the book's social and cultural analysis of Italian fashion, allowing Scarpellini to demonstrate here (and in later chapters) the immense social significance of clothes. Drawing on the work of Georg Simmel, Thorstein Veblen, Marshall Sahlins, Pierre Bourdieu, and others, Scarpellini examines how items like hats, gloves, and fur coats, create and reflect social divisions – 'class, gender, age, and social condition' – and in so doing, serve to structure society (p. 25).

The story of Italy's unexpected ascendance in the fashion world begins in Chapter Two, which explores the industry's efforts at recovery, renewal, and transformation in the first two decades after the Second World War. Looking at clothes as objects of material culture, Scarpellini discusses changes in producing fabrics and clothing items, the role of intermediaries and institutions, and Italy's early fashion capitals. What becomes apparent in this discussion is that a transnational exchange, particularly between Italy and the United States, played a significant role in building up the industry. Marshall Plan funding had an impact here, as did the adaptation of American ready-to-wear fashion by companies like Gruppo Finanziario Tessile (GFT) and Marzotto as well as the presence of buyers from American department stores at the first Italian fashion show held in Florence in 1951. In Chapter Three, the book takes a chronological step back to examine the relationship between fashion and Fascism in the interwar years. While the Fascist regime failed in its attempt to use fashion as a tool to build national consensus and unity, as well as to stave off foreign influences from Paris and Hollywood, Scarpellini argues that it did succeed in fashion's industrial realm. By protecting the technical side – supporting the textile industry and its development of synthetic fabrics, for example – the regime not only bolstered the production sector, but also laid part of the foundation for the rise of Italian fashion decades later.

Returning to the mid-1960s, Chapter Four examines the ways in which a change in dress reflects and interacts with larger cultural change, focusing on the revolutionary nature of clothing during the turbulent ten-year span of 1965 to 1975. Inspired by international styles coming from Great Britain and the US, youth drove the change in popular fashion by wearing clothes that stylistically and chromatically challenged the discipline and order of the prior generation. Scarpellini shows how, in this way, Italian fashion was opened to a wider range of people. Contributing to this

democratisation, which had its roots in the 1950s, were significant technological developments in the industry, including the expansion of synthetic fabrics. But it was in the next two decades that luxury fashion, available solely to the upper class, would spread outside this narrow realm.

Chapter Five focuses on Italy's arrival on the international fashion stage and its affirmation as the leading national industry from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s. Scarpellini tells us that it was not just one aspect that contributed to this ascendance, but rather a combination of factors: the emergence of the stylist, the rise of new consumer groups, the implementation of new business strategies, the solid connection between fashion and the communication sector, and an extensive service network around Milan that worked to promote Italian fashion to the world. The result was the creation of internationally recognised Italian brands – Armani, Versace, and Ferré, among others – that specialised in the new ready-to-wear clothing. Italian *moda pronta* took Paris's *haute couture* and democratised it, maintaining the high style while reducing the price and thereby increasing its range of buyers: the Made in Italy brand had arrived.

Dealing with the first two decades of the twenty-first century, a time marked by globalisation, Chapter Six explores the challenges that an increasingly interconnected world has brought to Italian fashion. While internationalisation is nothing new for the industry, changes including new fashion players (China, Russia, India, and Brazil), a more diverse, multicultural market, a more fluid consumer, a shift to outsourcing and offshoring, the production and selling of counterfeit items, international acquisitions of Italian brands, fast fashion, and the role of the internet, in particular influencers and e-commerce, have forced the peninsula's fashion makers to address and adapt to these new conditions. Scarpellini notes that one field where Italy definitively leads the way is that of techno-fashion.

Emanuela Scarpellini presents an engaging narrative, bolstered by the inclusion of analyses of private family photo albums, references to popular film, and useful quantitative data on Italy's rise to fashion prominence. Given that the main topic of focus is material culture, an addition of images of the fashion items being discussed would have further brought to life this remarkable story. *La stoffa dell'Italia. Storia e cultura della moda dal 1945 a oggi* is an important, well-rounded addition to not only the history of fashion, but to Italian cultural history.

Jessica L. Harris

Department of History, Allegheny College, PA

jharris@allegheny.edu

© Association for the Study of Modern Italy 2020

doi:10.1017/mit.2020.28

Resistance, Heroism, Loss: World War II in Italian Literature and Film, edited by THOMAS CRAGIN and LAURA A. SALSINI, Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2018, 168 pp., €70.28 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-683-93137-9

Seventy years after the end of the Second World War, the cultural production concerning this pivotal event of human history remains fertile ground for scholars of Italian Studies. The edited volume *Resistance, Heroism, Loss* contributes to the exploration of the Italian cultural memory of the Second World War by offering a wealth of case studies, addressing both canonical texts and less renowned authors, spanning from the postwar period to the early 2000s.

The introduction, by Cragin and Salsini, has the ambitious goal of providing a schema of the evolution of war representation in Italy up to today, identifying five phases in the Italian