

The source material is varied, from novels to published letters. Much of the book comprises concise and apt summaries of core ideas. The lengthy descriptions of clothing beg for illustrations, which would free the text for analysis, and there are too many typos for this reviewer to ignore, extending beyond simple spelling mistakes into incorrect word order, sentence structure, and even repeated subheadings ('Popular Department Stores' appears consecutively on p. 117 and p. 118.) Some of the most interesting passages are 'domestic raid[s]' (p. 204), in which Scarpellini leads the reader, imaginatively, into typical homes from across the period addressed in the book and shows her skills of historical imagination. This book will serve as a valuable companion to students and scholars of production and mediation in Italy for a long time to come, as well as providing a useful resource for those interested in comparative studies of consumption.

Grace Lees-Maffei

University of Hertfordshire

Email: [g.lees-maffei@herts.ac.uk](mailto:g.lees-maffei@herts.ac.uk)

© 2013, Grace Lees-Maffei

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13532944.2012.744434>

## References

Cavazza, S. 2004. *Dimensione massa. Individui, folle, consume 1830–1945*. Bologna: il Mulino.

De Grazia, V. 1993. *Le donne nel regime fascista*. Venice: Marsilio.

Paolini, F. 2007. *Storia sociale dell'automobile in Italia*. Rome: Carocci.

**Italian Jews from Emancipation to the Racial Laws**, by Cristina M. Bettin, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 215 pp., £52.50 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-230-10476-1

**The Italian Jews of Italy 1848–1915: Between Tradition and Transformation**, by Elizabeth Schächter, London and Portland, OR, Valentine Mitchell, 2011, 268 pp., £45.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-85303-903-7

Histories of the Jews of Italy in the modern and contemporary world have focused on the events surrounding the Risorgimento or the Racial Laws and the Holocaust. These two worthwhile studies examine the period 1861 to 1938, but do not succumb to the epistemological error of telling their stories from 'the perspective of the Shoah, as a "rehearsal for destruction"' (Schächter, p. 138). Instead, they address the thesis advanced by Arnaldo Momigliano and Antonio Gramsci (and later Renzo de Felice), that Italian Jews occupied a unique place in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. According to this thesis, Italian Jews were in a singular position because of the unique process of Italian unification: Italian gentiles and modern and emancipated Italian Jews were all products of the Risorgimento. As a result, Italian Jews were great patriots who preached liberal values and emancipationist reforms and were noted for participation and integration at the highest levels of political, cultural and economic life in Liberal Italy. After the destruction of the ghettos, Italian Jews did not encounter any linguistic barriers, Italian Jewish Orthodoxy was neither Sephardic nor Ashkenazy, Italian Jews were few in

number and their population did not increase through the mass arrival of Eastern European Jews, as was the case in France and the UK in the late nineteenth century. They were rooted in specific city cultures (Rome, Venice, Turin or Trieste (not Italian until 1918) and had their unique sub-cultures (a parochialism that meant the Jewish community lacked a national voice until after the First World War). Finally, Italy lacked a tradition of popular anti-Semitism. Thus (to anticipate events not central to either of the books reviewed here), Mussolini's promotion of the 1938 Racial Laws came as bolt from the blue for most Italians, gentiles and Jews alike.

Both Bettin and Schächter contest this thesis. They argue that the integration of the Jews into Liberal Italy was a multi-layered process in which different generations of Jews approached the relationship of assimilation or integration in different ways. In the late nineteenth century, assimilation seemed to be on the ascendancy. However, the rise of nationalism, the gradual rapprochement of Italian secular conservatives with Catholics, the presence of socialism and Zionism, meant that Italian Jews of the 1910s were altogether less sanguine about the road to integration. In the early twentieth century, through the catalyst of international Jewish solidarity (the Dreyfus Case, blood libel trials and the Russian pogroms) and Zionism (and slightly later the Balfour Declaration), Italian Jewish youth both rediscovered their Italian Jewish heritage and encountered the rich traditions of Eastern Europe Jewry. Language and cultural schools were developed and, although inter-marriage and conversion did not disappear, there was a noticeable turn by younger Jews towards their community, nationally and internationally. By the early 1920s, even young, modern, secular Jews such as Nello Rosselli – who confessed he did not attend synagogue on the Sabbath, did not know Hebrew and did not observe the rites of Judaism – could proclaim their Jewish identity, 'because the monotheistic conscience is ineradicable within me . . . because I have a profound sense of personal responsibility . . . because I have that religious sense of the family which . . . is a fundamental and indestructible characteristic of Jewish society' (Rosselli [1924], quoted in Schächter, p. 35). This approach was incomprehensible to Antonio Gramsci, who in the early 1930s engaged in an ill-tempered argument about anti-Semitism in Italy with his Russian sister-in-law Tatiana Schucht and the assimilated Piedmontese Jewish economist Piero Sraffa, both of whom had recently rediscovered their lay Jewish identity.

Bettin and Schächter adopt a dichotomous approach for the understanding of assimilation and integration. They review the rich secondary sources (in English and Italian), which have identified a persistent anti-Semitic Catholic cultural sub-current that flowed into the events of 1938 and after. Using Jewish journals, memoirs, autobiographies, oral testimony, private correspondence and archival material both authors reveal a far more fraught and complex relationship of Italian Jews to the liberal state and society than is usually portrayed. Both books add to our knowledge of these processes in a historical context but they are also relevant to today's Italy, as Italians and 'New Italians' engage in different but nonetheless familiar arguments about toleration, belonging and acceptance in twenty-first century political and civil society.

Carl Levy  
*Goldsmiths, University of London*  
 Email: [C.Levy@gold.ac.uk](mailto:C.Levy@gold.ac.uk)

© 2013, Carl Levy

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13532944.2012.754980>