

the contextual specificity may render the book of less use for those outside of Italian studies. As debates on the definition of neorealism will undoubtedly continue, Leavitt's historicising of neorealism is an essential contribution that will greatly enable our understanding of the enduring place of neorealism in Italian culture.

Rebecca Bauman

*Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York*  
*rebecca\_bauman@fitnyc.edu*

© The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Association  
 for the Study of Modern Italy  
 doi:10.1017/mit.2021.18

**Italian Women's Experiences with American Consumer Culture, 1945–1975: The Italian Mrs. Consumer**, by JESSICA L. HARRIS, Cham, Springer International Publishing AG (Palgrave Macmillan), 2020, xiii + 235 pp., €83.19 (hardback), ISBN 978-3-030-47824-7

'*Se non avete visto la Rinascente, non avete visto Milano*. If you haven't seen Macy's, then you haven't seen New York'. This is a tagline for an advertisement promoting an exchange programme between *La Rinascente*, a historical department store in Milan, and the American Macy's. It is 1961, and Italy is in the middle of its *miracolo economico* – the 'economic miracle' that Jessica L. Harris, in this book, analyses from the point of view of women's consumer culture. In addressing the three decades after the Second World War, *Italian Women's Experiences with American Consumer Culture, 1945–1975. The Italian Mrs. Consumer* investigates the role of American consumption products and models in the Italian context. Focusing specifically on women, the main argument of the book is that the arrival of American consumer culture in postwar Italy challenged notions regarding women's roles and identities and had an important function in encouraging socio-cultural, as well as economic, changes in Italy. Moreover, in the context of the Cold War, the popularisation of American consumer culture had implications that went beyond the specific Italian situation.

As specified in the comprehensive Introduction (Chapter 1), the attention of the book to material and popular cultures revolves around two main domains, which are the subjects of the first two parts of the book: American *models* of consumption and American *objects* of consumption. In particular, in Chapters 2 and 3, Harris focuses on department stores and supermarkets, showing how the introduction of these in Italy not only changed shopping practices, but also re-shaped habits and desires. Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to objects of consumption, namely fashion, the refrigerator, and beauty and hygiene products. Here too, the effects of the introduction of specific products reached beyond the realm of consumption, revolutionising ideas and practices around women's beauty ideals and social roles. The analyses, in these chapters, develop primarily through an engagement with the promotion of modes and objects of consumption through print media: women's magazines such as *Annabella* and *Grazia*, culinary magazines, trade magazines, and archival materials of some Italian companies such as *La Rinascente*, *Ignis*, and *Arnoldo Mondadori editore*. In the third part of the book (Chapters 6 and 7), instead, Harris addresses the reception of the promotion of American consumer culture by the Catholic Church and the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the two most influential reference points in postwar Italy. She does so by examining oral histories and interviews, and by looking at the Catholic magazine *Famiglia Cristiana* and at the feminist one *Noi Donne*. This latter, issued by *UDI, Unione delle Donne in Italia*, Italy's oldest feminist group, was linked, at that time, to the PCI – one of the strongest communist parties in postwar Western

Europe. Interestingly, while American female consumer culture aroused antagonism both in *Noi Donne* and *Famiglia Cristiana*, Harris shows that neither of the two magazines completely rejected it, incorporating some of its messages, aesthetics, and products in their pages. A brief but thorough Conclusion (Chapter 8) opens with an analysis of *Dolce Rosa Excelsa* (2015), a short film by Giuseppe Tornatore with music by Ennio Morricone and starring the famous Italian actress Sophia Loren. By exploring the ideas around *italianità* present in this advertisement for a Dolce & Gabbana perfume, Harris summarises the main points of her research.

The argument of this book is well articulated and honours the complexities of that historical period without leaning towards reductionist claims. This, together with the focus on materiality, gives strength and texture to the analytical framework and claims of the book. Importantly, the book stresses that the arrival of American female consumer culture in Italy did not play out as a unidimensional Americanisation of Italian society. Rather, it developed as the result of an articulate and creative engagement with practices and products that came from overseas, and tended more towards an Italianisation of American culture rather than a passive adoption of it. Moreover, Harris points out that the ‘modernisation’ of women’s consumer habits and practices through their engagement with American consumer culture did not necessarily challenge patriarchal systems by promoting progressive and liberating societal roles. On the contrary, it often helped in reproducing expectations about women’s traditional roles in the house (as *casalinga*) and re-inscribing conceptions of beauty dependent on men’s gazes.

This is an engaging, well-written book, suitable for multiple audiences, from undergraduates to specialists. It addresses an understudied topic in a sophisticated yet accessible way by bringing together both archival and original materials and experiences. While the argument of the book could have been strengthened by looking at the role of objects in the promotion of American female consumer culture through the transnational networks of relations enabled by the Italian emigration to North America, the claims of the book are solid and compelling, and an important contribution to the study of Italy in the postwar period as well as to women’s studies.

Giovanna Parmigiani

*Harvard Divinity School and Centre for the Study of World Religions, Cambridge, MA*  
*gparmigiani@hds.harvard.edu*

© The Author(s), 2021. Published by Cambridge University Press  
 on behalf of the Association for the Study of Modern Italy  
 doi:10.1017/mit.2021.19

**The Perfect Fascist: A Story of Love, Power, and Morality in Mussolini’s Italy**, by VICTORIA DE GRAZIA, Cambridge, MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020, x + 517 pp., £28.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-674-98639-8.

In *The Perfect Fascist* Victoria De Grazia tells the story, both public and private, of the prominent Fascist hierarch Attilio Teruzzi. His life and career are used as a prism through which to view many aspects of the regime, including its rise to power, the development of the Militia, and foreign and colonial policy. The social mores of the period are explored through the history of his intimate relationships, particularly his short-lived marriage to the opera singer Lilliana Weinman. The book follows his life chronologically, tracing his 20-year career in the military, his role in early Fascism, his subsequent rapid rise to a succession of powerful positions, his continuing loyalty to Mussolini after 1943, his arrest in 1945 and, finally, his purge trial and imprisonment on the island of Procida. Based on extensive scholarly research, this book is written in a very accessible,