Title
Exporting Mrs. Consumer: The American Woman in Italian Culture, 1945-1975

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Publication Date
2016

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Exporting Mrs. Consumer:

The American Woman in Italian Culture, 1945-1975

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in History

by

Jessica Lynne Harris

2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exporting Mrs. Consumer:

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by

Jessica Lynne Harris

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Brenda Stevenson, Co-chair

Professor Geoffre W. Symcox, Co-chair

"Exporting Mrs. Consumer: The American Woman in Italian Culture, 1945-1975" examines the development and growth of a mass consumer-based society in Italy after the Second World War. Employing a gendered and transnational approach, the dissertation puts women at the center of the analysis by specifically focusing on American female consumer culture's influence on Italian women's lives from 1945-1975. This study, in contrast to existing literature on the topic, provides a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the models and messages of American female consumer culture in Italy during this period, how they influenced Italian women, and the extent of this culture's influence. Furthermore, the analysis of the intersection of the modern "American woman" (the white middle-class suburban American

housewife), consumerism, and Italian female culture and identities provides new insight into the unique cultural relationship between the United States and Italy following the Second World War.

The American female consumer products and institutions—beauty products, the refrigerator, mass produced ready-to-wear fashion, the department store, and the supermarket—transferred to Italy by American companies and Italian entrepreneurs during this period, introduced new models of behavior and ways of life that promised prosperity, a higher standard of living, and relief from burdensome and tiring daily chores to Italian women seeking to emerge from the suffering they endured during the war. Additionally, they promoted democratic consumer capitalist values—freedom of choice, individualism, abundance, and affluence—that contrasted with Catholic values, such as modesty and religious morality, and Communist values, such as collectivism, equality, and financial morality. As such, the modern "American woman" became a significant figure in Italy's cultural and social contest for the hearts and minds of Italians fought between the Catholic Church and the Italian Communist Party. Overall, American female consumer culture's invasion of postwar Italy challenged Italian notions regarding women's societal roles and transformed the ways in which Italian women from the upper to middle-classes styled themselves and their homes, shopped, and ultimately, how they identified themselves.

The dissertation of Jessica Lynne Harris is approved.

John A. Agnew

Robin David Gibran Kelley

Kathryn Norberg

Brenda Stevenson, Committee Co-chair

Geoffre W. Symcox, Committee Co-chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

To Granny Vee

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for the roles they have played in this project. I would like to thank my committee members Brenda Stevenson, Geoffrey Symcox, Kathryn Norberg, Robin D. G. Kelley, and John A. Agnew for their support, guidance, and the time they have dedicated to this project. Professors Norberg, Kelley, and Agnew gave me invaluable insight, advice, and suggestions. Professors Symcox and Stevenson supported this project from the very beginning and helped shape it into a broader and more diverse narrative. Professor Symcox's personal accounts of being in Italy during the time period under study provided me with important insight into Italian culture at that time, and the stories were also a delight to listen to. I have been working with Professor Stevenson for eight years now, from when I first entered UCLA's Afro-American Studies Master's program. During these eight years, she has been a true mentor and has shaped the scholar that I have become. I cannot thank her enough for this.

I also would like to thank Emanuela Scarpellini for her suggestions and insight into this project. I am also grateful for Manuela Terenzi's assistance with some of the peskier translations of the articles and advertisements.

The research for this project was conducted in Italy, and I am grateful to the archivists and librarians in Milan and Rome who assisted me with my research. In Rome, the staff at the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci helped me with *Noi Donne*. In Milan, the librarians at the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense and the Biblioteca Palazzo Sormani, in particular the *deposito esterno*, helped me with understanding the Italian library system, as well as with my research on the numerous magazines consulted at their libraries. I also am grateful to the archivists, in particular Tiziano Chiesa, and the staff at the Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori in Milan.

Everyone at Bocconi University in Milan where I consulted the Archivio Famiglia Brustio—from the staff at the Welcome Desk who helped me with my ID card to the library director Dr. Marisa Santasiero who authorized my visit and the reproduction of the archival material to the archivists, Tiziana Dassi, Silvia Franz, and Gianmarco Ambrosetti, with whom I worked on a daily basis—were very friendly and accommodating. I am very appreciative for this and their assistance.

I also would like to thank Marco Calini, Silvia Magistrali, and Sonia Orlandi, whom I met and worked with in Milan. Marco retrieved crucial information on Ignis for me and assisted me with receiving authorization to use the Ignis images in the dissertation. Silvia and Sonia, at Rcs Mediagroup, were great in helping me with my research on *Annabella* and with bringing to my attention other archival material that was pertinent to this project and my other scholarly and cultural interests. Marco, Silvia, and Sonia went beyond just assisting me with my research. They were always so welcoming and kind, inviting me to lunch, movies, and even the symphony. They made my time in Milan a very enjoyable experience. I am truly grateful for their kindness and to be able to have them as friends. Grazie mille!

I must mention other people I have met during my graduate studies that have become great friends these past years. Andrew Gomez was always there anytime I needed help, advice, or support. Thank you so much. I would like to thank Giuseppe Betti for showing me his Milan and always taking time out of his busy schedule to meet with me whenever I was in town.

This project would not have been possible without the funding I received from several sources at UCLA. I received the Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship from the Graduate Division; the Quinn Fellowship and a travel research grant from the History Department; the Penny Kanner Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Center for the Study of Women; and a

Summer FLAS Language Grant from the UCLA Center for European and Russian Studies. I would also like to thank the History Department for providing me with funding to present my research at several conferences.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents. They have always been there for me, providing me with guidance and cheering me on in my academic and non-academic pursuits. I would not be where I am today without their unflagging love and support. Thank you, I love you guys so much!

VITA

Jessica Lynne Harris is a doctoral candidate in History at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research interests include the intersection of gender and consumer culture in the United States and Italy after the Second World War. Jessica earned an M.A. in Afro-American Studies and a B.A. in History from UCLA. She has been the recipient of numerous fellowships including UCLA's History Department's Quinn Fellowship, UCLA's Center for the Study of Women's Penny Kanner Dissertation Research Fellowship, and UCLA's Graduate Division's Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellowship.

Introduction

On December 30, 1963, RAI—Italy's national public broadcasting company—aired a television program entitled *Milano così*. Filmed during the Christmas period of that same year, the program presented viewers with images of Milan, the capital of Italy's "economic miracle." Viewers watched the Milanese shopping at department stores, taking a *passeggiata* along the high-end shopping street Via Montenapoleone, and arriving at the prestigious, world renowned opera house La Scala in their finest suits, dresses, jewels, and furs. Viewers also saw Milan's architectural symbol of modernity, Gio Ponti's Pirelli Tower, a skyscraper reaching 407 feet into the sky, as well as the symbols of modern postwar mobility, automobiles, which filled the city's streets.[1]

These images of modernity, affluence, and consumerism were juxtaposed with those of tradition and poverty—ordinary, bleak residential complexes on the city's *periferie* (outskirts) that housed factory workers and the newly arrived immigrants from Southern Italy and the surrounding Lombard countryside, lines of people outside of soup kitchens or waiting for trams, women washing clothes in the city's canals in the Navigli district, and men and women shopping at the local outdoor market stalls, *le bancherelle*, for holiday gifts.

By creating this juxtaposition, *Milano così* depicts a changing society; one that in the span of a decade and a half after the end of the Second World War in 1945 transformed from a primarily rural, agricultural based country physically and emotionally devastated from the war to a modern, industrialized, consumer capitalist one with an increased standard of living, and that

[1] *Milano così*, Tv7, Rai Uno, 30/12/1963, http://www.teche.rai.it/2015/12/natale-a-milano-1963/

would eventually become the fifth largest industrial power in the world.[2] This economic, social, and cultural transformation was so rapid, so great, and so unexpected that it became known as the "economic miracle."

Italy's "economic miracle" lasted from 1958-1963. During this period, Italy's GNP had an annual average increase of 6.3%. The industrial sector's increased production and particularly, exports to other members of the European Economic Community (EEC), were key to this growth. Paul Ginsborg writes, "Above all, exports became the driving sector behind expansion, with an average increase of 14.5 per cent per annum. The effect of the Common Market was clear for all to see: the percentage of Italian goods destined for the EEC countries rose from 23 per cent in 1955 to 29.8 per cent in 1960 and 40.2 per cent in 1965."[3] Italy's per capita income between 1950 and 1970 "grew more rapidly than in any other European country: from a base of 100 in 1950 to 234.1 in 1970, compared to France's increase from 100 to 136 in the same period, and Britain's 100 to 132."[4]

In addition to increased industrial production and rising incomes, other important factors of the "economic miracle" include migration from South to North and from rural to urban areas, the government construction of important infrastructural works, such as highways, and the development of a consumer-based Italian society. In regard to migration, between 1955 and

[2] Spencer M. Di Scala, *Italy From Revolution to Republic: 1700 to the Present, Third Edition* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), 302.

[3] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 214.

[4] Ibid., 239.

1971, 9,140,000 Italians migrated within the country. In Milan, in particular, approximately 70 percent of migrants to the city from 1953-63 were from rural locations.[5]

The "miracle" was not uniform throughout the entire country, with the South not experiencing the same industrial and economic changes, and not reaping the same financial benefits as the North. However, social and cultural changes that accompanied the economic transformation had greater diffusion and indeed did reach the South.

One of the most notable changes in Italy, that is visible in *Milano così*, was the development and growth of a mass consumer-based society. Postwar American financial assistance to and cultural influence on Italy played a large part in this development. Following the end of the war, the rapid expansion of the U.S.'s economy and consumer society, combined with the country's superior position on the world stage, made the United States the ultimate model of mass consumer capitalism. Since a modern society in the postwar period was defined by its mass consumerism, technological innovation, efficiency, higher standard of living, abundance, and prosperity, all of which could be used to describe the U.S. during this period, the country also became the paradigm for modernity.[6] Therefore, the United States was in a position

[5] Ibid., 212-219.

[6] Richard F. Kuisel provides a good explanation of the multifaceted postwar U.S. mass consumer society. He writes "America represented the coming 'consumer society.' This term suggested not just the mass purchase of standardized products of American origins or design such as Kodak cameras or jeans; it also denoted a style of life that encompassed new patterns of spending, higher wage levels, and greater social mobility. It featured new forms of economic organization including different kinds of industrial relations, business management, and markets. And the new consumerism depended on different cultural values. Consumer society suggested a life oriented around acts of purchase and a materialistic philosophy. It valued the productive and the technical and was accompanied by the products of the new mass culture, from Hollywood films and comic strips to home appliances and fast food."

to economically, socially, culturally, and politically influence a Europe devastated by the war and perceived to be vulnerable to Soviet Communist influence.

In Italy, a crucial piece in the Cold War puzzle, the U.S. sought to do exactly this; to shape the country in America's image. The country's strong Communist presence (Italy had the largest Communist party in Western Europe) and its connection to the Soviet Union alarmed U.S. officials, making it necessary for the U.S. to exert a strong influence over Italy as a means of preventing the spread of Communism and the demise of the capitalist, democratic West. As such, the U.S. provided financial assistance, political support to the conservative Christian Democratic Party (DC), and cultural products and models to Italy that represented consumer capitalist democracy.

Financially, Italy received a total of $5.5 billion between 1944 and 1954 from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), in which the U.S. played a leading role, Interim Aid, the Marshall Plan, and Mutual Security military aid.[7] Politically, in the lead up to Italy's crucial 1948 parliamentary elections to determine the composition of its new constituent assembly, the United States supported the DC in order to prevent the Italian Communist Party (PCI) from earning a victory. For example, the U.S. awarded Italy a $100 million export-import loan after DC leader Alcide De Gasperi's visit to the U.S., and American ships that arrived on Italian shores with much needed material goods and food were accompanied

Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3.

[7] D.W. Ellwood, "Italy, Europe and the Cold War: The Politics and Economics of Limited Sovereignty," in *Italy and the Cold War: Politics, Culture, and Society 1948-58*, ed. Christopher Duggan et al. (Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995), 34.

by U.S. Ambassador James Dunn's speeches promoting "America, the Free World, and, by implication, the Christian Democrats."[8] Culturally, American commodities sent to Italy became important devices for articulating American democratic consumer capitalist concepts—individualism, freedom of choice, and prosperity—that contrasted with the Soviet Union's Communist ethos, which included collectivism and material deprivation. The U.S. government played a large role in spreading American culture via agencies, such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the United States Information Agency, which distributed American literature throughout Europe, and funded magazines produced by European intellectuals whose scholarship maintained a pro-American stance.[9] Although not directed by the government, the exportation of American consumer products to Italy also contributed to the development of a consumer-oriented Italian society.

Women were very much at the center of both the point of origin and points of reception of the postwar global spread of American consumer culture. In the U.S. and Italy, women were crucial to the growth and development of their countries' mass consumer societies. However, in the postwar period, especially immediately after the end of fighting, American and Italian women were in completely different positions. In the United States, white middle-class, suburban women, in contrast to minority women and those who lived in the city or in rural areas, were riding the wave of a booming economy and benefiting from a mass consumer society.[10]

[8] Ginsborg, 103, 115.

[9] Francis Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta, 1999).

[10] The federal budget increased "from about $9 billion in 1939 to $100 billion by 1945, elevating the GNP from $91 to $166 billion." Between 1946 and 1960, the GNP more than doubled. Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century:*

These women had the most technologically advanced appliances in their homes, shopped at modern commercial centers, department stores, and supermarkets, and had a disposable income that allowed them to purchase consumer goods that satisfied their individual desires for comfort, leisure, and happiness.

In contrast, the majority of Italian women faced the difficult and daunting challenge of rebuilding their lives and country after a devastating war. In the early postwar period, poverty remained a serious problem in Italy. For example, an early 1950s parliamentary inquiry into poverty in the peninsula revealed that "11.7 per cent of families were housed in shacks, attics, cellars or even caves, and were too poor to afford sugar or meat; 11.6 per cent were in very overcrowded dwellings (with at least three persons per room) and ate very poorly."[11] Although 65.7 per cent of the families did not suffer from this extreme poverty, they still had "on average, two persons per room and spent more than half their income on food. [Additionally,] only a minority of homes benefitted from modern conveniences."[12] Thus, in this period, women's lives were marked by adversity and deprivation. Clearly, the female heads of these families did not enjoy the same suburban comforts as their American counterparts, live in comparable modern residential spaces, or have as varied a diet as the white middle-class American women who shopped at supermarkets. Simply put, they were not the housewives of the American suburbs.

Because of this stark contrast, American female cultural models, ideas, and images assumed primacy in the female consumer cultural aspect of the postwar U.S.-Italy relationship.

Why Commercialism Won in Modern America (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 84, Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), 264.

[11] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 112.

[12] Ibid.

This meant that the modern white middle-class suburban American housewife—Mrs. Consumer, the female representative of U.S. democratic consumer capitalism—became a role model for Italian women. The introduction of products belonging to Mrs. Consumer to Italy, such as technologically advanced domestic appliances and beauty products, as well as the transfer of popular American or American inspired institutions of consumption to the country, such as supermarkets and department stores, had a profound impact on first, upper and upper middle-class Italian women and then, later in the postwar period, on middle and working-class women. The products and institutions challenged traditional and contemporary notions regarding women's social roles and transformed the ways in which these women styled themselves and their homes, shopped, and ultimately, how they identified themselves.

In the dissertation, when discussing Italian women, I am referring to those primarily of the urban upper middle and middle-classes. The primary evidence for, as well as the consumer products and institutions examined in this dissertation—popular weekly women's magazines, the refrigerator, the department store, and beauty products—were targeted at women from these social classes. Italy's growing urban centers, especially those in the North such as Milan, were the first places in the country to undergo the postwar modernization process, including the significant cultural and social transformations that American mass consumer capitalism engendered. Therefore, Italian women living and/or working in the country's main cities were the first to be exposed to the new cultural models and products. Furthermore, they were the first to confront and deal with the challenges and opportunities that American consumer culture created.

The influence that American female consumer culture—its products, images, and models—had on Italian women in the three decades following the end of the Second World War

has not been comprehensively examined in previous studies. Studies either focus on one aspect or sector of influence, such as Hollywood films, fashion, and magazines, or briefly address the topic in conjunction with their examination of the overall American cultural influence in postwar Italy.[13] For example, Stephen Gundle's work *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (2007) examines the intersection of beauty and Italian identity throughout Italy's history. An analysis of the American influence on Italians' ideas regarding beauty occurs in his discussion of the ways in which Hollywood, and in particular its actresses, introduced new beauty ideals to Italy in the early postwar period. The works of Adam Arvidsson and Silvia Cassamagnaghi also

[13] See Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) and *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), Emanuela Scarpellini, *Material Nation: A Consumer's History of Modern Italy*, translated by Daphne Hughes and Andrew Newton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) and *Comprare all'americana: Le origini della rivoluzione commercial in Italia 1945-1971*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001), Nicola White, *Reconstructing Italian Fashion: America and the Development of the Italian Fashion Industry* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese, "Turning Fashion Into Business: The Emergence of Milan as an International Fashion Hub," *The Business History Review* 80: 3 (Autumn, 2006), Maria Chiara Liguori, "La parità si acquista ai grandi magazzini? Boom economico e trasformazione del modello femminile" in *Genere, generazione e consumi. L'Italia degli anni Sessanta*, a cura di Paolo Capuzzo (Roma: Carocci editore, 2003), *Italiamerica. Vol. 1, L'editore*, ed. Emanuela Scarpellini e Jeffrey T. Schnapp (Milano: il Saggiatore, 2008), *Italiamerica, Vol. 2, Il mondo dei media*, ed. Emanuela Scarpellini e Jeffrey T. Schnapp (Milano: il Saggiatore, 2012), Adam Arvidsson, *Marketing Modernity: Italian Advertising from Fascism to postmodernity*, (London: Routledge, 2003), and Silvia Cassamagnaghi, *Immagini dall'America. Mass media e modelli femminili nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra 1945-1960* (Milano, Italy: FrancoAngeli, 2007).

focus on one specific sector of influence—the presence of American culture in postwar popular Italian women's magazines. Arvidsson's *Marketing modernity: Italian Advertising from Fascism to postmodernity* (2003) analyzes advertisements promoting female American consumer modernity in these magazines to illustrate changes in Italian advertising from the Fascist period to the postwar period. Cassamagnaghi's *Immagini dall'America. Mass media e modelli femminili nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra 1945-1960* (2007) examines the appearance of American women, such as political figures like Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce, First Ladies like Mamie Eisenhower, and Hollywood actresses Rita Hayworth, in Italian women's magazines, as well as the articles, investigative reports, and short stories that have the United States and its culture as their topic. These three works highlight important sectors of American cultural influence on postwar Italian women by analyzing the intersection of women, American consumerism, and Italian media, but they do not adequately deal with the messages contained in these images of American female consumer culture and their larger significance in a politically, socially, and culturally polarized Italy.

Emanuela Scarpellini's and Victoria De Grazia's works provide comprehensive overviews of twentieth century Italian (Scarpellini) and European (De Grazia) consumption and American influences on it. Scarpellini, in *Material Nation: A Consumer's History of Italy* (2011) and *Comprare all'americana: Le origini della rivoluzione commerciale in Italia 1945-1971* (2001), analyzes the nature and development of Italian consumerism, and pays particular attention to Italy's post World War II consumer revolution and the crucial role that the United States played in this dramatic transformation. De Grazia, in *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth Century Europe* (2005) examines American consumerism's—its products, models, and ideals—triumph over European bourgeois capitalism in the twentieth

century by looking at specific instances of "triumph" in several countries, such as Germany, France, and Italy. The works by both scholars create a greater understanding of these important changes in Italy and Europe, but they do not use gender as a primary category of analysis. As such, women do not appear in the narratives on a constant basis, and the significant position that women held during this period of change is not fully explored.

These works that address American consumer culture's effect on Italy provide an interesting and useful, yet limited analysis that does not investigate the larger scale and hence, the complexity of the female component of this process of transnational cultural exchange. This dissertation provides a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the products, images, models, and messages of American female consumer culture in Italy from 1945-1975, how they influenced Italian women, the extent of this culture's influence, and its role in Italy's political, cultural, and social struggle between the conservative forces of the Catholic Church and the Christian Democrats, and the leftist Italian Communist Party for the hearts and minds of Italians.

The dissertation examines multiple areas of influence, divided into two categories. First, the models of consumption—American-style shopping at department stores and supermarkets. Second, the actual objects of consumption—magazines, fashion, refrigerators, and beauty products. Looking at the presence and discussion of American female consumer culture in various areas of Italian print media, such as those aimed at women, the domestic appliance trade, and culinary magazines, as well as examining archival material of Italian companies (Arnoldo Mondadori Editore and La Rinascente) that were at the forefront of the country's "economic miracle," illustrates the breadth and complexity of American female consumer culture's presence in postwar Italy. These sources, as well as others examined in the dissertation, lend insight into the effect that this culture had on Italian women in both the public and private spheres.

American female consumer culture entered Italy through various avenues—the print media, films and television, stores, and trade fairs, for example—in the postwar period. Whereas U.S. companies sent their products to Italy, as did cosmetic manufacturers Max Factor and Elizabeth Arden, Italian entrepreneurs also played an important role in bringing American consumer culture to Italy and introducing it to Italian women. The dissertation highlights the concerted efforts of Italian entrepreneurs Arnoldo Mondadori, founder and owner of Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Umberto and Cesare Brustio and Aldo Borletti of La Rinascente, and Giovanni Borghi of Ignis to modernize their companies and products according to American standards and models. These men actively sought out American consumer modernity and technology, traveling to the United States to research the latest developments in the publishing, retail, and domestic appliance sectors, as well as wisely positioning themselves to benefit from the deluge of postwar American financial aid. By bringing American consumer culture to Italy, they played an important part in prompting significant social, cultural, and economic changes in their country.

This transnational transfer of models and products, and the entrepreneurs' actions, points to an important topic in studies on the global diffusion of American culture in the twentieth century: the power of American cultural products and models, and the extent of "Americanization." Many studies explore how the receiving countries responded to American culture's invasion in order to understand if a complete process of "Americanization" did indeed occur. On one side, scholars discuss the spread of U.S. culture in imperialistic terms, contending that American culture was an all-consuming, overwhelming power that dictated the likes, dislikes, and norms of the local population. For example, De Grazia's *Irresistible Empire* employs an informal imperial framework and the term Market Empire to demonstrate how

America through culture, rather than through foreign policy and military actions, transformed Europeans' consumption habits and way of life. She argues that America's hegemony over Europe derived from its consumer society. It was the Market Empire's modern consuming practices that successfully challenged and defeated old European bourgeois consumption patterns and commercial civilization. Thus, the spread of American-style consumerism to Europe provided for the country's dominant global position throughout the twentieth century.

De Grazia contends that the Market Empire "ruled by the pressure of its markets, the persuasiveness of its models, and if relatively little by sheer force of arms in view of its wide power, very forcefully by exploiting the peaceableness of its global project in a century marked by others' as well as its own awful violence."[14] This informal empire had five main components which contributed to its success: the belief in other nations' "limited sovereignty over their public space," the simultaneous spread of American civil society and consumer products, "the power of norms-making," the promotion of democracy and sociability through consumption, and its peaceableness, the ability to engage in war without militarism.[15]

On the other side, scholars argue that the reality was more complex and that locals were not doormats, but rather had an active role in accepting what they liked and rejecting what they did not like. Rob Kroes, in *Cultural Transmission and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe* (1993), focuses on the European reception of American culture, using the concept of creolization as a way to understand this process. He argues that while American culture did engender a change in European society, the "receivers of American cultural forms adapted them

[14] De Grazia, 3.

[15] Ibid., 6-9.

to meet their own needs" resulting in the Europeanisation of American products.[16] This method of cultural appropriation is a more suitable descriptive since Europeans were less likely to be steam rolled over by American culture and were more likely to appropriate aspects that they found appealing. Therefore, understanding "Americanization" as a mediation, as he suggests, rather than a totalizing process allows for a complex analysis of the reception of American culture.[17]

The dissertation's discussion of the Italian entrepreneurs Umberto and Cesare Brustio and Aldo Borletti, and Giovanni Borghi provides evidence for the latter argument. As enthusiastic as these men were for American consumer modernity, they recognized that an exact replica of the American model of the refrigerator or department store was not suitable for the Italian market due to important social, cultural, and economic differences between the U.S. and Italy. Therefore, the Brustios and Borletti, and Borghi adapted the American model, using the best and most appropriate aspects and discarding those that did not fit the Italian context. American consumer culture's arrival in Italy, facilitated by these men's and other entrepreneurs' actions, did not result in a complete "Americanization" of Italian society and culture, but rather an "Italianization" of American culture.

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[16] Rob Kroes, "Americanisation: What Are We Talking About?," in *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe,* ed. Rob Kroes et al. (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), ix.

[17] For more on Europe's appropriation of American culture see Richard Pells, "American Culture Abroad: The European Experience Since 1945," in *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe* and *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

Another important group of actors in this study are the Italian and American women themselves. Although their actual voices are not present in this narrative, the debates, articles, and advice regarding Italian women's acceptance and adoption of American cultural models in the magazines and archival material analyzed, shows that women had just as an important role in Italy's postwar transformation as did the Italian entrepreneurs and the American companies who brought American culture to Italy. With their purchasing power as consumers, women were the ones who had perhaps the most power in determining the ultimate success and failure of American female consumer culture in postwar Italy.

In examining the period 1945-1975, this dissertation goes beyond the typical time frame of most studies dealing with the postwar American cultural influence on Italy and/or the postwar development of a mass consumer-oriented Italy, which end their analyses at or around 1965. While Italy's "economic miracle" took place from 1958, the first moments of significant change in the country's GDP and of increased industrial production, to 1962/63, the first instances of a resurgence of Northern industrial worker protests, it is important to investigate the place of American female consumer culture in Italian women's lives after the "miracle," especially in light of important social, cultural, and economic events that occurred at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. These include the continuation and growth of factory workers' struggles, as well as the rise of protest movements—the student and women's movements—that called into question the values of consumerism and the lifestyle it had promoted and created for Italians. The oil and energy crises and stagflation of the 1970s, that marked the end of rapid economic growth and a society built around consumerism, are other important events of this period. Extending the chronological span allows one to see the changing nature of Mrs. Consumer's image and message in Italian society throughout the late 40s, 50s, 60s, and early 70s.

The three decades after the war in Italy were also a time of an intense domestic political, social, and cultural struggle for influence over Italians fought between the Catholic Church and the DC on one side, and the PCI on the other. The invasion of American culture in Italy beginning in the 1950s posed a significant threat to these groups' influence in Italian society. Furthermore, this presence, along with U.S. financial aid and political support, transformed this internal struggle into an international Cold War battle with potentially important global implications. While numerous studies have examined the role that American culture had in this internal conflict, very few have analyzed the role of American female consumer culture.[18] The dissertation considers this important aspect of Italy's cultural Cold War by analyzing Communist and Catholic positions on Mrs. Consumer and her products in Italy that were put forth in each group's popular periodicals. Further, the study puts these positions in conversation with each other, highlighting areas of agreement and disagreement between the two groups, and illustrating the ways in which Communists and Catholics responded to this threat to their desired hegemony over Italians.

The dissertation is structured in three parts. The first part—Chapters One and Two—explores the transfer of models of American consumption to Italy and the significant role that Italian entrepreneurs played in this process. Chapter One "Modernize and Americanize: Rebuilding the Mondadori Publishing Company's Magazine Division in Post World War II Italy" examines the postwar reconstruction and modernization of the magazine division of one of

[18] Both *Nemici per la pelle: Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. Pier Paolo D'Attore (Milano, Italy: FrancoAngeli, 1991) and Gundle's *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991* contain some information on the role of the "American woman" in Italy's Cold War struggle.

Italy's top publishing companies, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore. This division published the most popular Italian weekly women's magazine in the postwar period, *Grazia: un'amica al vostro fianco*. Arnoldo Mondadori's strategy for making his company, including its magazine division, one of the leading publishing houses in postwar Italy consisted of modernizing the publication production process and the magazines themselves along American lines. For the production process, Mondadori bought the latest, most technologically advanced printing machines from the U.S. with Marshall Plan funds. For the magazines' layout and content, he took numerous trips to the U.S., both alone and with his son Giorgio, to scout American publishing companies. Additionally, he established an office in New York, with an Italian woman as head of the office, Natalia Danesi Murray, to facilitate the development of relationships with these companies. The most important aspect of Mondadori's strategy was his courting of the U.S. Ambassador to Italy, Clare Boothe Luce (1953-1956), and her world famous publishing tycoon husband, Henry R. Luce, head of Time Inc., which published the groundbreaking *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines.

These interactions with the American publishing world modernized and Americanized, to Mondadori's specifications, the company and its periodicals. For example, the magazines' layouts resembled that of their American counterparts and their content was pro-American, containing positive features on the U.S.'s democratic consumer capitalist society. This layout and content resemblance was true for Mondadori's *Grazia*, which highlighted the best of American female consumer culture in its articles, advertisements, and photo spreads. Therefore, Mondadori's actions facilitated the transfer of female consumer cultural products and models from the U.S. to Italy, laying the foundation for changes to Italian women's cultural and social identities.

Chapter Two "La Rinascente: A Symbol of Postwar Italian Rebirth with American Roots" explores the presence of American retail models in the postwar reconstruction and modernization of *the* Italian department store, La Rinascente. The department store was a site of consumption that had women at the center; they were the main customers, as well as the primary employees. In this sense, this commercial institution was indeed a "ladies' paradise."[19] The chapter provides an in depth look at the reconstruction of La Rinascente's flagship store located in Milan's Piazza del Duomo. In 1943, this store, along with much of Milan, was nearly destroyed by Allied bombing. La Rinascente's managers, Umberto and Cesare Brustio and Aldo Borletti, like Mondadori, used the U.S., in particular its modern department stores, as the source of inspiration and as a model for rebuilding the Milan store. They incorporated multiple characteristics of the department stores they visited during a research trip to the U.S. taken in the fall of 1948 into the newly rebuilt store. These characteristics included interior design schemes, exterior decorative and architectural styles, department layouts, and modern technology, such as air conditioning and the escalator, all coming from the U.S. They also implemented a new customer service method they observed in the U.S.—"going to the customer"—or in other words, putting the customer first and catering to her every need.

American influence did not solely exist in the store's layout, interior decorations, and exterior appearance, but in the products for sale as well. La Rinascente prominently featured American merchandise, including American cosmetics and the latest, most modern trend in fashion—American designed and inspired mass produced ready-to-wear garments. The Brustios

[19] The term "ladies' paradise" comes from Émile Zola's 1883 book "The Ladies' Paradise" which takes place in a mid to late nineteenth-century French department store inspired by Paris's famous Le Bon Marché.

and Borletti were responsible for bringing American consumer products to Italian women and teaching them how to *comprare all'americana* (to shop the American way), in effect transforming Italian women's shopping bags and experiences.

La Rinascente's directors incorporated these American aspects, but combined it with Italian "intuition and taste," maintaining a certain *italianità* (Italian character) and making the store appealing to Italian preferences. The directors' adaptations of the modern American department store resulted in La Rinascente's financial success in the postwar period, rendering the store one of the postwar Italian symbols of rebirth—a symbol that had American consumer modernity at its core.

The dissertation's second part—Chapters Three and Four—looks at the chief U.S. commodities at the heart of postwar Italian consumer culture, namely the refrigerator and cosmetics. It analyzes the products' messages and models promoted to Italian women, as well as their influence on Italian women's lives and identities. Chapter Three "The Arrival of Modernity and Tradition: The Refrigerator and Italian Women in the Postwar Period" serves as a bridge between parts one and two of the dissertation. Examining the arrival and diffusion of the refrigerator, an American invention, in Italy, the chapter discusses the efforts of Giovanni Borghi, head of the Italian domestic appliance company Ignis, to bring American modernity to his company and its refrigerators. The chapter also analyzes the refrigerator's impact on the relationship between Italian women, the home, and food.

The first refrigerators in Italy were American exports that were made in the U.S. and designed for American homes. Thus, they were very expensive and too large for Italian homes' much smaller culinary spaces. Only wealthy Italians were able to purchase this bulky and costly luxury. Recognizing that the American model's size and price placed the device beyond the

grasp of the majority of Italians, Borghi, as well as other Italian refrigerator manufacturers, adapted the device to fit the Italian context. They reduced the refrigerator's size and made it more compact, so as to fit Italy's smaller, less roomy kitchens, and reduced the price, so as to be affordable for Italian incomes that, although on the rise, were still lower than American earnings. In so doing, Borghi and other manufacturers democratized these luxury consumer items, making them affordable to a broader range of Italians.

The refrigerator's arrival in Italy in the mid-1950s forever changed the way women shopped for food, their traditional food preparation habits, and their domestic kitchens. While these changes occurred, bringing Italian women into a modern and technologically advanced world, refrigerator advertisements, articles on the device in the popular press and industry magazines, and publicity material that spoke to women's relationship with the appliance, did not always promote modern and progressive female societal roles. Instead, the messages and images contained in this material promoted the image of the "angel of the hearth," the traditional *casalinga* (housewife), who was dedicated to the home, to being a mother and wife, and nothing else. In this manner, the refrigerator assisted in reinforcing Catholic and Fascist notions promoting traditional gender roles that tied women to the home.

Chapter Four "'The American Way of Life' in Print: Beauty Culture in the Italian Women's Magazine *Annabella*, 1945-1975" investigates one of the most noticeable changes to Italian women's physical appearance in the postwar period: the increased use of beauty products—lipstick, face powder, nail polish, and various types of eye makeup. In Fascist Italy, cosmetics were looked down upon by the regime and the Catholic Church, and makeup use was limited, being primarily worn by the rebellious "Modern Girls" who wanted to create a modern personality for themselves, and women of ill-repute, who applied makeup in much heavier doses

to indicate their chosen profession. However, after the Second World War, wearing makeup became an important component of Italians' idea of beauty. As such, makeup use spread throughout Italy's social classes and became a necessary requirement for any woman who wanted to be seen as being beautiful and modern.

The flood of American cosmetics into postwar Italy contributed to this significant change in beauty ideals and makeup use. Beauty products from American companies, such as Max Factor, Elizabeth Arden, and Revlon, made up the majority of cosmetics in postwar Italy and thus, had a primary role in influencing Italians' notions of beauty. Italian women encountered the new, American influenced image of beauty in popular weekly women's magazines, which themselves experienced great growth and popularity following the war. Articles, beauty columns, and advertisements spelled out what beauty was for readers and "schooled" them in how to achieve the American influenced Italian beauty ideal. In analyzing beauty product advertisements from one of the most popular women's magazines of the period, *Annabella*, the chapter articulates the components of this ideal and illustrates how these notions broke with traditional ideas of Italian beauty. Moreover, the chapter also examines how this new ideal promoted democratic consumer capitalist values—freedom of choice, individualism, and affluence—that stood in stark contrast to Communist values and their perceived threat to the democratic, capitalist West.

The final part of the dissertation—Chapter Five—examines American consumer culture's implications for Italy's internal social and cultural struggle between the PCI and the Catholic Church. Chapter Five "*Noi Donne* and *Famiglia Cristiana*: Communists, Catholics, and American Female Culture in Cold War Italy" looks at how two prominent magazines, the Communist women's magazine *Noi Donne* and the Catholic family magazine *Famiglia*

Cristiana, reacted to and dealt with the growing presence of American female consumer culture, specifically that of beauty, entertainment and celebrity, and shopping, in their readers' lives. *Noi Donne* and *Famiglia Cristiana* made sense of the changes for their readers and advised them on the "proper" path to modernity according to their specific ideological orientations.

The immense popularity of American consumer culture among Italian women represented a significant threat to Communist and Catholic influences on them. Both groups feared this popularity would lead to the decline in their own popularity and authority in Italian society, making them irrelevant in an increasingly modernizing society. The threat was so great that the social and cultural fight for the hearts and minds of Italians became a three-way struggle between the Communists, Catholics, and American consumer culture, with American consumer modernity assuming the position of primary enemy of the two Italian groups. As threatening as this new culture was to Communist and Catholic hegemony, neither *Noi Donne* nor *Famiglia Cristiana* completely rejected American female consumer culture. Instead, both publications incorporated its products, messages, and images into their pages, mediating them through Communist and Catholic lenses in order to make them suitable for readers. Therefore, the two magazines promoted a modern, consuming Italian woman who still represented core Communist or Catholic beliefs.

American consumer culture's arrival in postwar Italy prompted significant social and cultural changes in Italy, as is presented in *Milano così*. For Italian women, American female consumer products and models profoundly affected their lives and identities in this period. By examining the intersection of American female consumer culture, domestic (Italian) and international Cold War politics, and Italian women, the dissertation offers new insight into the

cultural, political, and economic relationship between the United States and Italy, and how that relationship affected Italy's development and its citizens after the Second World War.

Chapter 1

Modernize and Americanize: Rebuilding the Mondadori Publishing Company's Magazine Division in Post World War II Italy

On a foggy autumn day in 1960, nine smiling and well-dressed Italian correspondents for the Italian weekly women's magazine *Grazia* posed for a picture on Radio City Music Hall's sixty-fifth floor panoramic terrace. The group, consisting of editors, photographers, and stylists, were in New York on assignment for the magazine. The product of their trip was a special issue released in November of the same year dedicated to the United States and its most famous and most modern city, New York. In the letter from the editor, Renato Olivieri trumpeted the 190-page issue calling it the most exceptional issue ever seen with special features on the middle-class American family (which Olivieri claimed was the first one in the world done in this manner), New York fashion, and the American woman's beauty routine.[1]

It was through special issues of women's Italian magazines, such as this one, and special editorial features on the American woman and her lifestyle that Italian women encountered American culture and the "American way of life" in the decades following the Second World War. Women's periodicals brought American female culture to their Italian readership on a weekly basis. They contained sections on domestic advice, entertainment news, short stories, fashion, and other popular culture items that editors and society deemed relevant for women. As a result, they brought public and private spheres together and fostered the bond between women

[1] *Grazia*, 13 novembre 1960.

and consumerism.[2] These publications' emphasis on consumer culture combined with features on American women's lifestyles played a crucial role in creating new definitions for Italian women's domestic and feminine culture in postwar Italy.

One of the most popular women's magazines in the three decades following the war was *Grazia: un'amica al vostro fianco*. Launched in 1938 by Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, the magazine's main intention was to socially and culturally inform the middle-class woman—to be a friend at the reader's side (as the periodical's title states, *un'amica al vostro fianco*) guiding her through late 1930s Italy. The outbreak of war in 1939 forced *Grazia*'s suspension until 1946 when it returned to newsstands following the end of fighting.[3] A modified guiding intention accompanied the revived publication: to "bring [Italian women] to discover the new modernity as enjoyed by American women with their luxury cars, televisions in every house, big supermarkets and futuristic household appliances."[4] The new American modernity displayed in *Grazia*'s contents reflects founder and owner Arnoldo Mondadori's vision to make his company and its publication the most modern, popular, and successful in the Italian peninsula by looking overseas for inspiration.

[2] Gisella Bochicchio and Rosanna De Longis, *La stampa periodica femminile in Italia: Repertorio 1861-2009* (Roma: Biblink editori, 2010), 20.

[3] *Album Mondadori 1907/2007* (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editori S.p.A., 2007), 169 and Mondadori History, http://www.mondadori.com/Group/History

[4] Mondadori History.

During the postwar period, modernization and Americanization were synonymous.[5] Consequently, Mondadori viewed the American publishing industry as the standard by which all publishing houses should be judged. The advanced technology and modern techniques of distribution, advertising, and subscription services that periodicals such as *Time, Life,* and *Reader's Digest* used served as a model for the postwar reconstruction of the firm's magazine division. Mondadori made a concentrated effort to rebuild, modernize, and Americanize his company and its magazines, including *Grazia*.

This effort consisted of several strategies: buying the most advanced publishing and printing technology to be used in his production facilities, partaking in trips to the United States to scout the American publishing industry, establishing an office in New York, cultivating relationships with American publishing houses, and most importantly, courting the powerful American publisher, Henry R. Luce, founder of *Time, Life,* and *Fortune* magazines, and his wife, Clare Boothe Luce, U.S. Ambassador to Italy. Taking into account Henry Luce's strong belief that the United States should spread democracy and free enterprise as it assumed the role of world leaders of the 20th century, and Ambassador Luce's fervent anti-Communism position, the last component of this strategy, courting the Luces, put Mondadori publications at the center of Italy's cultural Cold War. As such, Mondadori's publications became vehicles for promoting the U.S. and its consumer capitalist democracy.

Modeling his magazines, both in the production phase and in the finished product, on American periodicals, Arnoldo Mondadori played a key role in bringing postwar America and its

[5] Pier Paolo D'Attore, "Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea," in *Nemici per la pelle: Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. Pier Paolo D'Attore (Milano, Italy: FrancoAngeli, 1991), 28.

culture to Italy. As a result, female readers of his publications, especially that of *Grazia*, were exposed to the modern "American way of life" and the consumer products, abundance, and prosperity it entailed. This exposure prompted changes that transformed postwar Italian female culture.

Mondadori History

In 1907, Arnoldo Mondadori, at the age of 18, began working in the publishing industry in the town of Ostiglia located in Italy's wealthy Lombardy region. Working with a small group of publishers, he published *Luce! Giornale Popolare Istruttivo* (*Light! Educative Popular Journal).* Mondadori published his first book in 1912, which was then followed by the creation of the company's "first book series, *La Lampada*," and the publishing of school textbooks.[6] Following the First World War, Mondadori moved the company's headquarters to Milan in 1919 and established a printing plant in San Nazaro di Verona. As a result of this move and the recent publication of several new magazines that were more dynamic and innovative than his competitors', the company became a significant presence in the Italian publishing industry. Mondadori continued to achieve success in the 1920s by publishing works of several important Italian writers, such as Gabriele D'Annunzio and Luigi Pirandello. Furthermore, the establishment of *Mondadori Gialli,* the detective series after which an entire genre was named, also brought recognition and success to the company.[7]

[6] Mondadori History

[7] The *Gialli Mondadori* book covers were yellow hence the name *gialli*, which means yellow in Italian. In Italy, detective stories, both literary and film/TV, are known as *gialli*.

Despite restrictions imposed by the Fascist regime regarding the publication of foreign works, Mondadori was still able to expand and internationalize his company. He established book series, such as *Medusa* and *Omnibus*, which published works by foreign authors. For example, *Gone with the Wind* was one of the novels released in Italy under the Mondadori label. Additionally, Mondadori signed an agreement with Walt Disney in 1935 to be the exclusive Italian publisher of Disney cartoons. These actions brought American culture to Italians living in a controlling and repressive regime that restricted its citizens' access to foreign culture.[8]

The outbreak of war disrupted company operations. Bombing raids in Milan forced Mondadori to move his company from the city. Eventually, the company had to stop production and Arnoldo and his family were forced to move to Switzerland when the Fascist regime requisitioned the new headquarters and editorial offices in September 1943. Arnoldo Mondadori fully committed to modernizing and Americanizing his company after the end of fighting. In 1945, he returned to Milan and took back ownership of his company. Soon he began to strategize on ways to bring Mondadori back to and even surpass the prominence and success it enjoyed before the Second World War.[9]

Mondadori's Strategy: The Marshall Plan and American Technology

Mondadori set out to make his company, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, the leading Italian publishing firm by modeling the company's organization as well as its magazines' layout,

[8] Mondadori History.

[9] Ibid.

design, and content on American editorial firms and their products. Accordingly, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore underwent a process of modernization and Americanization.

Mondadori took advantage of postwar U.S. financial support to rebuild and modernize his company and its publications. The United States' newly acquired financial and military strength and Europe's dramatically weakened position allowed the U.S. to assume the leading role in European reconstruction. U.S. financial support towards European recovery had actually begun during the war with the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in 1943 and continued after the war's end. Although UNRRA involved contributions from multiple countries, the U.S. was the largest contributor.[10] Italy was one of the main recipients of UNRRA funds. For example, in 1946, the country received a grant of $450 million that "provided seventy percent of Italian food imports and forty percent of fuel." It also included "substantial proportions of farm, industrial, and medical imports" as well as coal and cotton supplies.[11] These early grants to Europe appeared to have a positive effect as countries, such as Britain and France, recovered quickly. However, the harsh winter of 1947 halted this recovery. The resulting economic downturn combined with widespread hoarding, severe unrest, and Communist challenges engendered serious concern among United States' political and military officials regarding Western Europe's ability to defend itself against a Communist seizure of power. A State Department document from 1947 illustrates the fear of a financially and socially devastated Europe being a ripe setting for the Soviet Union to spread its influence and power through Western Europe and across the Atlantic Ocean to the U.S.:

[10] John Killick, *The United States and European Reconstruction, 1945-1960* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), 46.

[11] Ibid., 48.

> The staff does not see Communist activities as the root of the present difficulties in Western Europe. It believes the crisis in large part results from the disruptive effect of the war on the economic, political, and social structure of Europe…The planning staff recognizes that the Communists are exploiting the European crisis and that further Communist successes would create serious danger to American security.[12]

Therefore, the European Recovery Program, more commonly known as the Marshall Plan, was signed into law by the U.S. Congress on April 3, 1948. The government's goal in providing financial support to Europe was to create both industrial and moral recovery. Merely than just supplying actual money, the Marshall Plan provided much needed goods to ailing countries in order to restore Western Europeans' confidence in their respective governments and thus halt Communism's spread. Moreover, the monetary grants and supplies given to Europe by the U.S. were not only significant in getting Europe back on its feet but also in spreading American culture and consumer products to the old continent.

During the four-year period, 1948-1951, in which the Marshall Plan operated, Italy received just over $1.2 billion.[13] This amount was used on industrial, agriculture, rail, and public works projects in addition to food and other critical supplies. Marshall Plan funds were also "supplemented by private donations," which were often "immigrant remittances and private capital."[14] The funding Italy received was part of a larger political and ideological battle between the U.S. and the Communist threat posed by the Soviet Union. D.W. Ellwood asserts that the Marshall Plan "aimed to get as close as possible to the people it was benefitting in order to change attitudes, mentalities, and expectations in the direction of modernization as the

[12] Sylvia Jukes Morris, *Price of Fame: The Honorable Clare Boothe Luce* (New York: Random House, 2014), Kindle edition.

[13] Killick.

[14] Ibid., 119.

Americans understood it."[15] In this case, modernization meant an American style consumer society—strong industry, prosperity, abundance, and a higher standard of living; very distinct characteristics from Communist society. Furthermore, they were characteristics that the Arnoldo Mondadori Editore and its magazines came to embody as the company began rebuilding after the Second World War.

Mondadori's postwar reconstruction and modernization began with a $750,000 Marshall Plan grant which initiated the company's Americanization that lasted well beyond the Plan's four-year life span. The money was used to buy modern printing machines manufactured in the United States, such as the five-color rotogravure by Hoe and Cottrell.[16] In a letter to Kay Kamen, exclusive licensing representative for the Walt Disney company,[17]Arnoldo Mondadori informed him of the new technology soon to be arriving at the company's plants:

> We are planning now an enormous project for re-edification of our plants in Verona with American manufactured machines according to the projects which Giorgio studied during his visit to the U.S.A. A' propos, let me thank you very much for your precious help in that circumstance.
>
> We intend coming to U.S.A. toward the end of this year, that is when all machines we ordered will be ready for shipment.[18]

[15] D.W. Ellwood, "Italy, Europe and the Cold War: The Politics and Economics of Limited Sovereignty," in *Italy and the Cold War: Politics, Culture, and Society 1948-58*, ed. Christopher Duggan et al. (Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995), 34

[16] *Album Mondadori 1907/2007*, 236.

[17] Filmic Light, Snow White Archive, http://filmic-light.blogspot.com/2011/01/kay-kamen-growth-of-disneyana.html

[18] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori*, fasc. Walt Disney, Arnoldo Mondadori a Kay Kamen, Milan, 19th January 1949,

Despite the termination of Marshall Plan funding, the Mondadori Company continued to purchase and utilize the most technologically advanced machines from the United States in their printing operations. In the early 1960s, the company acquired another Cottrell rotary press and by 1963 Mondadori's factory in Verona featured new, modern machines, many of which came from the U.S. These included the Sheraton binder, the ULTRA MAN VII offset feeder, Sheridan-Smith chain for packaging volumes, and Sheridan harvesting machines.[19] In 1974, the Cameron Book Production System, also coming from the U.S., was established in the company's factory in Cles, in the province of Trento.[20] Modern printing machines were not the only pieces of advanced American technology to be found in Mondadori plants. Air conditioning was installed in the plant in San Michele after Arnoldo's son, Giorgio, took note of the cooling system during his first scouting trip of the American publishing industry in 1948.[21] United States financial aid facilitated the company's acquisition of American products which became one of the key steps in Mondadori's modernization and Americanization.

Mondadori's use of American machines and the considerable effect it had on the company's operations, organization, and products reflected a general trend in postwar Italy among industries that received financial aid from the United States. As Vera Zamagni has demonstrated in her works, monetary support of Italian industries and infrastructural development engendered mass consumerism in Italy and entailed American cultural influence. Zamagni argues that the American presence in Italy "succeeded in changing the structure of the Italian economy in the fields of production and management" making it resemble the United

[19] *Album Mondadori 1907/2007*, 396-397.

[20] Ibid., 492.

[21] Ibid., 339.

States.[22] Following the war, "state-owned enterprises and the largest quasi-monopolistic private companies," such as FIAT, Edison, and Montecatini, were the first to use Marshall Plan money to transform the operations of their plants. Because of this, the plants' technology and operations were no longer unstandardized and de-specialized, and as a result production began to increase.[23] In many cases, Italian firms used American technology to invigorate the production process. Furthermore, the adoption of American management practices, such as hire purchase, market research, job evaluation, work incentives, and productivity bonuses also had this same effect by making production more efficient, thereby allowing for the rapid production and increased output of products.[24] And as Penny Sparke illustrates in "Industrial Design or Industrial Aesthetics?: American Influence on the Emergence of the Italian Modern Design Movement, 1948-58," as factories adopted modern American techniques, it affected the commodities being produced. Products such as Olivetti typewriters, coffee machines, and scooters had designs that "recalled the idea of American streamlining."[25] In Mondadori's case, the firm's magazines resembled the most popular American magazines in their design. For example, its magazine *Epoca*, which was first published in 1950, became the first Italian magazine to use the illustrated

[22] Vera Zamagni, "American Influence on the Italian Economy (1948-58)," in *Italy and the Cold War: Politics, Culture, and Society 1948-58*, ed. Christopher Duggan et al. (Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995), 77.

[23] Ibid., 78.

[24] Ibid., 86.

[25] Penny Sparke, "Industrial Design or Industrial Aesthetics?: American Influence on the Emergence of the Italian Modern Design Movement, 1948-1958," in *Italy and the Cold War: Politics, Culture, and Society 1948-58*, ed. Christopher Duggan et al. (Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers Limited, 1995), 161.

journalism technique popularized by *Look* and *Life* magazines.[26] Therefore, investment in Mondadori and other Italian companies and their factories made American culture, in the form of industrial models and products, a growing part of Italian society.

Mondadori's Strategy: *Andiamo in America!*[27]

Traveling to the United States to observe American publishing companies in their daily operations was another way in which Arnoldo Mondadori brought American culture to Italy. A total of six trips were taken by either Arnoldo or his son, Giorgio, in the three decades following the end of the war. The first visit to the U.S. by a Mondadori representative occurred in 1948 when Giorgio visited the Walt Disney Company and the offices of *Reader's Digest*. In addition to reestablishing contact with Disney and signing an agreement for Mondadori to publish the Italian version of *Reader's Digest* (*Selezione*)[28], Giorgio was also tasked with purchasing

[26] Mondadori History.

[27] Let's Go to America!

[28] *Selezione* first appeared on Italian newsstands in 1948. The magazine, from its articles to advertisements, promoted the "American way of life." Chiara Campo argues in "L'America in salotto: *Il Reader's Digest* in Italia" that the periodical was a "spokesman and interpreter of middle-class Americanism" which "made it the ideal tool for the diplomacy of ideas." Since Italy was an important piece in the Cold War political puzzle, *Selezione* played a significant role in bringing its readers, who were primarily women, away from the Communist threat and closer towards the prosperity and abundance of the United States. Campo concludes that "if *Selezione*'s task was to Americanize its readers, one has to conclude that the purpose was reached: the middle-class (certainly not only for the role played by the magazine) was not only the protagonist of the consumerism boom, but also the first supporters of the alliance with the United States, the most tenacious adversary of the Communists." Chiara Campo, "L'America

printing machines for magazines and bound volumes.[29] The year after, Arnoldo made his first trip to the United States with the goal of making direct contact with editorial houses and learning more about their managerial organization and production process. Mondadori would transport the knowledge he acquired to Italy and implement it in his offices and plants.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Arnoldo and Giorgio continued to visit American agencies, acquire American machines, and establish agreements regarding the exchange of material, such as magazine features and book series, between Mondadori and the American companies.[30] During these trips, the two gained important firsthand knowledge of the American industry by establishing relationships with the country's top publishing companies. This achievement proved to be a significant factor in Mondadori's role in facilitating the arrival and spread of American culture in postwar Italy.

Mondadori also established an office in New York City, positioning his company closer to its American counterparts that he so admired and strove to emulate. The person in charge of creating and solidifying bonds between Mondadori and American publishers was Natalia Danesi Murray, head of the New York office. The communications between Arnoldo Mondadori and Danesi Murray reveal the concerted effort they both made to acquire knowledge and information on the American industry and the country's culture, which would be utilized in the company's operations in Italy and featured in their publications.

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in salotto: *Il Reader's Digest* in Italia," in *Nemici per la pelle: Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. Pier Paolo D'Attore (Milano, Italy: FrancoAngeli, 1991), 426.

[29] *Album Mondadori 1907/2007*, 236.

[30] The Mondadoris traveled to the United States in 1954, 1960, 1964, and 1969.

Natalia Danesi Murray played a key role in Americanizing Mondadori magazines and bringing the "American way of life" to their readers. She was born in 1901 in Rome to Giulio Danesi, the owner, along with his brother, of a "studio and printing plant in Rome specializing in photographic reproductions" and Ester Danesi, an essayist and journalist, who occasionally had her pieces published.[31] Ester's temporary career status changed when Giulio suddenly passed away at the age of thirty-seven in 1915. In response, Natalia's mother embraced the responsibility of maintaining her family's bourgeois lifestyle by utilizing her journalistic talents to earn money on a regular basis. Ester became an accomplished journalist and intellectual, "[giving] lectures, [promoting] women's causes, and [taking] part in cultural activities sponsored by public arts councils and private clubs."[32] Working for the newspaper *Il Messaggero* during the First World War, Ester became the first Italian female war correspondent to visit the front. In 1919, she founded the women's magazine *La Donna*, which contained information on women's causes and culture.[33] Ester gave her daughter her first experience in the publishing industry by letting her collaborate on some of her projects.[34] Thus, it was Ester who exposed Natalia to Italy's journalistic and literary worlds.

After moving to New York with her new husband in the 1920s, the American agent and music critic, William B. Murray, having a son, getting a divorce, and returning to Rome in the 1930s, Natalia Danesi Murray was able to utilize the experience she had when working with her

[31] William Murray, *Janet, My Mother, and Me: A Memoir of Growing Up with Janet Flanner and Natalia Danesi Murray* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 49-50.

[32] Ibid., 51.

[33] Ibid., 51.

[34] Ibid., 59.

mother to gain employment in the press field during the Second World War. Danesi Murray was first employed by NBC radio news to work on programs that were sent to Italy. In 1944, she became the Director of the Office of War Information's press bureau in Rome reporting on the conditions in war torn Italy. The following year Danesi Murray became head of the United States Information Service's (USIS) Special Projects Division in Rome.[35] These positions placed her in the center of the United States' wartime propaganda machine which ardently and zealously promoted democracy and the idea of freedom to choose to Western Europeans fighting against totalitarian regimes. More importantly, her time working for the U.S. government made her aware of the cultural techniques and strategies that could be employed to combat the perceived Communist threat and culture's important role in achieving this same goal.

While working as a freelance correspondent in Italy after the war, Danesi Murray was offered a significant position in the Mondadori Company. This new role would make her a crucial figure in bringing American-style consumer capitalist democracy to Italians. Having just decided to open an office in New York City, Arnoldo Mondadori asked her to be the head of his new outpost. She had previously worked with Arnoldo before the Second World War, helping him to secure the rights to Gabriele D'Annunzio's works. Once again, Mondadori was entrusting her with carrying out a crucial step in his company's development. This time it concerned its postwar reconstruction, modernization, and Americanization. Danesi Murray accepted the offer and began work in the New York office in 1951.

[35] *Janet Flanner and Natalia Danesi Murray Papers: A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress*, (Washington, D.C.: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, 1996 Revised 2010 April), 4.

Arnoldo Mondadori assigned Natalia Danesi Murray the specific tasks of scouting the American publishing industry and establishing relationships with its firms. The work she completed on his behalf would go towards making Mondadori "Italy's most important and largest publisher of books and magazines" as well as its most modern and Americanized.[36]

Mondadori's goal in having Natalia Danesi Murray cultivate relationships with American companies was to get his company's works published in the United States and to get American works published in Italy by Mondadori. For the former task, the significant presence of Italians in the U.S. was an important factor in motivating Arnoldo Mondadori to test out the Italian-American market. Writing to Danesi Murray in 1952, he asked her to study this possibility since there were "millions of Italians [in the United States] that could still have an interest in productions from our country."[37] The latter task is stated clearly by the Milanese publisher in a letter to the head of his New York office entitled "Direct Acquisitions for our magazines: above all for *Epoca*." He writes that acquisitions for Arnoldo Mondadori Editore "is the sector that can most justify your presence in New York."[38] Mondadori continues to inform Danesi Murray that she is to look everywhere, in *Collier's*, *Holiday*, *Esquire*, *Sunday Post*, and *Geographic Magazine*, for "illustrative material in black and white and in color." He also instructed her to examine house and fashion magazines, such as *House Beautiful*, *Vogue*, and *Harper's Bazaar*,

[36] Murray, 186.

[37] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori*, fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Arnoldo Mondadori a Natalia Danesi Murray, Promemoria per la Signora Danesi

[38] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori*, fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Arnoldo Mondadori a Natalia Danesi Murray, 13 febbraio 1953

for features that could be used in the company's women's magazine, *Grazia*. Fashion features from *Harper's Bazaar* that "reflect certain tastes and certain American novelties" were of particular interest to Mondadori.[39] This letter reveals his strong belief that incorporating material from American magazines into his publications would add to his firm's prestige and differentiate it from its Italian competitors.

Natalia Danesi Murray adequately responded to these requests. During her time as head of the New York office, she sent material from American periodicals and information regarding their production process to her boss in Milan. Mondadori examined these items to see how to incorporate them in his periodicals. In October 1953, she informed Mondadori that she had written to the five major houses of American Insurance to obtain material that would be of use to Mondadori for his advertising campaign.[40] She also sent him advertising material from *Life* that she thought would be "useful for studying the American method for increasing circulation, promoting the magazines, and increasing advertising."[41] Danesi Murray told him that "with this material you will truly have a unique portrait of the entire American system [regarding] magazine publication and you will be the only editor in Italy to have such a comprehensive source of information that can give you new ideas and possibilities for the development of *Epoca*

[39] Ibid.

[40] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori*, fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Natalia Danesi Murray a Arnoldo Mondadori, 15 ottobre 1953

[41] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori*, fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Natalia Danesi Murray a Arnoldo Mondadori, 3 marzo 1954

and your other periodicals."[42] Material acquired by Danesi Murray and sent to Arnoldo Mondadori, such as this, was important in Americanizing the company's magazines.

Gaining a thorough understanding of the American publishing industry's inner workings was another important step in Mondadori's reconstruction and modernization strategy. As is evident by the letter previously discussed, Natalia Danesi Murray and the New York office were used for this purpose. In the summer of 1954, Arnoldo Mondadori expressed to Danesi Murray his desire to examine *Time*'s and *Life*'s advertising, distribution, and subscription services stating that despite Italy's limited economic possibilities, he would like to "follow…the same departments and the same methods actually in use in the United States."[43] In order to achieve this goal, Mondadori traveled to the United States to visit Time Inc. in the fall of 1954. His tentative schedule reveals that he was interested in learning about the company's new sports magazine, *Sports Illustrated*, since his company was currently in the process of developing its own sports magazine. Mondadori saw his visit as the perfect opportunity for him to examine the new periodical and then to model his sports magazine after the American edition. In so doing, Mondadori's publication would distinguish itself from its Italian competitors. During his visit Arnoldo Mondadori also wanted to learn more about the corporation and its international operations as well as its advertising, circulation, and promotion sectors.[44]

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Arnoldo Mondadori a Natalia Danesi Murray, 16 luglio 1954

[44] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Clare Boothe Luce, Tentative Schedule – Visit of Arnoldo Mondadori ro Time Inc., September 28,

Although Mondadori acquired important knowledge from his one day visit to Time Inc., he was still intent on gaining greater insight into the corporation's organization and functioning. Because of this desire, Mondadori organized a three to four week trip to the American editorial house by two Mondadori executives from Italy, Miss Franca Matricardi and Miss Ero Agostini, and by Bill Murray, Natalia Danesi Murray's son, who had temporarily taken over his mother's position while she was in California working with Anna Magnani on the film *The Rose Tattoo* in early 1955. Matricardi and Agostini were to study the promotion and subscription services and the circulation and publicity services, respectively. Bill Murray's task was to study Time Inc.'s "executive and editorial structure" and the editorial operations of *Life*.[45] Regarding Murray's assignment, Arnoldo Mondadori wanted to specifically know what were the top five executives' and editors' primary roles and how much power each one had. There were two results of this investigative trip. First, a lengthy, detailed report on Murray's findings was produced and sent to twenty-nine of Mondadori's employees, most likely editors and others at the top of the managerial hierarchy. In the letter accompanying the report, Mondadori asked them to pay close attention to Murray's work stating that there are "precious elements that [could] give [them] an idea of the vast American organization and also be useful for the delicate task that [was being carried out] in our House."[46] Second, Bill Murray was hired by Arnoldo Mondadori to use his

1954, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Arnoldo Mondadori a Natalia Danesi Murray, 16 luglio 1954

[45] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, William Murray a Russell Bourne, November 15, 1954

[46] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. LIFE, Arnoldo Mondadori a Alberto Tedeschi, 8 gennaio 1958

experience at Time Inc. to help make the magazine *Epoca* as close to resembling an American illustrated periodical as possible. Murray worked in Milan with *Epoca*'s staff of approximately twenty people, a significantly smaller amount than that employed for *Life*, to remake the magazine. His report on his Time Inc. visit and the insight he gained about *Life*'s layout and content was utilized in this process.[47] Murray recalled decades later that the reworked magazine "looked every bit as good to me as its much larger and richer American counterpart."[48]

Mondadori's Strategy: Mondadori and the Luces

A central factor to Arnoldo Mondadori's ability to have such access to Time Inc. was the business and social relationship he developed with Henry R. Luce and Clare Boothe Luce. Mondadori began courting the power couple in 1953 upon Clare Boothe Luce's appointment as U.S. Ambassador to Italy. The Milanese publisher initiated contact as means to gaining access to Henry Luce's corporation and to facilitating the exchange of magazine material between the two editorial houses. For a three-year period, Mondadori and the Luces were in quite frequent contact discussing their shared business interests and social plans. Mondadori's collaboration with the Luces, who had strong beliefs in the United States' leadership position in the postwar order and against Communism, placed his company and its publications in Italy's cultural Cold War battle. Consequently, Mondadori's readers were exposed to a particular set of political, social, and economic beliefs that sharply contrasted those promoted by the Communists. Although contact between Mondadori and the Luces occurred for a relatively short time in the whole span of the

[47] Murray, 229.

[48] Ibid., 230.

Cold War period, the benefits for the Arnoldo Mondadori Editore lasted well into the following decade rendering its magazines more modern, American, and pro-American.

Arnoldo Mondadori immediately set out to take advantage of having the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to Italy and her American publishing tycoon husband in his backyard. Just three days after the announcement of Clare Boothe Luce's appointment on February 7, 1953, Mondadori sent a letter to his American counterpart, Henry Luce. He congratulated Luce on his wife's new position stating that having her as ambassador "is an homage paid to intelligence and culture as well as service rendered to our Country, which is bound to American people by feelings of friendship and gratitude."[49] He praised Luce as well, but at the same time revealed his true reasons for contacting, and perhaps flattering, the publisher:

> My firm, that has the honour to publish the works of the greatest American writers, has its head offices in Milan and Roma and its branches in all towns; of course it will be a great pleasure for us to cooperate, provided this may be of any interest, with the Ambassadress of the American culture and work.[50]

Mondadori also had Natalia Danesi Murray work towards creating opportunities for collaboration between the two companies. Eleven days after Clare Boothe Luce's appointment, she sent a congratulatory letter directly to the new ambassador. Drawing on her Italian-American identity and work as a journalist in a field dominated by men, Danesi Murray hoped to forge a

[49] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Clare Boothe Luce, Arnoldo Mondadori a Henry Luce, February 10, 1953.

[50] Ibid.

bond with Boothe Luce.[51] Similarly to Mondadori's letter, she sought to foster a business relationship with the ambassador and her husband. She wrote:

> As the U.S. representative of Italy's foremost publisher, Arnoldo Mondadori of Milan, I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes also in his name. We shall be very happy to cooperate with you to further our good relations and friendship.[52]

The communications, and the praise contained within them, continued to be sent as the Luces traveled to Italy. In a telegram sent to Henry while on the ship Andrea Doria, Arnoldo Mondadori called him the "clever journalist and famous publisher of the greatest magazines in the world" and hoped to "make [his] personal acquaintance during [his] stay in this country."[53] The letters show his deep admiration for Henry Luce and his business accomplishments. It is clear that Mondadori believed that ingratiating himself to the Luces was a good first step towards facilitating access to the company that published the most groundbreaking and innovative magazines. Thus, from the beginning of the couple's Italian period, Mondadori was intent on establishing a relationship with them and driven in his pursuit of the Luces.

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[51] Clare Boothe Luce was an accomplished journalist and successful playwright before entering the political world. She wrote several plays that were taken to production. Her most famous play was *The Women*, a hit on Broadway. The play was the basis for the famous 1939 film version of the same name starring Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, and Rosalind Russell and directed by George Cukor. In the late 1920s and into the mid-1930s, Boothe Luce worked for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, becoming the managing editor of the latter. Following her time at these two magazines, she worked as a war correspondent for *Time.* Jukes Morris, *Price of Fame: The Honorable Clare Boothe Luce* and *Rage for Fame: The Ascent of Clare Boothe Luce* (New York: Random House, 1997), Kindle edition.

[52] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Natalia Danesi Murray a Clare Boothe Luce, February 18, 1953.

[53] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Clare Boothe Luce, Arnoldo Mondadori a Henry Luce, 21 aprile 1953

Arnoldo Mondadori's contacts with the couple continued when they arrived on Italian soil. He had his first face-to-face encounter with Henry at a lunch in honor of Clare Boothe Luce given by the American Chamber of Commerce of Milan. The two met the following day when the American publisher visited Mondadori's Milanese offices. Mondadori wrote to Natalia Danesi Murray that Henry Luce was "amazed thinking of the enormous effort that we accomplish to obtain such astronomical results."[54] Additionally, he told her that Luce had agreed to future exchanges of material and reproduction of features between the two companies.[55] In order to solidify this burgeoning business association, Mondadori sought to establish a social relationship with the couple by inviting them to spend time with him and his family at their home in the coastal resort town of Portofino.[56] These letters illuminate Arnoldo Mondadori's strategy for gaining access to the most important publishing company in the world, as he so much implied in several of his letters to Henry and Clare Boothe Luce. He strongly believed that establishing a personal relationship with Luce and his wife would open doors to the American publishing world that no other Italian publishing house could boast of having. As a result, the business connection buttressed by the social relationship would prove to be extremely beneficial for the Mondadori Publishing Company.

Mondadori's growing business and social affiliation put him and his company's publications in Italy's cultural Cold War matrix. Both Clare Boothe Luce and Henry Luce were

[54] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Arnoldo Mondadori a Natalia Danesi Murray, 1 giugno 1953.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Arnoldo Mondadori a Natalia Danesi Murray, 17 agosto 1953.

outspoken, ambitious people who held firm and unwavering beliefs regarding Cold War politics. As a war correspondent and part of Congress's Military Affairs Committee, she witnessed firsthand the atrocities of war created by Nazi totalitarianism. Furthermore, the Soviet Union's growing strength and Communist ethos did not put her at ease. For example, in 1944, she referred to Communism as "the most deadly blight that has ever hit the spirit of man."[57] After the war, she began to "[draw] a parallel between Communism and Nazi totalitarianism."[58] Her conversion to Catholicism, which stood in stark opposition to Communism, also added to her strong dislike and fear of Communists. By the time of her ambassadorial appointment, Clare Boothe Luce was known for being an outspoken, fervent anti-Communist.

As ambassador, Clare Boothe Luce sought to prevent Italy's Communist Party (PCI) from taking control of the country's new government. Upon arriving in Italy for the first time as ambassador, she clearly stated her goal for the country: "I am proud to come here as the Ambassador of a President and country that wants what Italy wants most—to help build for all of us the house of security on the rock of justice and liberty."[59] Additionally, she wanted a "stable regime" in place that was "capable of combating Communism on both the social-economic and political fronts."[60] On the political front, Clare Boothe Luce was an ardent supporter of the Christian Democrats (DC), the PCI's arch rival. In fact, she had met the party's leader, Alcide De Gasperi, when he visited the States in 1947 prior to Italy's crucial 1948 election. Moreover, she and her husband helped secure a $100 million loan from the United States for De Gasperi to use

[57] Jukes Morris, *Price of Fame: The Honorable Clare Boothe Luce*

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

during the electoral campaign.[61] On the social-economic front, Boothe Luce believed capitalism was the best way to ensure Italy's social and moral recovery and most importantly, to deny Communism's entrenchment among the Italian population. While serving as a congresswoman, she took part in an on air radio forum entitled "Are Communism and Democracy Mutually Antagonistic?" When asked if she "regarded Capitalism as the moral ideal," she responded:

> Our capitalist economy has many faults…I am the first to acknowledge them, and the first to say that we must improve them. But the fact that capitalism has faults does not prove that Communism is virtuous; nor does it prove that Communism is a cure, except as a guillotine might be called a cure for a case of dandruff.[62]

Capitalism would provide happiness and security for the Italian people much better than Communism. Clare Boothe Luce was the face of American anti-Communist sentiment in Italy during her time as ambassador. Because of this, Mondadori's interactions with her exposed him to this political ideology.

Henry Luce was as equally passionate about the United States assuming its rightful place as leaders in the new postwar order as was his wife in regard to anti-Communism. Luce published the first issue of the magazine that would make him wealthy and famous, *Time*, on March 3, 1923. His next groundbreaking periodical, *Life*, hit newsstands thirteen years later on November 19, 1936.[63] These two magazines made Luce the most powerful and well-regarded periodical publisher in the United States and in the world, as Arnoldo Mondadori quite frequently referred to him. It was his essay, "The American Century," published in *Time*'s February 17, 1941 issue that brought his political beliefs onto a world stage. He argued for the

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Jukes Morris, *Rage for Fame: The Ascent of Clare Boothe Luce*.

United States to take on the task of leading the world through the war and the decades following. He called for the U.S. to assert itself as a dominant world power saying that the country must

> accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit.[64]

The U.S. must help create a "vital international economy" and an "international moral order."[65] Thus, Luce declared "the 20th century must be to a significant degree an American Century."[66]

Taking into consideration the Luces' anti-Communist and U.S. leadership sentiments, Arnoldo Mondadori incorporated this Cold War rhetoric into his communications with the couple in order to guarantee access to Luce's organization and its publications. In the spring of 1955, Mondadori wrote a letter to Henry Luce asking for further collaboration between the two companies. The letter is similar to those previously discussed except for the fact that Mondadori places his discussion of the partnership in a Cold War context. He writes:

> You know that Italy is in a key position for the defense of the borders of the free world…such a position can only be maintained through the reinforcement of the Italian home front…We need your collaboration: and, while I thank you how much you have given us with the sure knowledge of our common interests, we urge you to not make us miss your collaboration and support in the future.[67]

He then turned to the issue of an economic alliance between the United States and Italy and the benefits it would create for both countries in this Cold War period:

> Returning to the United States' assistance, I imagine, above all, a series of measures capable of setting in motion a major flow of goods between Italy and the United States,

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[64] Henry R. Luce, "The American Century," reprinted in *Diplomatic History* 23:2 (Spring 1999): 165.

[65] Luce, 166.

[66] Luce, 168.

[67] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori*, fasc. LIFE, Arnoldo Mondadori a Henry Luce, 12 aprile 1955.

> and vice versa. I dare to say that the formula of our future economic collaboration should be sought, rather than in dollars, in the markets and in the work of mutual integration.[68]

A month later, in a letter to Luce's wife, Mondadori spoke of Italy continuing to work for the "affirmation of democracy."[69] The Milanese publisher's interactions with the couple over three years made him realize that playing to their political leanings was important if he wanted the collaboration between his company and Time Inc. to continue.

Henry Luce also made the effort to make sure that Arnoldo Mondadori did indeed share his and his wife's political beliefs. In December 1955, Luce organized, with the help of the USIS office in Milan, a lunch for the city's top publishers in order to apprise himself of their political leanings. This knowledge would be invaluable to Luce not only in regard to local reporting on his wife but also in potential business deals made between him and the Italian publishers.[70]

Arnoldo Mondadori's recount of the special event to Natalia Danesi Murray and the low esteem he seemed to hold for the USIS Milan office that came out in his retelling prompted her to offer him crucial political advice. She advised him to remain in touch with the head of the USIS in Milan, as well as the head of the British Council in Milan. She asserted that doing so was important because "these contacts are part of the field we call Public Relations [in the U.S]

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Clare Boothe Luce, Arnoldo Mondadori a Clare Boothe Luce, May 3, 1955.

[70] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Arnoldo Mondadori a Natalia Danesi Murray, 3 dicembre 1955, 15 dicembre 1955.

which is a real and very important skilled job, practically ignored in Italy."[71] Due to her previous experience working for the USIS and her present experience navigating New York's publishing industry, Danesi Murray recognized the important role that the government agency played in the promotion and spread of American culture in Italy. Furthermore, the USIS's role as liaison between American and Italian businesses was something that Mondadori could utilize as he sought to adapt the best American methods and stories for his magazines. Therefore, the Mondadori Company and its owner had to play to specific political ideologies and exploit certain avenues to guarantee that the company would not only profit from their courting of the Luces but open the doors to future collaborations with other American publishing firms.

The Cold War rhetoric and overt political agenda found in the letters between Henry and Clare Boothe Luce and Arnoldo Mondadori and Natalia Danesi Murray extended beyond these communications. For example, Mondadori's *Epoca* was "pro-American in foreign affairs and moderately conservative in domestic issues."[72] Additionally, the series, "The World We Live In," which was first featured in *Life* and then reproduced in *Epoca*, put the United States in a very favorable light. Danesi Murray reported to Mondadori that the series' "journalistic propaganda in favor of America,… [is] better than any pro-American propaganda effort or activity that has been done and is being done in our country by the State Department's governing organ in charge of the USIS office."[73] This statement reveals the significant role that culture

[71] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Natalia Danesi Murray a Arnoldo Mondadori, 19 dicembre 1955.

[72] Mondadori History

[73] Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milano, Archivio Storico Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, *Arnoldo Mondadori,* fasc. Natalia Danesi Murray, Natalia Danesi Murray a Arnoldo Mondadori, 23 novembre 1955.

played in Italy's Cold War battle. Magazine features could have as much or even more currency than political moves and actions in influencing Italians and their ideological beliefs. Because of this, Arnoldo Mondadori's desire and efforts to modernize and Americanize his company and its periodicals made these publications transportation vehicles for both the overt and covert propaganda promoting the United States and its consumer capitalist democracy.

Conclusion: *Grazia* America: An Exceptional Issue Dedicated to New York

This revelation brings us back to the stylish Mondadori employees in New York and the fruit of their efforts, the special edition of *Grazia* dedicated to the city. This "exceptional" issue brought America, its mass consumer culture, and most importantly, the white, middle-class American woman's role within this new prosperous society into Italian homes. The issue featured articles and photo spreads on shopping and department stores, the so-called "top to toe" beauty routine of the American woman, and the middle-class American family's typical day with special attention given to the wife's daily activities. These features highlighted some of the most prominent aspects of the United States' postwar mass consumer society: automobiles, refrigerators, supermarkets, department stores, and an abundance of beauty products. These products could be found in Italy at the time but not on the same massive level. Furthermore, the features contrasted sharply with Communist ideology and society, which was an alarming presence to U.S. political and military officials, as well as right wing Italian politicians. Therefore, this special issue of *Grazia* and issues from other magazines similar to it came to be, whether intentionally or not, cultural weapons in the country's Cold War battle. Consequently,

this "diplomacy of ideas" rendered the magazines' readership, middle-class women, front line soldiers protecting Italian society from going Communist.[74]

The Italian readers did not choose this role for themselves. Instead, work done by the U.S. government after the Second World War to bring about economic, industrial, and moral recovery to Italy and efforts made by Arnoldo Mondadori to rebuild and modernize his company were responsible for exposing Italian women to the benefits of American consumer society. Financial aid and modern publishing technology coming from the U.S. combined with the Milanese publisher's decisions to open an office in New York in order to facilitate direct contact with the American publishing industry, to travel to the United States, and to court the most famous American periodical publisher, Henry R. Luce, and his wife, U.S. Ambassador to Italy, Clare Boothe Luce, Americanized the Arnoldo Mondadori Editore's magazines. While the periodicals' layouts resembled American publications, such as *Time* and *Life*, the content contained material that was pro-American and/or highlighted the modernity, prosperity, abundance, and democratic, consumer spirit that characterized postwar America. As Umberto Eco wrote, "America as a model, as… a system of goods, as a political influence, as an image conveyed by mass media, invade[d] Italy…Before [the war] it was only something that one read in books or saw at the cinema. After it [was] something that affect[ed] the lives of the average Italian…"[75] Italian company owners, such as Mondadori, facilitated this cultural invasion and it

[74] Campo, 426.

[75] Umberto Eco, *La rinascita culturale: all'insegna dell'America*, in *Italia moderna*, ed. O. Calabrese (Milano, 1985), 381 in *Nemici per la pelle: Sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. Pier Paolo D'Attore, (Milano, Italy: FrancoAngeli, 1991), 29.

was their efforts that brought American culture and new definitions for Italian feminine culture to Italian women.

Chapter 2

La Rinascente: A Symbol of Postwar Italian Rebirth with American Roots

September, 1 1943. A Giornale Luce newsreel is played in an Italian cinema. Dramatic music emanates from the speakers, the title screen appears: "Bombardamento a Milano" (Bombing in Milan), and the narrator announces: "Milan after the recent terrorist bombings." The opening shot is of a building practically reduced to ruins with only remnants of its walls left standing. The viewer is then shown the Milanese people incredulously observing the horrendous damage to their beloved city. The newsreel then surveys the damage sustained to Milan's landmarks: the world renowned opera house La Scala with a destroyed roof and severe interior damage, Palazzo Marino, the seat of Milan's city hall since 1861, damaged, Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, the city's shopping arcade dating back to the 1860s, with "its windows broken," San Babila, one of the city's oldest churches, also damaged, and finally, Milan's icon, Il Duomo (Cathedral), with damage to its façade. The newsreel ends on a pessimistic note, implicitly posing the question: how will Milan and the rest of Italy rebuild and recover from the war?[1]

Italy's most well-known department store, in fact, *the* Italian department store, La Rinascente, was among the damaged and destroyed structures in Milan. Located in Piazza del Duomo next to the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II and flanking the Duomo's northern side, La Rinascente was just as much a Milanese symbol and landmark as its famous neighbors. The store's near destruction was a significant blow to its owners, the people of Milan, and the city

[1] *Bombardamento di Milano. Milano dopo gli ultimi bombardamenti*, Giornale Luce C0372/6, 01/09/1943, http://www.archivioluce.com/archivio/.

itself. The directors' response to the question of how will Milan, Italy, and La Rinascente rebuild and recover from the devastation of the war would have important consequences for the direction that Italian consumer culture would take in the postwar period.

The department store was and remains a cultural institution. Not only was it a site for shopping but it was also a site for interactions and exchanges that had consumerism as their basis. The department store served many other roles as well. It was an arbiter of taste, identifying the clothing, house wares, and other consumer goods that were suitable for its patrons. Furthermore, it played the role of "cultural primer." In *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920,* Michael B. Miller argues that the Parisian department store "showed people how they should dress, how they should furnish their home, and how they should spend their leisure time."[2] The Bon Marché and other department stores molded their customers. As Miller states, the department store was "a reflection of its culture and… a factor in shaping the character and evolution of that culture in a time of social change."[3] This proved to be significant for the stores' primary customers and employees—women. Whether working or shopping, women's presence in department stores placed them in a unique position to be influenced by and to influence consumer society. Thus, the department store was an "instrument of social homogenization" and a medium for uniting people and creating a national culture based on commodities and the specific values assigned to those products.[4]

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[2] Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: The Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 183.

[3] Ibid., 7.

[4] Ibid., 183.

Italy's La Rinascente embodied these aspects and played these roles. The store acted as an arbiter of taste and a cultural primer by reflecting and shaping its upper and upper middle-class customers' cultural styles and consumer habits. The quality clothing and products sold in its stores earned La Rinascente the leadership position in Italy's department store sector in the first half of the twentieth century, especially after the store came under new ownership in 1917. However, the bombing in Milan in August 1943 and other Italian cities in which La Rinascente had branches jeopardized the company's primacy.

When time came to rebuild, restructure, and modernize, La Rinascente and Italy as whole turned to the United States for guidance and inspiration. During the postwar period, La Rinascente executives traveled to the U.S. to study American department stores, brought American ready-to-wear fashion to its female customers[5], created shows in their flagship store dedicated to the U.S. and its consumer culture, and sought to create and maintain long-lasting connections with American retailers.

As a result of these activities, the Rinascente Company transformed the Italian shopping experience and the content of Italians' shopping bags in the postwar period. The experiences and bags now resembled those of Americans, in particular, white, middle-class American women. Moreover, La Rinascente's success in rebuilding its destroyed stores, especially that of the Milan Piazza del Duomo location, and the financial success it enjoyed in the 1950s and 1960s, served

[5] According to Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese La Rinascente's contracts with American ready-to-wear designers Rosenfeld and Donnybrook to produce and sell their creations in Italy was a key factor in contributing to the rise of Milan as an international fashion capital in the 1970s. Elisabetta Merlo and Francesca Polese. "Turning Fashion Into Business: The Emergence of Milan as an International Fashion Hub," *The Business History Review* 80: 3 (Autumn, 2006).

as a symbol of rebirth, prosperity, and hope for Italy and Italians—a symbol that was based on American consumer models and ideals, technology and innovation, and products.[6]

La Rinascente History

La Rinascente was first started by Luigi and Ferdinando Bocconi in 1865 in Milan. The store was small and sold clothing and various home goods.[7] In 1877, the brothers transformed their store into Italy's first department store, Aux villes d'Italie, which would soon be changed to Alle città d'Italia. The year of this commercial transformation indicates that Luigi and Ferdinando were clearly inspired by the emergence and success of Europe's first department store, Paris's Le Bon Marché. This store opened in a stand-alone, large building solely dedicated for the department store in 1869.

From that moment in 1869 until the end of the Second World War, Le Bon Marché served as the model for future European department stores. The store was notable for the new architectural styles it employed to enhance the shopping experience. The building, located at 24 Rue de Sèvres, used iron and glass architecture that created bright, well-lit courtyards. Moreover, this architectural style also allowed for the perfect illumination of displays and for "open, spacious bays in which large quantities of goods could be readily displayed and through which

[6] According to John Foot, between 1955 and 1960, La Rinascente's "profits increased at a greater rate than any other Italian company…and its sales increased by 500 percent across the whole 1950s." John Foot, *Milan since the Miracle: City, Culture and Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 122.

[7] Indice dell'"Album delle Novità Illustrato Autunno-Inverno 1880 -81" Fratelli Bocconi, in Franco Amatori, *Proprietà e Direzione: La Rinascente 1917-1969* (Milano, Italy: Franco Angeli, 1989), 276-77.

vast crowds could move with ease."[8] The "crowds" in Le Bon Marché were the Parisian bourgeoisie. Accordingly, owners and managers tailored the goods they sold, as well as the stores' architectural styles and interior designs to appeal to the "refined" tastes of their customers.[9] Thus, Le Bon Marché was a measure of class status. In contrast, department stores in the United States, which were rapidly on the rise in the second half of the nineteenth century, were more inclusive, catering to a broader, less stratified customer base.[10] Le Bon Marché's innovative design features, architectural style, and selling tactics would be emulated by European department stores, including the Bocconis' Alle città d'Italia, in the years and decades to come.

The Bocconi brothers' department store enjoyed success in the late nineteenth century. By 1887, their business had expanded to include eight branches throughout the Italian peninsula, including one in Rome's Piazza Colonna. In 1889, the brothers opened a branch in Milan's Piazza del Duomo, at the very center and heart of Italy's financial and commercial capital. Unfortunately, this success did not endure. For reasons that have not been documented, or are unknown, Luigi's and Ferdinando's business venture experienced a downturn sometime in the early to mid-1900s bringing them to the brink of financial failure. These financial difficulties negatively affected the stores' reputation and forced the brothers to sell their business. When Senatore Borletti, a 37-year-old Lombardy businessman involved in textiles and precision engineering, acquired Alle città d'Italia in 1917, the store "had lost its charm, and rather was by

[8] Miller, 42.

[9] Elena Papadia, *La Rinascente* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2011), Kindle edition. Introduction.

[10] Ibid.

now an object of large discredit."[11] Thus, Borletti's first task as the new proprietor was to reverse this perception.

Borletti initially proved to be adept at reversing the fortunes and negative opinion of the Bocconis' department stores. One of the businessman's first actions was to rename the business, employing Gabriele D'Annunzio to do so. The famous poet, journalist, and soldier decided to name the stores La Rinascente, which derived from the Italian word *rinascita* or rebirth. This new name quite appropriately reflected Borletti's desire to start anew in order to make the company successful once again. Borletti also insisted that La Rinascente be "an exclusively Italian company that undertakes the task of selling products from domestic factories."[12] La Rinascente would be by Italians and for Italians. From its early years, La Rinascente was "a paradise for women." The store's clientele was primarily female and thus, were catered to accordingly. For example, La Rinascente's Milan store had spaces devoted to their female customers' non-shopping needs, such as a beauty salon and a tea room.[13] The women who frequented the department store were from Italy's upper and upper middle-classes. In order to restore the stores' reputation, it was important for Borletti to attract and appeal to the women who came into his stores looking for the most up-to-date fashions, house wares, and other gendered merchandise sold at the stores. Between 1919 and 1920, Borletti re-opened the Bocconi stores under the La Rinascente name, ridding them of the tainted Bocconi association.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Amatori, 37.

[13] Ibid., 55.

Figure 1 La Rinascente, Milano Piazza del Duomo, Before Bombing in August 1943
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

Although the department stores had shed the negative reputation associated with the Bocconi era, they did not have the immediate financial success for which Borletti hoped. First, the Milan Piazza del Duomo location burned to the ground on Christmas night 1918. Second, the company had financial difficulties during the 1920s and early 1930s. During this time, La Rinascente dealt with national economic uncertainty and instability due to Fascist policies and a world economic crisis. Although Fascist economic policies that led to deflation, and the regime's overall negative assessment of consumerism as individualistic and thus a threat to Fascist Italy's collective identity hindered La Rinascente's success, Mussolini and his ministers allowed for the

expansion of the company's fixed price stores, UPIM (Unico Prezzo Italiano Milano), which served Italy's working-classes.[14]

European fixed price stores were modeled after the American chain Woolworth's which was the original fixed price store. Europe's first fixed price store opened in England in 1909. It was not until after the First World War that the stores became a fixture on the European continent. In 1927, managers of the German store Leonhard Tietz offered Umberto Brustio, who was La Rinascente's CEO at the time, and his company the opportunity to collaborate with the German retailers in opening a set of fixed price stores in Italy. The offer was immediately accepted by Senatore Borletti and in 1928, the Rinascente Company opened Italy's first fixed price store, UPIM, in Verona. By 1932, the UPIM chain had expanded to twenty-two stores, to thirty-five by 1939, and to fifty-four by 1943.[15]

Mussolini's contradictory stance in allowing for UPIM's expansion was perhaps motivated by two factors. The first factor was Borletti's affiliation with the Fascist Party. For example, his newspaper *Il Secolo* was an organ for the party and in fact, took part in a campaign to discredit Luigi Albertini, an outspoken anti-Fascist who was director of the country's leading newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. Furthermore, "… anti-Fascist propaganda identified Borletti as one of the representatives of the industrial world most closely linked to Fascist politics, from which they had drawn the most lavish benefits."[16]

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[14] Following the Second World War, only three of the fifty-four stores did not reopen. Amatori, 88-89; Papadia, Capitolo secondo : Nascita dell'Upim.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Alceo Riosa,"Borletti, Senatore," http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/senatore-borletti_(Dizionario_Biografico).

The second factor influencing Mussolini's actions was UPIM's capabilities of uniting, through consumerism, a larger spectrum of Italians from different cities and regions under the same Fascist creed. For example, the regime permitted and openly supported the opening of a new La Rinascente store in September 1929 in the city of Bolzano, which was close to the Austrian border, had a primarily German speaking population, and had been under Italian rule for only ten years. In this instance, the regime recognized that the store and its consumer products could be used as tools to *fare la nazione* (make the nation), or in other words, to unite the people living in Italy's diverse regions.[17] Therefore, by the start of the Second World War in 1939, La Rinascente locations numbered five whereas the number of UPIM stores was thirty-five. The two stores had a combined total of six thousand employees and a share capital of 54 million lire.[18] The company's expansion from 1917 to 1939, when compared to the same information from its closest competitor, Standa, indicates that the Rinascente Company was the leader in its sector.[19]

[17] Papadia, Capitolo terzo: Il fascismo e i grandi magazzini.

[18] Amatori, 242.

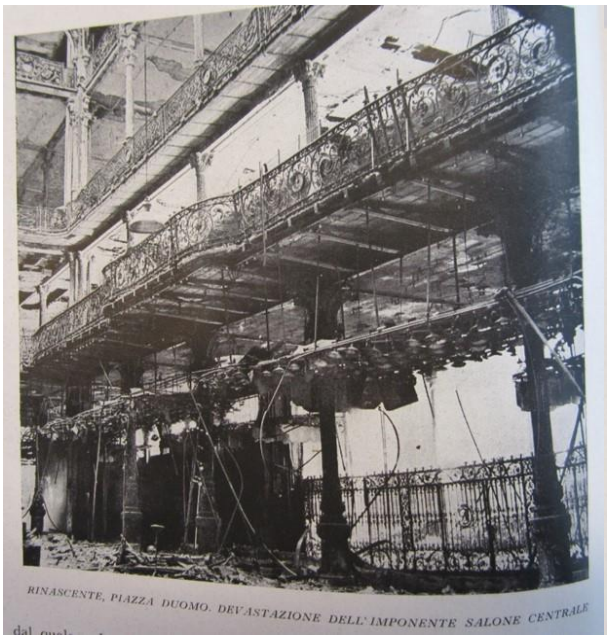
[19] In 1931, the La Rinascente Company had 40 stores (La Rinascente and UPIM), in 1935, 31 stores, 1940, 43 stores, and 1945, 52 stores. Standa's, another Italian department store, store totals for the first three years mentioned previously were: 1, 7, and 20. Figures are unavailable for 1945. The gross value of tangible fixed assets for La Rinascente was the following: 1931 – 94 million lire, 1935 – 85 million lire, 1940 – unavailable, 1945 – 104 million lire. The gross value of tangible fixed assets for Standa was the following: 1931 – unavailable, 1935 – 1 million lire, 1940 – 6 million lire, 1945 – unavailable. In 1940, La Rinascente employed 6,000 people whereas Standa employed only 1,000. Amatori, "Confronto Rinascente-Standa su alcune grandezze economiche, patrimoniali – Periodo 1931-1985 – Cadenza quinquennale," in Ibid., 266-267.

Hitler's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, marking the start of the Second World War, had significant consequences for Italy, Italians, and La Rinascente. The fighting devastated the Italian landscape from North to South. Among the damaged and destroyed structures were those belonging to the Rinascente Group. "Nine UPIM stores were destroyed, six were damaged but remained partially active, nine were requisitioned, [and] four were closed for different reasons."[20] In regard to La Rinascente branches, only the Rome location suffered no damage. The Naples branch was requisitioned while the Milan, Genoa, and Cagliari branches were destroyed.[21] At the end of the war in 1945, the company, now led by new president Umberto Brustio, faced the difficult and daunting task of rebuilding its stores and finding success in a new social, political, economic, and cultural landscape.[22]

[20] Ibid., 149.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Senatore Borletti passed away in December 1939. Umberto Brustio, his cousin, became president of the Rinascente Group in January 1940. Ibid, 119.



Figures 2 and 3 La Rinascente, Milano Piazza del Duomo, Damage from August 1943 Bombing
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

Even though the destruction of and damage to the company's stores was certainly emotionally and financially devastating, the rubble and damaged buildings contained a silver lining. These physically ruined stores, along with Italy's new social, political, and economic terrain, provided La Rinascente's directors with a perfect opportunity to start anew in order to bring unprecedented success and prominence to their company. They were given a prime opportunity to re-invent their stores in a way that would put them at the forefront of new consumer developments occurring in Italy.

La Rinascente and the United States

U.S. Financial Assistance

Similarly to other Italian companies seeking to rebuild during the postwar period, La Rinascente looked across the Atlantic to the United States and its booming consumer based

economy for financial assistance and cultural inspiration. In order to bring success and prominence back to La Rinascente, Umberto Brustio's and the company's directors' first undertaking involved responding to the damage—physical, financial, and emotional—caused by the war.

The company took advantage of low prices on much needed material goods offered by UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) as part of the organization's recovery package. An article in the company's magazine, *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM*, in 1947 noted the selling of UNRRA cotton and wool in La Rinascente stores that had re-opened following the war.[23] The magazine remarked that the presence of UNRRA textiles was due to the company directors' "desire to provide service for the client according to [the company's] unchangeable tradition" of selling quality products. Their decision to continue to offer customers elegant, prestigious, and beautiful merchandise after the war resulted in the stores "promot[ing] a culture capable of improving the quality of life and improving one's self." [24] Price was also a

[23] *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM,* Ottobre-Dicembre 1947. La Rinascente's magazine for its employees was first published in 1929 as *Echi de La Rinascente.* In 1936, the title was changed to *La Famiglia* and in 1947 to *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM. Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM,* Autunno 1967, n. 42, 64.

[24] Furthermore, the company's 1968 publication on its history and prospects for its future reveals that "from 1947 our company decided to offer customers—forced during the years of autarky and war to buy merchandise of poor quality—high quality products; all trade policy was committed in this direction." Additionally, Emanuela Scarpellini notes that after the war the company and store adopted "an extremely sophisticated and refined style"—in its aesthetic aspects and publicity material—to appeal to their high-end clientele. She writes that "the idea [behind this decision] was to present a reference point more appropriate for the higher social classes, [yet] that would attract a middle-class eager for social ascent." *Canovaccio Analitico – Basi culturali per le strategie di sviluppo nel dopoguerra*; *La Rinascente Accenni storici e Prospettive di espansione – Luglio 1968*, 8. Emanuela Scarpellini,

motivating factor in the directors' decision to use UNRRA textiles. A letter to La Rinascente managers states that "in a period of eight months approximately 175-180 million meters of textiles (150 cotton, the rest wool) will be placed on the market at remarkably lower prices."[25] The same letter reveals that three-quarters of La Rinascente's imports were financed by UNRRA, sixty-six percent of that total coming from the United States.[26]

The decision to import and sell non-Italian materials to make La Rinascente successful and to uphold the company's reputation as a vendor of quality products contrasted with Senatore Borletti's original declaration that the store would only sell "products from domestic factories."[27] The war, its devastation, and the crucial changes it caused Italian society to undergo had a noteworthy effect on La Rinascente's governing vision. The idea of remaining a company loyal to its nation's textile and clothing producers no longer carried the same significance it once did. Instead Umberto Brustio, Cesare Brustio, Giorgio Brustio, and Aldo Borletti strongly believed that La Rinascente must be more open to foreign influences.[28] This belief proved to be extremely

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Comprare all'americana: Le origini della rivoluzione commerciale in Italia 1945-1971 (il Mulino: Bologna, 2001), 187.

[25] "La Rinascente" Ufficio Studi e Propaganda, Rassegna Economica Milanese, Rassegna della situazione economica, Settembre 1946, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Amatori, 37.

[28] Umberto Brustio, Senatore Borletti's cousin, served as La Rinascente's CEO from 1919-1940, president from 1940-1957, and its honorary president from 1957-1968. Brustio's two sons, Cesare and Giorgio, were also involved in managing the company's operations. Cesare was vice president from 1957-1967 and its CEO from 1967-1969. He was also an adviser for La Rinascente's supermarkets, Supermercati SMA, and its ready-to-wear fashion company, APEM. Giorgio was a managing director and president of SMA during his time as part of the Rinascente

important as the directors developed plans for the company's reemergence from the rubble of war.

La Rinascente and the American Department Store

The most glaring issue that needed to be addressed by La Rinascente directors was the physical destruction of the company's stores. The stores' remnants and rubble symbolized defeat and ruin. However, they were also an impetus for change. Of all the stores damaged by wartime bombing, the store in Milan's Piazza del Duomo (La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo) was perhaps the most injurious to the company and its psyche. La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo was the company's flagship store and the location for its company headquarters. To set the store and company on a new path, the directors decided to use the American department store as the model for the store's reconstruction.

In the postwar period, for many Italian entrepreneurs seeking to rebuild their companies in an extremely unstable economy, the United States was the symbol for economic and commercial strength and modernity due to its booming mass consumer culture. La Rinascente's company magazine wrote that "America is exactly the opposite of the prehistoric era…American commerce is, like its people, a little childish, but gives an impression of strength, of innovation, of upsurge, that is truly unique to our European eyes."[29] The country's department stores embodied these qualities. The American department store in the postwar period was a vanguard

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Group from 1950-1969. Aldo Borletti, Senatore Borletti's son, participated in company management from 1938-1967 and served as president from 1957 until his untimely death in 1967. "I consiglieri e le loro più importanti attività in Italia (1917/1969)," Ibid., 284-288.

[29] *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM 1949-1950*, Gennaio-Marzo 1950, Anno 4, n. 1, 11.

in regard to the use of new technology, innovative designs, and store planning which made the store as consumer-friendly as possible. Whereas Parisian department stores were seen as the most technically and aesthetically advanced before the war, stores in the U.S. now held this title. They were the "largest stores in the world…installed in enormous buildings occupying an entire block of houses… [and were] universally known."[30] La Rinascente's directors were very much aware of this status and the American department store's increased international importance. In an internal report regarding La Rinascente's reconstruction, the United States was described as being at the forefront of the industry:

> In that country, in fact, one finds himself in front of achievements that are diametrically opposed to the informed concepts hitherto followed in Europe, from that which concerns construction to the interior decoration of department stores.
> The concepts and the experience in the field of organization and technology followed by the Americans, both in the construction and interior decoration fields…, are of such interest since they open completely new horizons for us Europeans."[31]

In order to make La Rinascente the most advanced, modern department store in Europe, the directors decided to conduct a thorough study of its American counterparts.

In 1948, Umberto Brustio, Cesare Brustio, and Aldo Borletti took a one and a half month long trip to the United States. Traveling from the east to the west coast, the trio visited a total of fifty-nine stores. At the trip's conclusion, Cesare Brustio compiled a three volume album containing photographs, publicity material, and a detailed report on interior and exterior decorations, window dressings, the implementation of new technology, and many other aspects from the stores they visited. The volume's opening letter, written by Cesare Brustio, clearly

[30] Ibid.

[31] Relazione del 26 aprile 1950 – Sulla Ricostruzione del Nuovo Grande Magazzino "La Rinascente" Milano – Piazza del Duomo, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

states the trip's purpose and focus: "The scope of this trip was the study of how much [of the American department store] could be adopted for our organization, without losing local influences."[32] The letter went on to describe the innovative and notable characteristics of American department stores, such as floor layouts that made the stores as consumer-friendly as possible, escalators, artistic and imaginative window displays, and creative merchandise display cases, that the Brustios and Borletti witnessed on their research trip. At the letter's conclusion, Brustio declared: "The offer, in every angle of the U.S. we saw, is impressive. I am not exaggerating in saying that anyone can find that which he wants…All of the above [is done] to always satisfy the needs of this population, whose increasing affluence creates continuous new aspirations."[33] The techniques and designs being implemented in the U.S. stores clearly excited Brustio and made him, as well as La Rinascente's other directors optimistic for their company's future. The trip showed them that the American department store and its modern, pioneering consumer model was the way to prosperity and success. Therefore, the directors made a conscious effort to incorporate many of the stores' features in their new stores. In so doing, they made the American department store the model for the reconstruction of La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo thus bringing the ambience of American shopping, and in turn, the American way of shopping to Italy.

[32] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 1, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[33] Ibid.

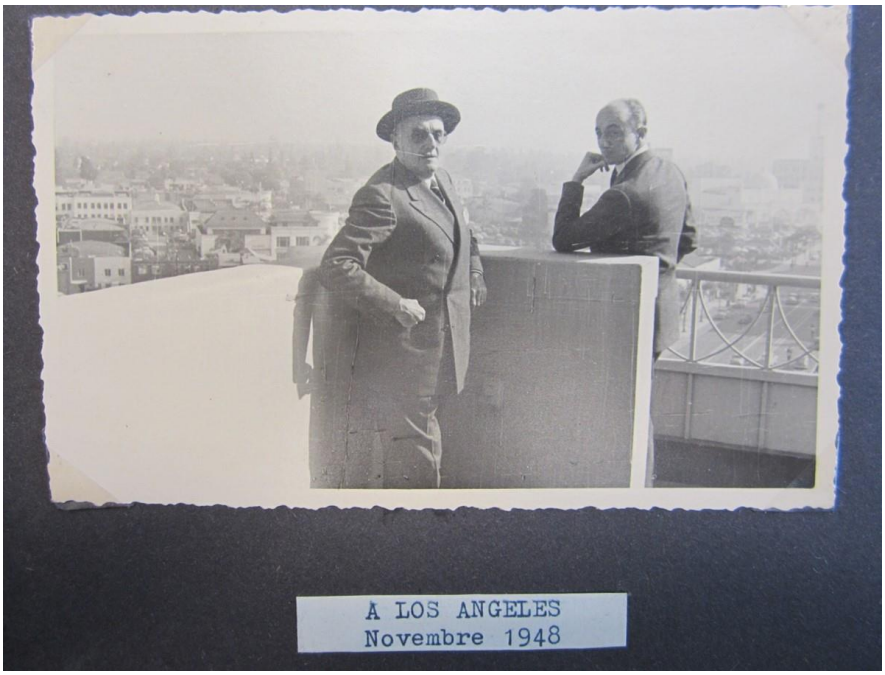

Figure 4 Umberto (left) and Cesare (right) Brustio, Los Angeles, November 1948
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

During the research trip, the Brustios and Borletti were struck by the construction and planning of the American department stores. At this time in the United States, many Americans were moving from the city to the suburbs with many of the city's centers for consumerism, including department stores, subsequently following them. As a result, department stores became a common feature of the suburban landscape. Accordingly, the department store, in its construction and planning, adapted to this new environment composed of open spaces primarily accessible by car. The Rinascente trio, upon visiting suburban stores such as Bullock's in Pasadena, California and Lord & Taylor in White Plains, New York, were struck by the lack of windows on the buildings' exteriors, the complete or almost complete absence of window displays, and the presence of large parking structures. Commenting on Bullock's Pasadena's exterior appearance, Brustio wrote: "The aspect is surprising for a European observer. An almost

total absence of display windows…It is a beautiful modern construction. A European would not assume that it is a department store."[34] He also made note of Lord &Taylor's "950 parking spots" and the "space [that is] available to build another parking lot that is larger than the original."[35] While these features were not relevant to La Rinascente's situation in Italy since their stores were located in urban environments and in fact, suburban development was non-existent in the country, the directors were still inspired by what Cesare Brustio called a "new mentality: go to the customer, make large parking structures available, create the conditions for shopping in peace without being bothered by an excessive crowd."[36] In other words, putting the customer first and catering to her every need.

The prominent use of escalators, instead of stairs and elevators, was another feature that impressed the directors. The presence of escalators in the stores was important because they made traveling from floor to floor easier while simultaneously allowing customers to view the store's merchandise. Once the customer reached her destination (a higher or lower floor), she was refreshed (not tired as if she had taken stairs) and already aware of the consumer offerings on that floor (not possible if she had taken the elevator). Cesare Brustio was not only impressed with this profitable benefit the escalator offered, but also with its design which contributed to the stores' modern and luxurious aesthetic. Foley's department store in Houston, Texas had "an

[34] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 2, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[35] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 1, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[36] Ibid.

excellent escalator, to whose lighting and architecture should be referred."[37] (Figure 5) Additionally, a caption for a photo of the escalator at G. Fox and Co. in Hartford, Connecticut read: "The stainless steel escalator with bright banister walls is a great find. The light itself moves with the reflection of the steps."[38] These comments reveal that the escalator's ability to create a modern, lush, and fantastical ambience and to make customer transport from floor to floor both profitable and comfortable was appealing to Brustio and the other La Rinascente directors. The escalator would become a key feature of the new La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo.

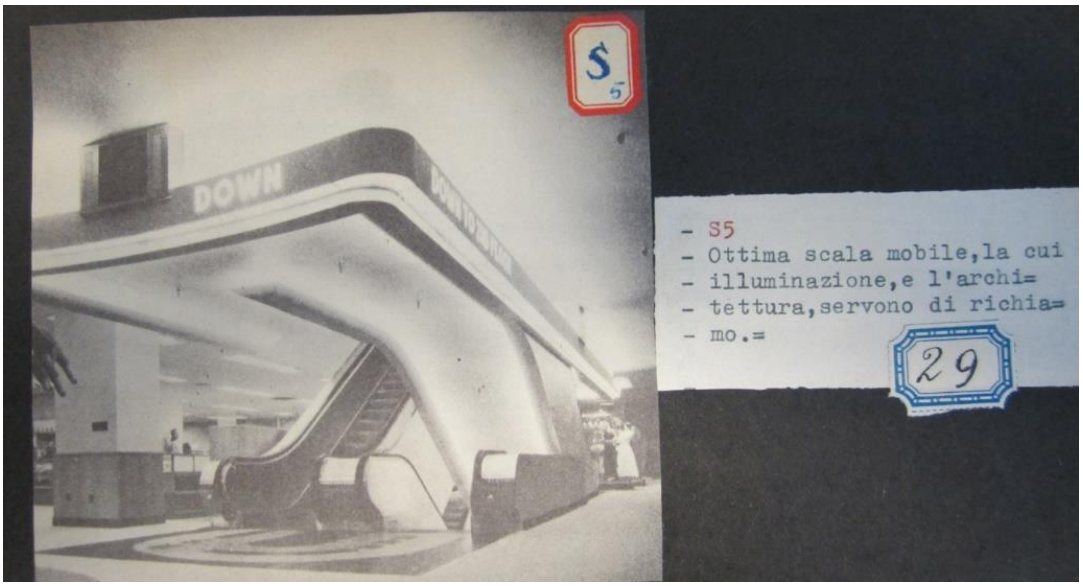

Figure 5 The American Department Store, Escalator at Foley's, Houston, Texas
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

[37] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 3, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[38] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 1, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

The decorations in urban stores' window displays also intrigued the company's directors. Even at the height of the Parisian department store's popularity and influence on the design, planning, and construction of European stores, U.S. department stores' window displays were internationally recognized as being the best. In *The Department Store: A Social History*, Bill Lancaster writes that "customer services, staff policy and highly innovative window displays, together with new forms of merchandising, set the large American stores in general, and Marshall Field's [the famed Chicago department store] in particular, apart from their European equivalents."[39] Therefore, the directors made sure to take note of the way Americans "dressed" their windows. Brustio wrote to La Rinascente's managers that "the most refined department stores use the windows as a set design, that is often suggestive, imaginative and of excellent taste, but absent of offerings."[40] His comment on Lord & Taylor's New York Fifth Avenue location's window displays illustrate this attitude: "It is given over to every fantasy, the décor is always very harmonized with the exposition means (tools, mannequins, etc.). The decoration also assumes absurd forms but it is varied and this is something which to refer."[41] (Figure 6) Although the windows were designed in such a way that made it a piece of art instead of a tool for showing the practical uses of the consumer product, Brustio understood the important contribution they made to the fantastical and at times, surreal, ambience and nature of the modern, American department store that appealed to the stores' customers. In order for La

[39] Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 4.

[40] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 1, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[41] Ibid.

Rinascente to have the same aesthetic appeal as U.S. stores, it was important that its new stores contain similar visually appealing, yet unrealistic and perhaps impractical displays.

Figure 6 The American Department Store, Window Display, Lord and Taylor, New York
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

The department stores' innovative interiors—from the way the merchandise was displayed to the colors used in each department to the stores' furnishing—garnered La Rinascente executives' attention. In regard to merchandise display, they were particularly interested in the materials used, the size of display cases, and the positioning of goods. Brustio took note of Long Island's Gertz's use of plexiglass for its display cases commenting that although "it does not respond to the best aesthetic requirements…it presents particular advantages in curves [of the cases] and above all allows the client to have a better visibility of

the goods on display."[42] Los Angeles' I. Magnin & Co.'s use of velvet and other textiles to cover the cases added to the sense of exclusivity attributed to the merchandise. Foley's featured a "good and rational" display of its ties that "gave the customer a well-ordered choice" which made the selection process easier and facilitated the product's purchase.[43] In addition to Brustio's comments on various merchandise displays, the album also contains numerous precise sketches of the design cases he came across. The techniques employed by American department stores to attract the customer's attention and entice them to buy the product were significant features that needed to be incorporated into the company's new department stores.

La Rinascente directors also recognized the significant role the stores' color schemes and furnishing played in creating a modern and profitable shopping environment. The album contains color samples collected from several department stores during the U.S. trip as well as commentary on how specific colors contributed to creating a particular ambience that enhanced each department's theme. For example, the women's intimates department at Bullock's Pasadena used harmonious colors that added to the room's warmth and intimacy, which, in turn, created a comfortable shopping environment. The furnishing and decorations, "an ivory carpet, furniture covered in a green-jade satin" and a "beautiful black velvet backcloth," also added to the department's enhanced comfort level.[44] Another common feature noted by the directors during their research trip was the significant presence of furniture not intended for sale. The abundance of furniture found in stores such as I. Magnin & Co. in San Francisco, California and The

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 2, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

Fashion Ben Wolfman in Houston, Texas was used to allow the customer to rest and relax during her time shopping. This strategic inclusion of furniture intended for the customer to sit (or lounge) on added to the stores' comfort level thereby persuading the customer into prolonging her stay in the store and perhaps, making more purchases.

It is evident from Brustio's notes and descriptions that La Rinascente directors were very much interested in the techniques that were part of American department stores' "new mentality"—going to the customer. By adapting color schemes, department design, and furnishings to their stores that appealed to customers' sensibilities and catered to their needs, the company's directors believed that doing so would not only make La Rinascente a profitable venture, but also put the store at the forefront of the European sector.

La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo: A Symbol of Postwar Italian Rebirth with American Roots

The photos, sketches, commentary, and other material on the American department store contained in the three volume album became the starting point for the construction and planning of La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo, the company's flagship store. The directors employed architects Ferdinando Reggiori and Carlo Pagani to incorporate American technology and design into the new store. Reggiori was tasked with designing the store's façade while Pagani was responsible for the interior elements. In addition to having the rich album at his disposal, Pagani also had firsthand knowledge of the American department stores having made his own research trip to the U.S. With this information and experience, Pagani and Reggiori produced a store that contained the best American components but also adapted them to fit the Italian context.

Figure 7 Newly Rebuilt La Rinascente, Milano Piazza del Duomo on Opening Day, *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM*, Ottobre-Dicembre 1950, Anno IV, N. 4
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

The new store, which opened to the public on December 4, 1950, was a mixture of American efficiency, technology, and innovation and Italian "intuition and taste."[45] *Interiors*, the internationally known furnishings magazine, wrote that "the adaptation of the [American] system done by Architect Pagani undoubtedly maintains the characteristics of the most modern department stores of the United States."[46] These characteristics included escalators that were specially made for La Rinascente by the American company Westinghouse and the installation

[45] *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM*, Ottobre-Dicembre 1951 n. 4.

[46] Ibid.

of an air conditioning system that was carried out by New York's Carrier Corporation in conjunction with the Italian company l'Aerotecni a Marelli Italiana.[47] The escalators, which "ran through the store's five floors, in a large hexagonal space," were capable of transporting five thousand customers an hour. Moreover, an article noted that as the customers moved from floor to floor on this device it was as if they were "suspended in air."[48] The escalators replicated the fantastical and surreal atmosphere that was characteristic of the modern American department store. (Figure 8)

Figure 8 La Rinascente, Milano Piazza del Duomo, Escalator with Cardinal Schuster, Opening Day, December 4, 1950, *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM*, Ottobre-Dicembre 1950, Anno IV, N. 4
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

[47] Ricostruzione Nuova Sede Piazza Duomo – Diario 1948, Relazione del 26 aprile 1950 – Sulla ricostruzione del Nuovo Grande Magazzino "La Rinascente" Milano – Piazza del Duomo, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[48] "L'incendio non si addice alla nuova rinascente," Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

Other features of La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo that contributed to this modern, fantastic realm of consumerism were the store's interior decoration and merchandise displays. On opening night, the store was a "full efflorescence of light, of freshness, of fervor."[49] This efflorescence was, in part, due to the different color schemes that were used to create a unique atmosphere for each department. The varied and multiple color schemes, a technique that the Brustios and Borletti observed on their 1948 trip, diverged from the traditionally less varied color patterns found in European department stores up to this point.[50] Each department's layout and design, in addition to the distinctive color schemes, also created a specific ambience. In the home furnishings department on the third floor, the furniture display contained two ceilings that were lower than the apartment display on the same floor. The height variation gave a "more exact sense of a home environment."[51] The store's merchandise displays imitated the orderly and attractive layout of their American counterparts. It was noted that the "rationality that governs the disposition of the departments and the exhibition of the merchandise in every department, cordially directs, guides, and leads the customer" (most likely, to the product and then to the cash register).[52] Furthermore, the goods themselves also spoke to the customer. In the company's

[49] "L'apertura della nuova Rinascente di Milano," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM,* Ottobre-Dicembre 1950 Anno IV, n. 4.

[50] Relazione del 26 aprile 1950 – Sulla ricostruzione del Nuovo Grande Magazzino "La Rinascente" Milano – Piazza del Duomo, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[51] "Quattro interni della Rinascente Milano," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM,* Gennaio-Marzo Anno VI, n. 1, 4.

[52] "L'apertura della nuova Rinascente di Milano," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM,* Ottobre-Dicembre 1950 Anno IV, n. 4, 3.

magazine, the goods on display were described as "[peeping] from every expanse" of the display cases and shelving.[53]

La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo's exterior also revealed its American origins and inspiration. First, the store had a marble façade. This component is significant because the directors had observed the use of this precious stone on the exterior of I. Magnin & Co. in San Francisco. In 1949, after their U.S. trip, they traveled to the Candoglia marble quarries located to the northwest of Milan.[54] Second, in order to attract Italians walking through the town square into the new La Rinascente, the store contained an "open front," a typical feature of American department stores. The "open front" was a large glass window on the ground level incorporated into the exterior architectural scheme that permitted passers-by to see the interior of the ground floor. The "open front" was intended to substitute the traditional window displays which only provided a glimpse into the "the show of the department store itself."[55] However, the complete substitution of the displays did not occur since La Rinascente's directors believed that the Italian public still preferred traditional windows. As a result, a combination of the "open front" and window displays were used. Thus, the ground level exterior featured architectural divisions that alternated between entrance, window, and "open front."[56]

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Photo, "Visita alle cave di marmo di Candoglia," 6/10/1949, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[55] Relazione del 26 aprile 1950 – Sulla ricostruzione del Nuovo Grande Magazzino "La Rinascente" Milano – Piazza del Duomo, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[56] Ibid.

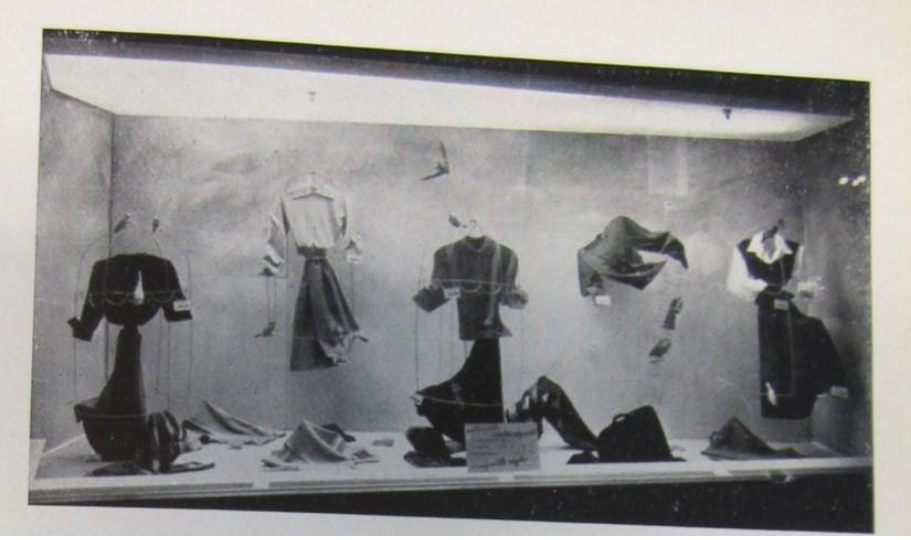

Figure 9 La Rinascente, Milano Piazza del Duomo, Window Display, 1950, *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM*, Ottobre-Dicembre 1950, Anno IV, N. 4
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

The new La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo was clearly influenced by American department stores. Because of this, the store was noted for its innovation and modernity which diversified it from the traditional European department store model. *Interiors* wrote in an article about the new store that "1950 can be remembered as the first year in which an architectural novelty, in Milan's central square, has attracted the public's attention, taking it away from the Cathedral, which up until now, was the traditional object of admiration."[57] The article also made note of the successful combination of American origins and Italian intuition and taste declaring this as the reason why La Rinascente "has surpassed them [European department stores] all."[58]

Those on the inside of La Rinascente also recognized and emphasized the important role that American elements played in elevating the store to the top of the European sector. During

[57] *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM,* Ottobre-Dicembre 1951 n. 4, 9.

[58] Ibid.

the store's construction, an article in *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM* wrote that the incorporation of information obtained during the directors' trip to the U.S. would make the store "the most modern among those existing outside of Italy, in all of Europe."[59] Upon completion, the store became a symbol for a reborn, renewed Italy. An article in *Cronache* highlighted the courageous aspect of this undertaking and emphasized the leading role that the company played in bringing Italy out of the depths of war. The article contended that La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo helped the famous Milanese city center recover its "normality…prestige…and above all, those signs of dynamism and industriousness that the eclipse, inflicted by the bombing of '43, had submerged."[60] Moreover, the new store "represented the hope that other private initiatives, imitating La Rinascente's courage, that wanted and knew how to act constructively without waiting for state compensation, [thus] intervening to heal the many wounds still evident on the national body."[61]

La Rinascente's president, Umberto Brustio, believed equally adamantly in the idea that the store was a source of inspiration for the Italian people still recovering from wartime destruction. Speaking to guests invited to the store's opening ceremony, Brustio said, "we firmly believe to have assumed and resolved a great commitment facing the city of Milan, facing our country, and above all to have assumed and resolved it in service of the great public."[62] Brustio

[59] "Premiazione Annuale del 'Fedeli dell'Azienda' 'Il programma della ricostruzione illustrato del presidente – La nuova filiale di Milano," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM,* Aprile-Giugno 1949, Anno III, n. 2.

[60] "L'apertura della nuova Rinascente di Milano," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM,* Ottobre-Dicembre 1950 Anno IV, n. 4.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

believed that the store served a political purpose as well. In a telegram announcing the store's opening sent to Italy's Prime Minister, Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi, Brustio wrote that La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo was a "prestigious, very modern, great emporium" that was a "work of peace." He concluded the telegram by addressing it to the "rebuilder of the new democratic Italy."[63] Taking into account the Cold War's significant presence in postwar Italy, Brustio's words illustrate the important role that American consumer culture played in the political, social, and cultural battle between Italy's Communist and Christian Democratic parties and their respective allies. Consumerism, which in the United States went hand-in-hand with democracy, and in particular, department stores, were seen as "peaceful" tools that could be utilized to prevent Italy from going Communist.

The Rinascente Company claimed that its Milano Piazza del Duomo location was a symbol of rebirth and transformation that was meant to inspire Italy and its people both still suffering from wartime damage and destruction. Although this claim might be an overstatement when one considers the deep cultural, regional, and social differences that divided the country, one aspect cannot be overstated—the store did indeed represent the movement of the country's economy and culture towards a consumer capitalist democracy that was at odds with the Italian

[63] "Gli auguri del presidente del Consiglio," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM,* Ottobre-Dicembre 1950 Anno IV, n. 4. Umberto Brustio's support of and reverence for De Gasperi are further revealed in a letter written to his son, Cesare, expressing his concern for Italy's future following the death of the former Prime Minister. He wrote: "I have a great fear in my heart for the death of De Gasperi—it is certainly a great loss for Italy…I do not see another similar personality in Scelba nor Fanfani…Maybe our country is headed for darker days. God forbid." Letter, Umberto Brustio to Cesare Brustio, 21 agosto 1954, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

Communist Party's vision for Italy. The symbol, the store itself, had deep American roots that were evident in its economic and political philosophies as well as in its tangible aspects. By incorporating elements from American department stores, La Rinascente directors succeeded in creating a similar shopping environment to the ones observed on their 1948 trip to the U.S. The resulting modern and, at times, fantastical ambience in the store engendered a change in the way that Italian women shopped at department stores. Now, Italy's upper and upper middle-class women would engage in a process that resembled that in which their American counterparts participated.

Bringing America to Italian Women: Consumer Products at La Rinascente

La Rinascente's female consumers not only participated in an American style shopping experience, they bought American products as well. Moving beyond Senatore Borletti's call for the stores to be by and for Italians, La Rinascente imported consumer goods from the United States. As previously noted, sixty-six percent of La Rinascente's UNRRA imports came from the U.S in the period immediately following the war. In addition to receiving imports from relief organizations, La Rinascente's directors also had their employees travel across the Atlantic to negotiate importation agreements. For example, in 1950, Signor Maestri, Attorney and Deputy Director of the Acquisitions Office, was sent to the States to obtain a license for importing American products that totaled approximately $20,000.[64] As a result of this trip and other efforts put forth by the company's directors to secure importation contracts, La Rinascente's stores featured American goods. The consumer products coming from the United States facilitated what

[64] Viaggio Signor Maestri, Milano, 7 ottobre 1950, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

Elena Papadia calls the "Americanization of daily life."[65] Once purchased, the items, which ranged from articles of clothing to household goods, became a part of the purchaser's, in this case upper and upper middle-class women, daily routine. As a result, Italian women's lives and routines were transformed into ones that began to resemble and take on characteristics of those of their American equivalents.

The American consumer product featured in La Rinascente that had the largest influence on its female customers was ready-to-wear fashion. At this time, fashionable European dress was associated with Parisian haute couture which had a strong influence on fashion in the rest of Europe, including Italy.[66] On the opposite side of the Atlantic, designers in the United States had made a reputation for themselves with their ready-to-wear lines. American ready-to-wear differed greatly from Parisian haute couture. Whereas the latter was characterized by intricate, handmade, expensive, limited quantity, and time consuming garments, the former featured simple yet chic styling and was manufactured, less expensive, and could be mass produced making the garments available to a greater and more diverse, in regard to class, group of women.

[65] Papadia, Introduzione.

[66] Italy did not have a strong haute couture tradition and there were a limited number of Italian fashion houses that dedicated themselves to this style. The main supplier of clothing for upper and upper middle-class Italian women was, the *sartoria*, or dressmaker. Typically operating independently, the dressmaker made garments that were based off the latest fashion trends in Paris. Thus, the resulting articles of clothing were adaptations of Parisian haute couture. Nevertheless, they were still characterized by "immense technical skill, precise construction and the use of high-quality textiles." Sonnet Stanfill, "The role of the *sartoria* in post-war Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 20, no. 1(January 2015): 85.

In many ways, American ready-to-wear fashion was symbolic of the country's capitalist, consumer-oriented democratic ethos.

American ready-to-wear was appealing and popular because of its modernity. It was fashion made for a modern woman living in what was seen by many Italians as the most modern country in the postwar period. An article in *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM* discussing American manufactured clothing remarked that the "tendency [in the United States] to simplify everything is a direct consequence of modern needs." The article also mentioned that the fact that "everyone voluntarily has accepted ready-to-wear fashion, is certainly the ability of the dressmaking, that has found a certain formula for taste corresponding to the needs of the modern woman."[67] Additionally, it made note of the clothes' affordable prices writing that in "[chain stores in the U.S.], one can find graceful clothes for few dollars."[68] American ready-to-wear's affordability and association with modernity made it very appealing to many Italian women who faced the difficult task of rebuilding their lives after the economically and socially devastating war.

Although a certain fascination surrounded American ready-to-wear in Italy, many felt that the style could not be brought to the country unchanged. For example, the same article mentioned that ready-to-wear fashion was becoming more popular in Italy, but without the excesses that were characteristic of American designs.[69] Additionally, La Rinascente's CEO, Cesare Brustio, also expressed disinterest in directly importing American ready-to-wear designs. During his visit to Houston's Neiman-Marcus in 1948, he highlighted a distinct difference

[67] "Gli abiti in serie si diffondano in Italia," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM* 1953, Anno VIII, 17.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

between American and Italian style traditions in an interview given to *The Dallas Morning News*. The article stated that Brustio believed that the "greatest difference [was] in the extreme femininity of the Italian" and quoted him as saying: "Here [in the U.S.], you feel the emancipation of women."[70] Brustio's and *Cronache*'s comments speak to the conservative manners and morals, deriving from the strong presence of Catholicism and strict fashion regulations during the Fascist period, that had a significant influence on Italian fashion in the postwar period. Therefore, American ready-to-wear fashion, if brought to Italy, would most likely have to be changed in some manner to suit the different social circumstances in which Italian women lived.

Despite this initial negativity towards the American designs, La Rinascente's directors recognized the style's growing importance in the fashion world. Because of this understanding and recognition, they decided to bring this fashion trend to their stores and their Italian customers. In 1950, the directors founded APEM, an Italian ready-made clothing manufacturing company. APEM's goal was to make "fashion no longer the preserve of a small circle of women."[71] Therefore, similarly to ready-to-wear's egalitarian effect in the United States, the clothing produced by APEM would work towards democratizing women's fashion in Italy.

Beginning in 1951, APEM produced ready-to-wear designs from the United States. Following the war's end, La Rinascente's directors signed an agreement with American ready-to-wear designers Henry Rosenfeld and Donnybrook giving APEM the rights to produce the

[70] "Italian Store Manager Finds Less Femininity in U.S. Clothes," *The Dallas Morning News*, November, 20, 1948, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[71] Amatori, 193.

designers' creations for the Italian market.[72] Fashion designs were not the only American items that were part of the Italian company. During manufacturing, APEM used American machines and "operated under American supervision."[73] Once the production process was completed, the garments were then featured and sold in La Rinascente stores throughout the Italian peninsula. APEM was successful in popularizing ready-to-wear fashion in Italy. By 1960, the company was producing 5,000 women's pieces a day which were rapidly being incorporated into Italian women's wardrobes.[74]

Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM expressed enthusiasm for the agreement between La Rinascente and the American designers, and the designs being produced. An article on the agreement stated that the clothes "have the miraculous virtue of giving or restoring youth to the

[72] Henry Rosenfeld was a New York born designer who started his business in 1942. His clothes, which were priced between $6.95 and $25, appealed to working-class as well as middle and upper-class women. For example, a shirtwaist that he made and that was sold for $12.95 was worn by film star Ginger Rogers and Elizabeth Impellitteri, the wife of New York's mayor in the early 1950s. This reputation for "[representing] a great value" earned him the monikers, the Henry Ford of the dress business and the Christian Dior from the Bronx. In 1964, he liquidated his company. Bernadine Morris, "Henry Jonas Rosenfeld Dies; Made Low-Cost Dresses Chic," *The New York Times*, February 6, 1986.

[73] Merlo and Polese, 445.

[74] Ibid., In 1955, ready-to wear clothing represented 22% of national consumption, 56% in 1965, and 75% in 1969. This increase was due not only to upper-class women purchasing the garments but women of the middle-class doing so as well. Moreover, the presence of ready-to-wear clothes in Italy was, according to Elena Papadia, "one of the driving sectors of the department store's expansion." Papadia, Capitolo quarto: Finalmente il decollo: il secondo dopoguerra.

female figure."[75] The article also discussed the clothes' immediate popularity in La Rinascente stores writing that "[they] aroused…the curiosity and interest of all the visitors and immediately elicited numerous requests."[76] In order to promote the new Rosenfeld and Donnybrook creations so as to arouse even more curiosity and requests among Milanese customers, La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo staged fashion shows displaying the designers' creations. The shows exposed members of the city's elite to the affordable, modern, "simple, linear, practical, and impeccably cut" clothes.[77] For the shows, a fictitious New York scene was created in order to fully show the benefits of American ready-to-wear fashion while the models "demonstrated how one could be elegant, during the day and how one could resolve any unexpected" occurrence thanks to her stylish yet practical clothes.[78] In addition to staging fashion shows, La Rinascente placed advertisements promoting the new fashions in the country's most popular weekly women's magazines. The advertisements highlighted the clothing's simple yet modern style as well as its affordability. For example, an advertisement for Henry Rosenfeld's designs at La Rinascente in the magazine *Annabella* read:

> Yesterday few women, today all women can be fashionable. The personality found in these dresses, its natural, sincere accent, its exquisite distinction. Simplicity is style, style is personality, personality is simplicity.[79] (Figure 10)

[75] "La moda americana," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM*, Ottobre-Dicembre 1950, Anno IV, n. 4, 18.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] "Modelli di primavera e d'estate – Sfilano al Tea Room della Rinascente di Milano," *Cronache della Rinascente - UPIM*, Gennaio-Marzo 1951, Anno VI, 8-9.

[79] La Rinascente Advertisement, *Annabella*, 22 aprile 1951.

The advertisement's emphasis on the clothes' affordability and simplicity appealed to the magazine's primary readers, middle-class women. These women did not have the same disposable income as the upper and upper middle-class women who attended La Rinascente's ready-to-wear fashion shows. However, the arrival of these low cost American designs meant that they could afford to purchase them. More importantly, it allowed middle-class women to participate in this process of being fashionable—a luxury that upper-class women almost exclusively enjoyed. While American ready-to-wear fashion gave middle-class women the opportunity to become part of this process, the less expensive garments left extra money in the pocketbooks of upper and upper middle-class women which they used to accessorize their outfits. American ready-to-wear fashion gained popularity among Italian women as they rapidly "orient[ed] themselves toward ready-made clothing."[80] In so doing, women from the upper to middle-class incorporated the chic, affordable, and modern clothes into their wardrobes. As a result, this style of clothing, deriving from the United States, became part of their everyday lives. It produced, as Elena Papadia has written, "a visible effect of uniformity of appearances, that manifested in the progressive weakening of distinctive signs of class, of social provenance, and geography."[81] American fashion played an important role in uniting Italian women from diverse classes and provenances in superficial appearance.

[80] "La moda americana," *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM*, Ottobre-Dicembre 1950, Anno IV, n. 4, 18.

[81] Papadia, Capitolo quarto: Finalmente il decollo: il secondo dopoguerra.

Figure 10 La Rinascente Advertisement, *Annabella*, 22 aprile 1951
Source: Centro Documentazione Periodici Rcs Mediagroup, Milan, Italy

In addition to American designed clothing, La Rinascente also carried other consumer products from the United States. In May 1958, the company staged a month-long show entitled *"Un mese d'America"* ("A month in America") in a 1200 square meters space in its Milan Piazza del Duomo location. The show, which was dedicated to the United States and its culture, was part of a series of shows in the store that displayed and sold products from and highlighted the cultures of countries around the world, such as India and Japan. The U.S. show was unique because, as the company's magazine pointed out, it was a well-known country about which Italians had already developed beliefs and opinions. While La Rinascente could present goods from less well-known countries through the lens of exoticism, Italians' familiarity with the U.S. and its vast consumer culture presented a challenge to the show's organizers who wanted to present an accurate and different picture of postwar America.

Therefore, the organizers chose to focus on creating an ambience that reflected the "great contemporary fairy tale" that was 1950s America. They wanted La Rinascente's customers, upon entering the space dedicated to "*Un mese d'America,*" to "find him/herself for the first time in the same mood in which one would find him/herself if, crossing the Atlantic, [and] doing the same shopping in New York."[82] In order to create the correct mood, the show replicated the abundance of consumer products, "that embarrassment of choice that is maybe the psychological element most characteristic of the American buyer," and their intrinsic modernity that characterized postwar American consumer culture.[83] The show contained over 5,000 pieces which were grouped into and shown together in the following categories: women; men; house

[82] "Un mese di America a Milano," *Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM 1958-1959*, Primavera 1958, Anno XI, n. 9, 12-15.

[83] Ibid.

wares, “probably the most imaginative for the infinite possibilities of inventions of which American house wares manufacturers prove capable”; children; furnishings; and old America “where a typical traditional American house [was] constructed.”[84] The goods on display included fabrics, clothing, perfume, leather goods, toys, and home goods. Pictures of the show in La Rinascente’s company magazine reveal some of the specific products featured: stuffed Disney characters, Libby’s and Del Monte canned fruit cocktail, toasters, and Suave beauty products. (Figure 11) By displaying so many items, the show’s organizers hoped to “preserve the modernity and the multiplicity of interests that are the characteristic elements of United States custom.”[85]

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

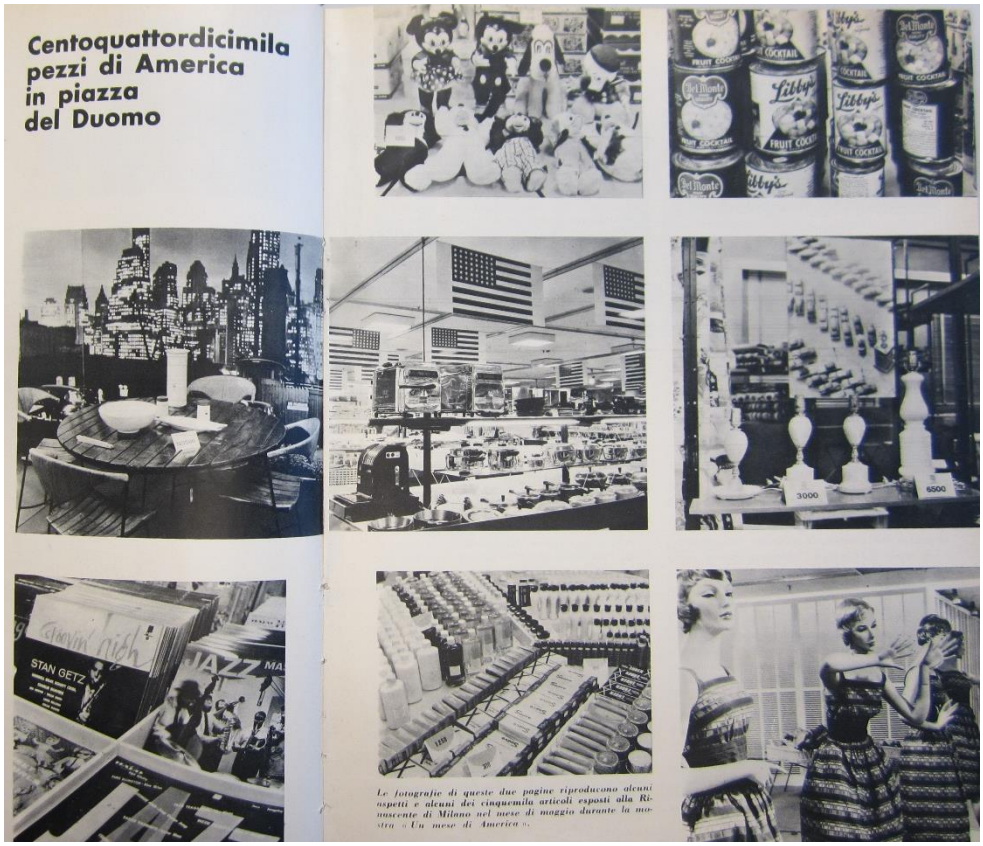

Figure 11 Items for Sell, "Un mese d'America," Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM 1958-1959, Primavera 1958, Anno XI, n. 9, 14-15
Source: Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

"*Un mese d'America*" brought American consumer products to La Rinascente's clients. More importantly, it replicated and immersed the customers in the atmosphere and state of mind characteristic of the United States' consumer capitalist democracy. Therefore, similarly to La Rinascente's rebuilt and redesigned Milan store, the show played an important role in exposing and orienting Italian shoppers towards an American way of shopping and an American style consumer-based economy.

La Rinascente and American Retailers

La Rinascente's connections with the United States in the postwar period went beyond the tangible consumer commodities discussed above. In addition to carrying and selling American products and incorporating American department store styles and techniques into their newly rebuilt stores, the company's directors sought to establish and maintain business relationships with American retailers that they hoped would put and keep La Rinascente atop Italy's retail sector.

La Rinascente began cultivating relationships with retailers in the United States following the end of the war. Umberto and Cesare Brustio's and Aldo Borletti's trip to the U.S. in 1948 to examine the country's department stores was an important moment in this case. In addition to collecting information on the department stores' construction, layout, and interior decorations, the directors also established relationships with the owners and management of several of the stores. For example, the trio met with R.C. Dexter, the Planning Director of Bullock's in Pasadena, during their visit to the store. In the three volume album reporting on the American trip, Cesare Brustio made note of the meeting and commented that Dexter "declared himself available to collaborate with us, for the study of our branch."[86] In Dallas, the Brustios and Borletti were personally invited to attend a Christmas fashion show at Neiman-Marcus by the store's owner, Stanley Marcus.[87] The connections made and the relationships established during this trip continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

[86] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 2, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[87] Relazione sul viaggio negli Stati Uniti D'America – 24 ottobre – 8 dicembre 1948 Vol. 3, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

In order to remain in good standing with their American counterparts, La Rinascente's directors found creative and profitable ways to express their appreciation for the warm and favorable reception they received in the States. Usually, this meant giving the American department stores some kind of presence in La Rinascente. In 1958, the Milano Piazza del Duomo store staged an exhibition of international shops on its fourth floor during the winter holiday season. Among the shops represented was Neiman-Marcus.[88] Three years later, La Rinascente collaborated with Macy's in New York on a sort of exchange program between the two stores. The initiative provided Macy's American clients who traveled to Italy with a paper submission for La Rinascente, and La Rinascente's Italian clients who traveled to the U.S. with a paper submission for Macy's. The taglines for advertisements promoting the initiative that were featured in the New York and Milanese press read:

> "Se non avete visto La Rinascente, non avete visto Milano.[89] If you haven't seen Macy's, then you haven't seen New York."
>
> "A Milano, fate i vostri acquisti dove li fanno i Milanesi…alla Rinascente.[90] In New York, shop where New Yorkers shop…at Macy's."[91]

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[88] *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM*, Inverno 1958,Anno XII, n. 12, 37.

[89] "If you haven't seen La Rinascente, you haven't seen Milan."

[90] "In Milan, shop where the people of Milan shop…at La Rinascente."

[91] *Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM*, Luglio 1961, Anno XV, n. 25. La Rinascente had worked with Macy's ten years earlier on an event dedicated to Italy and its consumer products that was held at the American retailer's New York Herald Square store. The event, "Italy-In-Macy's" lasted for two weeks in September 1951 and featured "over 1,000 handicraft and artisanal items, ranging from rugs to neckties to cheese" that were worth $1,000,000. Stephanie M. Amerian, "'Buying European': The Marshall Plan and American Department Stores," *Diplomatic History* 39, no. 1 (2015): 63.

By emphasizing the stores' centrality to their respective city's social and cultural lives and drawing comparisons between the two stores, the advertisements and initiative were part of La Rinascente's directors' efforts to solidify their relationships with American retailers. They truly believed and hoped that connections, such as this, would be beneficial for the Italian company as it sought to maintain its reputation for modernity, quality, and excellence.

In the period immediately following the war, La Rinascente had to rely on its European counterparts to make these crucial connections. For example, La Rinascente asked the Swiss department store Jelmoli, with whom they had strong relations before the war, for its assistance in contacting an American company that sold quality, fancy linen. For the Italian directors, obtaining the American product was a step towards re-establishing the company's reputation for providing quality goods for its customers. Additionally, the acquisition of material from the American company would help the Italian company in its recovery and facilitate its growth in this difficult period. In a 1946 letter, Jelmoli, on behalf of La Rinascente, asked E. W. Bruno and Co., an American company that represented international exchanges and also served as buyers for exports, for information regarding the American fancy linen house, Leacock and Co., Inc. Specifically, Jelmoli, asked if they "could let [them] know something definite about the general reputation and reliability of that above mentioned firm."[92] Four days later, E. W. Bruno, Co. responded by informing the store's representatives that Leacock and Co., Inc. was "one of the best Fancy Linen houses in the business," "[had] possibly been in the business for fifty years or

[92] Letter, Jelmoli to Messrs. E. W. Bruno Co., Inc., Zurich, July 8, 1946, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

more," and "[were] favorably known and highly regarded."[93] While it is unknown if La Rinascente eventually reached out to the linen manufacturer, the letters reveal the high regard that the Italian company had for the American textile business and in general, the country's commercial sector. Furthermore, the directors' request for Jelmoli's assistance shows that they were willing to use and did indeed use multiple channels to connect with U. S. retailers in order to grow and modernize their company.

Although La Rinascente maintained close relationships with the American market and its retailers, the directors believed that they were not as closely connected to commercial developments in the United States as they would like to be. Therefore, they opened an office in New York City in 1968. The office, located on the city's Upper West Side, was established on an experimental basis and was intended to last for one year.[94] The directors installed George D. Bryson, who had worked as a consultant for La Rinascente for eight years, as head of the office.[95] Bryson was asked to carry out the following tasks: "start and maintain regular contact with the American distribution companies;" "attentively observe" the U.S. market in regard to "every type of argument that could possibly be of interest to [La Rinascente], from commercial to commodity aspects to those of financial, technical, training in general and managerial in particular;" to "participate in seminars, conferences, and events" and to create proposals for the eventual participation of La Rinascente representatives; and "collaborate in the realization of

[93] Letter, E. W. Bruno Co., Inc. to Jelmoli, New York, July 12, 1946, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[94] "Ufficio de La Rinascente a New York,"*Cronache della Rinascente -UPIM*, Estate 1968, Anno XXI, n. 44.

[95] Letter, Cesare Brustio to George D. Bryson, November 28, 1968, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

progress on formation or specialization of our specially selected on-site staff."[96] According to the directors, accomplishing these goals would most certainly solidify La Rinascente's reputation as one of the most modern department stores—in design, selling techniques, and management—on the European continent.

Bryson was successful in garnering American interest in the Italian company. In the summer of 1968, he maintained steady contact with Paul Sticht, Director of R. J. Reynolds who was also affiliated with Federated Department Stores, and with Arthur Wood who represented Sears, Roebuck and Co.[97] The sets of communications between Bryson and the two men regarded the possibility of each of the representatives' firms, Federated and Sears, investing in the Rinascente Company. The letters exchanged between Bryson and Cesare Brustio discussing the former's progress on this topic reveal that American investment in La Rinascente would have not only a fiscal effect but a cultural effect as well. In preliminary discussions between Bryson and Sears regarding a joint investment, a proposal was made in which La Rinascente's UPIM stores would eventually be redesigned and reorganized to resemble and operate in the same manner as Sears' U.S. stores.[98] In a letter to Brustio following these discussions, Bryson informed his boss of Sears' seriousness in carrying through with the joint venture. He told Brustio that "Sears are talking about a 10% interest, or about $25 million…but they want to be

[96] "Ufficio del La Rinascente a New York,"*Cronache della Rinascente-UPIM*, Estate 1968, Anno XXI, n. 44.

[97] Letter, George D. Bryson to Cesare Brustio, June 21, 1969, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy; Letter George D. Bryson to Cesare Brustio, June 25, 1968, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[98] Letter, George D. Bryson to Cesare Brustio, August 1, 1968, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

sure that their methods and policies would be used as soon as possible in Italy with a view to increasing the efficiency and profitability of the business."[99] Despite Sears' willingness to invest in La Rinascente, an agreement was never signed. It appears that negotiations slowed after Ida Borletti, Aldo Borletti's sister, sold 4/5 of her share of the company to the Agnelli Family, owners of FIAT, and the Italian investment bank, Mediobanca, of which the Agnellis also had a share of the ownership. This sale left the Borletti group with a fifty percent share of the ownership, the Agnellis with forty percent, and the Brustios, who strongly believed in the importance and necessity of the New York office, with only about ten percent. Consequently, the Agnelli group, which was opposed to pursuing agreements with the American companies with whom Bryson had been working, gained leadership of the company thus diminishing hopes that the New York office would exist beyond its proposed one-year life span.[100]

On November 28, Cesare Brustio wrote a long and revealing letter to Bryson informing him of the approaching end of the New York office and Bryson's role within it. Brustio explained:

> the New York office is among the things not understood [by the owners]. I have insisted many times, but we know that talking is only useful if someone listens…In conclusion, dear George, I renew, if you will accept it, [your] contract for another six months, this is until the end of June; then we will see. For now, I have been given little hope of being able to continue.[101]

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[99] Letter, George D. Bryson to Cesare Brustio, August 5, 1968, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[100] Letter, Cesare Brustio to George D. Bryson, June 30, 1968; Letter, Cesare Brustio to George D. Bryson, August 5, 1968, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

[101] Letter, Cesare Brustio to George D. Bryson, November 28, 1968, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

Despite Bryson's and Brustio's failure to obtain American financial investment in the Rinascente Company, their efforts are significant. Their work demonstrates that even into the late 1960s, a time when both the U.S. and Italy were undergoing dramatic social and cultural changes that would questioned consumerism's primacy in each country, the Italian company still viewed the American retail market as "a market ahead by many years in respect to the European one" and thus, one that was still worthy of building relationships with and imitating.[102]

Conclusion

La Rinascente's directors' response to the wartime damage and destruction of their stores had significant consequences for Italy's postwar consumer culture and the women who participated in it. The Brustios' and Borletti's decisions to use the American department store as inspiration and the model for the reconstruction of La Rinascente stores, to sell American products, and to establish relationships with retailers in the United States, changed the way that their customers, primarily upper and upper middle-class women, shopped, interacted with consumer culture, and ultimately, identified themselves.

La Rinascente's adoption and adaptation of key elements of American department stores, such as the escalator, innovative merchandise displays, and varied color schemes, modernized and Americanized the stores. These architectural and aesthetic changes placed La Rinascente at

[102] Ibid. Following La Rinascente's change in ownership and leadership, the company facilitated U.S. retailing giant J.C. Penney's entrance into the Italian market. A new law on commercial licensing passed by the Italian government in 1971 allowed the American retailer to open four stores in Milan. Despite their promise, the stores were not successful and in 1976 they were sold to La Rinascente. Franco Amatori writes that this sale "contributed in a relevant way to reviving the fortunes of the very depressed Milanese company." Amatori, 234-235.

the top of Italy's postwar retail sector. Moreover, it earned the company international recognition and the reputation of being *the* Italian department store.

As a result, La Rinascente became a reference point for Italian women, from the upper to middle-classes, that wanted to be fashionable and modern in their public appearance (dress and beauty) and private appearance (house wares and household decoration). Women entering the stores were immersed in an environment that closely resembled the modern, welcoming, comfortable, luxurious, and at times, fantastical atmosphere that characterized department stores in the United States. These women purchased American commodities, such as ready-to-wear clothing and Max Factor beauty products, and subsequently incorporated them into their daily lives. Their purchases had the effect of partially eroding class distinctions that divided women throughout the Italian peninsula. Therefore, by shopping at La Rinascente after the Second World War, Italian women oriented themselves to *comprare all'americana,* or buying and shopping in the American way.

Because of this, American style consumer capitalism became a key feature of postwar Italy's rapid and astonishing economic recovery. This so-called "economic miracle" from 1958-1963 represented the country's emergence from the social, cultural, and economic devastation caused by twenty years of Fascist rule and brutal war. The opening of La Rinascente's Milan Piazza del Duomo store eight years earlier also served as a symbol for the country's rebirth and movement in a new direction. In an interview conducted in 1981, Gian Carlo Cillario, the company's former Commercial Co-Director, recalled that La Rinascente was "a great cultural reference point" and believed that "Italian society developed after the war due to two companies: Olivetti and La Rinascente." It was "their active presence in the social and cultural fields, their choice of goods with high design, their publicity style, and their openness to international

cultural movements" that contributed to the key role La Rinascente played in Italy's postwar development.[103] The striking fact about these two postwar symbols of Italian recovery and rebirth—the "economic miracle" and La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo—is that the United States and its mass consumer culture were at the center of each. These symbols demonstrate the primary position American consumer culture had in Italy's postwar recovery and modernization as well as changes to Italian women's culture.

[103] Intervista Gian Carlo Cillario, 7 maggio 1981, Archivio Famiglia Brustio, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy.

Chapter 3

The Arrival of Modernity and Tradition: The Refrigerator and Italian Women in the Postwar Period

Dino Risi's classic road trip film, *Il Sorpasso* (1962), is a vivid portrait of Italy's "economic miracle" and the centrality of mass consumer culture to the country's postwar development. The film, which follows the wild, charismatic Bruno, played by Vittorio Gassman, and the reserved and studious Roberto, played by Jean-Louis Trintignant, as they drive from Rome to Viareggio during Ferragosto, contains the material signs and symbols—highway advertisements for products such as Borsalino hats and Strega liqueur, gas stations, domestic appliance stores, cars, in particular Bruno's Lancia Aurelia convertible, and the American dance style the twist—of the country's dramatic cultural and economic transformation after the Second World War. Furthermore, it is imbued with the concepts, such as mobility, leisure time, and a carefree spirit, that characterized Italy's "economic miracle" and its citizens' mass consumption of material goods. Although *Il Sorpasso*'s main protagonists are men, one scene highlights the prominent roles that women played in this unprecedented transformation. While driving recklessly on the highway, Bruno and Roberto come upon an accident. Bruno pulls over and they exit the Lancia Aurelia convertible to observe the scene. The camera follows the two as they approach the accident—an overturned industrial truck and its cargo, bright, white, and gleaming Admiral refrigerators spewed on the side of the highway.[1]

Domestic appliances, such as the refrigerator and washing machine, were both economic and social symbols of Italy's "economic miracle." Economically, domestic appliances were one

[1] *Il Sorpasso*, directed by Dino Risi, 1962.

of the driving sectors of the country's industrial rebirth and growth. Socially, the appliances were status symbols demarcating one's societal position. Due to the appliances' high cost, only the elite were initially able to afford a refrigerator or dishwasher. This limited availability engendered desires for ownership and an elevation in social status among the middle and lower-classes that were unable to afford the modern technological devices. As Italian companies adapted the American domestic appliance model to fit the Italian context—smaller homes and lower wages— starting in the late 1950s, Italian families from the middle-classes were able to purchase these status symbols. As with other consumer products in postwar Italy deriving from the United States, Italian manufacturers played a role in democratizing these luxury items and making them available to the masses. The appliances' increasing presence in Italian homes, which themselves were more numerous in the postwar period due to the boom in housing construction, prompted changes in the homes' physical spaces, especially that of the kitchen. The modern American kitchen with domestic appliances as the focal points soon became the primary model for Italian kitchens.

Domestic appliances also affected the lifestyles of the family members that lived in the homes with the greatest effect being on the Italian housewife. The appliances assisted the housewife in managing her home and family, as well as in maintaining a clean home. More importantly, the devices bolstered the notion of the woman as "'angel of the hearth,' mother first and then wife, tutor of morality and affection."[2] Therefore, the new and modern appliances reinforced this traditional Italian Catholic notion regarding gender, while simultaneously making the housewife a primary protagonist of the country's modern "economic miracle."

[2] Luisa Tasca, "The 'Average Housewife' in Post-World War II Italy," *Journal of Women's History* 16:2 (2004): 94.

This chapter examines the presence of the refrigerator, an American invention, in Italy from the 1950s to the 1970s and the social and cultural transformations it prompted. The refrigerator, along with the washing machine, perhaps engendered the most profound changes to Italian housewives' culture during this period. The device, for example, altered the nature of women's customary shopping habits for food and the meals they prepared. While changes occurred that brought Italian women into a modern and technologically advanced society in regard to the places and processes associated with the purchase and consumption of food, their primary position remained that of the traditional housewife, dedicated to their wifely and motherly duties—a notion that echoed, if not emulated, the role of "Mrs. Consumer," the white, middle-class American woman of this same period. Thus, the refrigerator, an American product that entered Italian culture in the 1950s also brought along with it American female comportment norms that tied women to the home and the duties it required of them.

By tracing the refrigerator's development in the United States, its entrance into Italy and its dissemination, Italian manufacturers' connections with the U.S. refrigerator industry, and the alterations and modifications the appliance caused in Italian society, the chapter illustrates not only the ways in which the refrigerator symbolized the country's "miraculous" transformation, but also its effect on the Italian housewife which rendered the "American Dream" the "Italian Dream" and ultimately, in some aspects, made the Italian housewife a facsimile of her American counterpart.

The Refrigerator's Development and History in the United States

Beginning in the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, the United States underwent a process of industrialization that transformed its physical, cultural, and social

landscapes. As the country's public spaces industrialized, so too did its private spaces, especially that of the home. The increasing availability and use of electricity in domestic spaces as well as innovations in household technology led to what Ruth Schwartz Cowan calls the "industrialization of the home."[3] For example, the kitchen became a more mechanical and scientific space thanks to the incorporation of new domestic appliances meant to make food preparation and cleaning easier. Therefore, these appliances contributed to the "industrialization of the home" and had a significant impact on the kitchen and women's roles within this space.

It was during the first half of the twentieth century that the refrigerator earned its place as the focal point of the "industrialized" kitchen. Patents in the U.S. for the mechanical refrigerator dated back to the 1830s. These early refrigerators were commercially used, being implemented in food transport, beer brewing, and ice making. It was not until 1918 that refrigerators were first manufactured for domestic use.[4] In February of that year, the Kelvinator company, which had been developing domestic refrigerators since 1914, sold its first compressor based refrigerator for the home.[5] The American refrigerator sector, aided by the prosperity of the Roaring

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[3] Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 5.

[4] Ibid. 129, 131.

[5] A compressor is a motorized electric based pump that "controls the condensation and the vaporization" of the refrigerant, which keeps the refrigerator cold. The alternative to the compressor based refrigerator was the gas absorption refrigerator. Ruth Schwartz Cowan writes: "The gas refrigerator is an absorption refrigerator. Inside its walls, a refrigerant (ammonia, usually) is heated by a gas flame so as to vaporize; the ammonia gas then dissolves (or is absorbed into) a liquid (water, usually) and as it dissolves it simultaneously cools and condenses. The absorption of ammonia in water automatically alters the pressure in the closed system and thus keeps the refrigerant flowing, hence making it possible for heat to be absorbed in one place and released in another, just as it would be if

Twenties, soon took off and witnessed great expansion. By 1923, the industry consisted of fifty-six companies. Despite the proliferation in manufacturers, the refrigerator was not as widespread in American homes due to its high cost and the fact that the appliance was difficult to maintain.[6] During the 1930s, significant technological innovations were made that rendered the refrigerator less expensive, easier to maintain, and safer. By 1941, the industry was dominated by four companies: GE, Westinghouse, Kelvinator, and Frigidaire, which supplied the majority of the refrigerators that were in forty-five percent of American homes during this time.[7] The sector continued to grow after the Second World War. In 1953, the appliance was in 89.2% of American homes and by 1955 it was in 92.4% of homes.[8]

As domestic saturation continued to increase, American companies began to look for other markets. Western Europe and Italy, in particular, both undergoing a process of industrial, economic, and social rebuilding, presented themselves as particularly ripe markets for American exports. Moreover, the growing Communist threat posed by the Soviet Union and its opposition to capitalism and consumerism provided another impetus for the exportation of refrigerators to Europe. Thus, the refrigerator in Europe would economically benefit American industry while

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the flow of the refrigerant were regulated by a compressor. The absorption refrigerator, consequently, does not require a motor—the crucial difference between the gas refrigerant and its electric cousin." Although the absorption refrigerator was more efficient, made less noise, and easier to maintain, compressor based refrigerators became the primary model on the market because "its development was encouraged by a few companies that could draw upon vast technical and financial resources." Ibid., 128-129, 142.

[6] Ibid., 132-133.

[7] Ibid., 138-139.

[8] "Il mercato degli elettrodomestici negli Stati Uniti durante il 1954," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Febbraio 1955 Anno III, n.2, 22.

simultaneously aiding the U.S. government as a cultural weapon in its Cold War battle against Communism.

The Refrigerator's Development in Italy: American Connections

The Italian refrigerator industry's establishment and development in the 1950s were due in part to the American industry's desires to look abroad and the resulting business relationship that developed between the two groups. This relationship consisted primarily of production licensing agreements, the creation of Italian divisions of American companies, and the establishment of American owned and/or financed factories on Italian soil. Chicago's Admiral Corporation, whose refrigerators we encountered earlier on, was among one of the first American manufacturers to enter the Italian market. In 1953, Ross Siragusa, president of Admiral Corp., and son of Italian immigrants, traveled to Italy to visit the exclusive Italian vendor of his company's products, Società Mercantile Lombarda. *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, one of Italy's leading domestic appliance trade magazines, reported on this trip commenting that the Italian refrigerator industry would surely benefit from this relationship with Siragusa who was "bound to [the] country, not only by commercial relations but by affective ones as well."[9] Other companies, such as Crosley, Seeger Whirlpool, and Kelvinator, followed in Admiral's footsteps by signing licensing agreements with Italian manufacturers during the 1950s.[10] In the

[9] "Mister Siragusa, Presidente dell'Admiral Corp.' in visita alla 'Società Mercantile Lombarda,'"*Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Dicembre 1953, Anno I, n.2, 28-29.

[10] "La 'Società Italiana Scambi' ha realizzato la collaborazione Crosley-Breda," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Gennaio 1954, Anno II, n, 1, 24-25; "Condizionatori d'aria e gruppi frigorigeni per il mercato italiano," *Apparecchi*

following decade, American manufacturers set up Italian branches of their companies and established factories in the country. In 1961, both Philco and Kelvinator created their own Italian divisions, Philco Italiana S.p.A. and Kelvinator Italiana, respectively. Philco also opened two factories in the Lombardy region, one on the outskirts of Milan in Rho and the other in Robbio, about 50 kilometers southwest of the region's capital city. U.S. firms also took over operations of Italian domestic appliance companies. Studebaker, the American automobile manufacturer, became involved in the Italian domestic appliance industry when it purchased the Italian company Domowatt S.p.A, manufacturer of refrigerators and washing machines. After this purchase in 1962, Studebaker provided the capital for the construction of a new factory in the northwest Italian town of Leini, approximately 13 kilometers from Torino.[11]

Firsthand experience with the United States' refrigerator industry and market was another significant factor in Italy's refrigerator development. Similarly to other Italian industries and businesses seeking to either rebuild and reestablish themselves or make headway in their country's commercial and business scene after the war, refrigerator entrepreneurs, managers, and employees traveled to the United States to investigate and learn from the world leader in refrigerator production.[12] The May 1966 issue of *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* reported on an

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elettrodomestici, Febbraio 1956, Anno IV, n. 2, 42; "Kelvinator presenta sul mercato italiano uno dei migliori frigoriferi fabbricati nel mondo," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Marzo 1958, Anno VI, n. 3, 65-68.

[11] Thomas E. Bonsall, *More Than They Promised: The Studebaker Story* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 364; "Domowatt Punto di incontro degli interessi e della tecnica di due paesi" *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Giugno 1963, Anno XI, n. 6, 41-44.

[12] For other examples regarding Italian business travels to the United States for research in the postwar period see chapters 1 and 2.

upcoming touristic and research trip for twenty-three Italian domestic appliance factory owners and managers. During the research part of the trip, which was organized by American Express of Milan, the article noted that the Italian representatives would visit the Frigidaire factory in Dayton, Ohio and the Kelvinator factory in Grand Rapids, Michigan.[13] Italian manufacturers also traveled independently from the assistance of travel organizations to conduct research in the U.S. This was true for one of the most important Italian refrigerator manufactures, Ignis. In 1965, the company's president Giovanni Borghi and members of his staff visited the Frigidaire factory. The technical knowledge Borghi learned from this visit, which he subsequently implemented in Ignis's refrigerator design, had very important consequences for the Italian refrigerator industry, as well as for Italians themselves.[14] In addition to Borghi, Ignis's Commercial Director, Vittorio Ponti, also traveled to the United States to "acquire more knowledge of the language and to develop capillary action in the research of the American market and in sales promotion."[15]

Although there was a strong American involvement in the development and growth of the Italian refrigerator sector, Italian manufacturers did not produce a product that fully resembled its American counterpart. Instead, producers adapted the American appliance to suit the Italian context—a country that was recovering from the material and emotional damages caused by war and was thus in a strikingly different economic and social state than the United States. Beginning

[13] "Un gruppo titolari e dirigenti di fabbriche di elettrodomestici in viaggio negli USA," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Maggio 1966, Anno XIV, n. 5, 49.

[14] Borghi's discovery will be discussed later in this chapter.

[15]" Un saluto a Vittorio Ponti," *Ignis Press*, Marzo/Aprile 1966, Anno 7, n. 2, 16.

in the 1950s, Italy's industrial output, housing construction, and income levels all began to rise.[16] Although incomes were higher than ever before, the majority of Italians could not afford the costly imported American domestic appliances. Furthermore, Italian housing construction did not take on the form of ranch homes and suburban communities that characterized postwar American housing development. Rather, housing consisted of apartment buildings whose home units' interiors were smaller than American homes, and thus did not contain the necessary space for large American domestic appliances.

Recognizing these fundamental cultural and socio-economic differences, Italian manufacturers adapted the American refrigerator to fit specific Italian demands in order to guarantee success for their firms. Heeding the call from *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* to "simply adapt [the modern American kitchen and its appliances] to [Italian] real needs as much as one can and to not change habits," refrigerator producers made the appliance more affordable and smaller than its American counterpart.[17] For example, the refrigerator produced as a result of the licensing agreement between the American firm Crosley and Italian firm Breda had the same "refined aesthetics, classic lines, and extreme practicality" as Crosley's American product but

[16] Industrial output at the end of the war was at 29% of pre-war levels. According to Paolo Scrivano, "between 1953 and 1960, industrial production increased by 89 per cent and workers' productivity by 62 per cent." In regard to housing construction, figures rose from 73,400 in 1950 to 273,500 in 1957 to 450,000 in 1964. Paolo Scrivano, "Signs of Americanization in Italian Domestic Life: Italy's Postwar Conversion to Consumerism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40:2 (April 2005):320-321; Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 246.

[17] "Planimetria distribuzione estetica della cucina moderna,"*Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Novembre 1953, Anno I, n. 1, 15.

was thirty percent cheaper. Moreover, the appliance's exclusive vendor, Società Italiana Scambi, allowed for consumers to purchase the refrigerator on an installment plan so that a product of such "class and quality…[could] be a part of every family['s]" home.[18]

In addition to socio-economic factors dictating Italian refrigerator production, consumers' preferences also influenced manufacturers' decisions regarding product design. Harvey Williams, president of Philco, commented on the importance of consumer desires in an article featured in the January 1961 issue of *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*. He said that "in Europe…the public asks for refrigerators and washing machines that are smaller in size than the models preferred by the Americans." He also noted that there were "differences regarding the preferences in material, technical characteristics, etc."[19] Due to these consumer differences, as well as economic reasons that benefitted Williams' company, Philco established an Italian division and constructed an Italian factory that manufactured European style refrigerators rather than relying solely on exporting its American refrigerators to Italy.

The Refrigerator's Development in Italy: The Role of Mister Ignis, "Il re dei frigoriferi"[20]

Italian firms also incorporated technological innovations made in the United States to make the American refrigerator more appropriate for the Italian context. Perhaps the most important incorporation of American technology into the Italian refrigerator's design was made by the Ignis Company of Comerio, Italy in 1967 with their "Project Sirio," a line of refrigerators

[18] "La 'Società Italiana Scambi' ha realizzato la collaborazione Crosley-Breda," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Gennaio 1954, Anno II, n. 1, 25.

[19] "Notizie Philco," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Gennaio 1961, Anno IX, n. 1, 62.

[20] The King of Refrigerators

that promised to keep foods fresher than ever before. The Ignis Company, whose name means fire in Latin, was started by the Borghi family patriarch, Guido, and his three sons, Gaetano, Giovanni, and Giuseppe, in 1943 in Comerio, a small Italian town just an hour north of Milan. In the early years, the Borghi family produced small electric stoves with removable plates, liquid gas cookers, and mixed gas-electricity ranges. 1950 marked the company's transition from heat to cold production with the establishment of its refrigerator division, Società Industriale Refrigeranti Ignis S.p.A. (SIRI). The division's first electric refrigerators were produced the following year in 1951. The company's refrigerator sector enjoyed success from this point on and Ignis soon earned the reputation of being one of the leaders, if not *the* leader, in the Italian refrigerator sector.[21]

[21] This reputation was also due to the company's creative advertising slogan created in 1954—"Ignis frigoriferi d'Italia," which meant "Italy's refrigerators" as well as "Refrigerators from Italy." The latter meaning refers to the significant role that refrigerator exports played not only in Ignis's development but in Italy's economic development as well. "I primi cent'anni di Whirlpool Sognare e Osare. Dal fuoco latino al vertice americano: Dalla Ignis alla Whirlpool," Whirlpool Exhibition, Comerio, Italy. July 13, 2013.

Figure 12 Ignis, Frigorifero 180L, 1956
Source: "I primi cent'anni di Whirlpool Sognare e Osare. Dal fuoco latino al vertice americano: Dalla Ignis alla Whirlpool," Whirlpool Exhibition, Comerio, Italy.

Figure 13 Ignis Refrigerators in the Factory
Source: Ignis 25

Giovanni Borghi's trip to the United States in June 1965 to visit the Frigidaire factory in Dayton, Ohio marked another significant moment in Ignis's refrigerator production. During this trip, Borghi became aware of the American manufacturer's utilization of polyurethane foam, which was traditionally used in roof insulation, instead of mineral wool for the refrigerator's thermic insulation. The Ignis president believed that incorporating this innovation into his company's refrigerators would be beneficial for both consumer and manufacturer. For the former, Ignis refrigerators would be more suitable for Italian homes since the use of polyurethane foam resulted in the reduction of the refrigerator's overall dimensions while

simultaneously increasing its interior capacity.[22] For the latter, since the actual amount of polyurethane foam needed for each refrigerator, 23 centimeters, and the thickness of each sheet, 5/10 millimeter, was less than the 65 centimeters and 8/10 millimeter sheet thickness needed with mineral wool, Borghi was able to reduce the production costs. This reduction, in turn, resulted in a more affordable appliance for the Italian consumer. The decrease in production costs also allowed for the increase in Ignis's refrigerator production to 12,000 units a day and consequently, an increased presence on the Italian market.[23]

In addition to creating economic benefits for consumers, the use of polyurethane foam in the refrigerator's construction also improved the appliance's food preservation capabilities. Ignis's Project Sirio featured this American derived technology which permitted the refrigerator to have "two temperatures that played two distinct roles according to the conservation of each specific food."[24] In other words, the technology allowed for the complete separation of the refrigerator and freezer units. Moreover, the innovation also created a "humid cold," which Ignis called UMICLIMAT, inside the refrigerator that prevented food from dehydrating rapidly. Because of the more humid interior atmosphere, the company's refrigerators, such as the "Side-by-Side" model, allowed for food to be stored in the refrigerator for longer periods and produced "foods [that had] never been preserved so well."[25]

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[22] "La lunga storia del freddo," *Ignis Press*, Gennaio/Febbraio 1967, Anno 8, n, 1, 6.

[23] Gianni Spartà, *Mister Ignis: Giovanni Borghi nell'Italia del miracolo*, (Milano: Mondadori Editori, 2002), 40-45.

[24] "I giganti del freddo," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Agosto 1968, Anno XVI, n. 8, 35.

[25] "Una novità al giorno. I frigoriferi Progetto Sirio," *Ignis Press,* Settembre/Ottobre 1967, Anno 8, n. 4, 6; "La nostra pubblicità," *Ignis Press*, Gennaio/Febbraio 1968, Anno 9, n. 1, 11.

Figure 14 Ignis, Frigorifero "Side-by-Side" 540 L, 1968
Source: "I primi cent'anni di Whirlpool Sognare e Osare. Dal fuoco latino al vertice americano: Dalla Ignis alla Whirlpool," Whirlpool Exhibition, Comerio, Italy.

Accordingly, Ignis framed and advertised its Project Sirio as a "technological revolution in food preservation" and a significant achievement in terms of the scientific, cultural, and commercial renewal and progress of the Italian refrigerator industry, and of Italy and its people, in general. The company claimed that the refrigerator line had "nothing or almost nothing in common with the appliances presently on the market" and would therefore, "change the systems,

the structures, the characteristics: everything" of the existing refrigerator sector.[26] The name "Sirio" also contributed to the themes of "renewal," "progress," and "modernity" contained in the line's products. Giovanni Borghi said he chose the name "Sirio" because "it is the star that renews itself. A star that symbolizes our continuous technical and scientific progress."[27] Therefore, Project Sirio was a crucial step in the refrigerator's, as well as the company's development. Furthermore, according to Ignis publicity, the line was a significant moment in mankind's evolution. For example, one of the Project's main intentions was to "create the well-being of man."[28] This aim very much corresponded to the values of the democratic, consumer capitalist society, which promoted well-being through consumption, that was fully formed in the United States and was forming in Italy during this time due to the latter's business, cultural, and political connections with the former. Borghi admired the so-called "American way of life" and sought to have his products represent the concepts and characteristics that were inherent in postwar American consumerism.

The Refrigerator in Italy: The Product throughout the Peninsula

The combination of American involvement and connections with the Italian refrigerator industry, and Italian manufacturers' entrepreneurship and adaptation of the American product contributed to the Italian refrigerator industry's success in the 1950s and 1960s. The industry experienced a continual rise in unit production over a twenty-year period. In 1953, production

[26] "Una novità al giorno. I frigoriferi Progetto Sirio," *Ignis Press,* Settembre/Ottobre 1967, 7.

[27] "La Ignis annuncia frigoriferi rivoluzionari," *Ignis Press,* Settembre/Ottobre 1967, Anno 8, n. 4, 13.

[28] "Una novità al giorno. I frigoriferi Progetto Sirio," *Ignis Press,* Settembre/Ottobre 1967, Anno 8, n. 4, 6

reached 100,000 units and in 1957 over 400,000 units were produced.[29] Ten years later, the industry produced more than 3 million units making it the second largest refrigerator producer in the world, coming in behind only the United States which produced 5 million units.[30]

The constant increase in production is indicative of the appliance's increasing presence in homes in Italy and abroad.[31] In 1951, the first year of refrigerator production in Italy, the appliance could be found in 1.6% of Italian homes. Five years later, the refrigerator was in 8.31% of Italian homes.[32] Since Italy was still very much divided along economic, social, and cultural lines, it is important to take note of regional, population size, and class differences in regard to the refrigerator's diffusion throughout the country. A survey conducted by the Italian research institute Doxa in 1958 revealed that out of twelve million Italian families, approximately 1.365 million owned refrigerators. The concentration of refrigerator ownership was highest in the North with 15% and lowest in the South and islands with 7.1% while ownership in the country's central regions was 10.6%. In terms of population size, the

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[29] "Confronto internazionale," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Luglio 1958, Anno VI, n. 7, 24; "Una rassegna importante. La XXIV Mostra Nazionale della Radio e TV, La VI Mostra Nazionale degli Elettrodomestici," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Settembre 1958, Anno VI, n. 9, 43.

[30] "Tre milioni di frigoriferi," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Dicembre 1967, Anno XV, 12, 17.

[31] In addition to selling refrigerators domestically, Italian manufacturers also exported their products for international sale. In 1964, 926,081 refrigerators were exported, 1,305,122 in 1965, and 2,162,017 two years later. The Italian refrigerator industry's primary international markets were countries in the European Economic Community. "Vendite 'BOOM' di frigoriferi e lavabiancheria italiani sui mercati esteri," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Aprile 1965, Anno XIII, n. 4, 42; *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Marzo 1966, Anno XIV, n. 3, 27; *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Giugno 1968, Anno XVI, n. 6, 16.

[32] "Confronto internazionale," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Luglio 1958, Anno VI, n. 7, 31.

refrigerator appeared the most in communities with more than 100,000 people.[33] An article in the December 1957 issue of *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* explored the socio-economic status of Italian refrigerator owners. The article concluded that 62.1% of refrigerators were owned by those in the upper-class, 39.5% by the upper middle-class, 13.6% by the middle-class, and 1.6% by the lower middle-class.[34]

A yearlong series on the daily lives of Italian families published in *La Cucina Italiana*, Italy's leading culinary magazine, in 1958 confirms these figures. Among the socio-economically diverse families featured, only those of the upper and upper middle-class—the families of a doctor and head civil engineer for the state—possessed a refrigerator.[35] However, these families from the higher stratum of society had servants who assisted the wives with their everyday domestic tasks. Although the servants did not have the income to purchase a refrigerator, their job put them in contact with the appliance and the modern domestic environment and lifestyle it gave to its owners. In this way, American consumer modernity affected those who were unable to fully participant in Italy's growing mass consumer society by influencing their desires and aspirations, rather than concretely changing their domestic lives.

Overall, at the end of the 1950s, the refrigerator and the benefits it provided in terms of food preservation and preparation were enjoyed primarily by the Northern Italian upper and upper middle-class, which thus added to the appliance's exclusive status. The statistical

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[33] "La diffusione dei televisori-frigoriferi-lavabiancheria in Italia," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Maggio 1959, Anno VII, n. 5 32.

[34] "Il mercato degli apparecchi elettrodomestici in Italia," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Dicembre 1957, Anno. V, n. 12, 33.

[35] *La Cucina Italiana*, Gennaio, Febbraio, Aprile-Novembre 1958.

information presented here corresponds with other economic and industrial factors related to refrigerator production and usage that highlight Italy's regional divide that industrial development, consumerism, and the "economic miracle" helped to exacerbate.[36]

Encountering the Refrigerator

The refrigerator's increasing prominence in Italy begs the question of how Italians became aware of and came into contact with the appliance. The United States government's international diplomatic efforts, Italian and American manufacturers' business initiatives, and publicity campaigns and discourse on the device in the Italian press played a significant role in making the refrigerator one of the most desired appliances in the peninsula. Each entity publicized the refrigerator and the benefits it created for the Italian family, especially for the housewife. Both commercial and political motivations were at the basis of these entities' publicity campaigns. Because of the cultural, social, and financial disruptions, as well as the physical damage caused by the war, these groups used the refrigerator as a means of bringing modernity to Italy, reinforcing traditional gender roles, and creating a sense of security and

[36] Other important figures to consider are the location of refrigerator factories in Italy and power consumption throughout the peninsula. For the former, the highest concentration of factories was in the Northern regions. Lombardy had 66% of the factories, Piedmont 14%, Veneto 8%, and Liguria 6%. Tuscany, in central Italy, had 6%. In regard to power consumption, it was highest in Northern Italy at 69%. Central Italy came in at 18%, Southern Italy at 9%, Sicily at 3%, and Sardinia at 1%. "Ricerche di mercati – Frigoriferi: Alcuni considerazioni sulla produzione e le vendite,"*Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Febbraio 1961, Anno IX, n. 2, 26; "The development of the Italian electric industry and its role in the great expansion of the electric-appliances industries and market," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Marzo 1962, Anno X, n. 3, 38.

stability in a tense and very uncertain Cold War atmosphere. All of these concepts were central components of postwar and Cold War American democratic, consumer capitalist society.

While the initiatives of refrigerator firms, the U.S. government, and the Italian press—exhibitions at fairs and stores, advertisements, and articles—had a male presence, usually as purchaser, the Italian woman, in particular the housewife, was the primary target of these campaigns. This indicates that these groups firmly believed that women, through the incorporation of the refrigerator into their and their family's daily routine, would play the primary role in achieving the entities' aims. Using the white middle-class American housewife and her relationship with the refrigerator as *the* model, the publicity campaigns of the U.S. government, Italian and American companies, and the Italian press contributed to bringing modern, yet traditional forms of female domestic behavior and identity to Italy that tied women to the home.

Encountering the Refrigerator: *La Casalinga*[37]

In Italy, as in much of Europe, the First World War created the conditions for an increase in women's employment outside the home. However, after the end of fighting, the numbers of women engaged in extra-domestic work declined. In Italy, this general trend was "accentuated" by Fascist policies which "valorize[ed] female domestic labor" and exalted the idea that "domesticity constituted the natural realization of the Fascist woman."[38] Even though the regime mobilized many women for the Fascist cause, calling for their participation in Fascist sponsored

[37] The Housewife

[38] Cecilia Dau Novelli, "Le miracolate del benessere," in *Il miracolo economico (1958-1963)*, ed. Antonio Cardini (Bologna: Società Editrice Il Mulino, 2006), 94, 96.

organizations such as the *Fasci femminili*, this extra-domestic participation, however, was limited to welfare work. Therefore, by performing tasks such as distributing milk to poor mothers with children and "running holiday camps for poor and sickly children," Fascist women's welfare work promoted women's role as protectors of Italians' well-being, as well as the stability of Italian society.[39] Catholic visions of women's social roles also placed great emphasis on women's "natural" responsibility to the domestic sphere. As mentioned earlier, the Italian woman's duty was to be the "angel of the hearth"; she was to care for her children and husband and bring peace, order, and love to the home.[40] Following the fall of the Fascist regime and the end of the Second World War, much of these notions remained in place even though Italian women had courageously participated in the Resistance movement and worked in industry and service during the war, demonstrating their extra-domestic capabilities and worth.[41]

Contemporaneously, across the Atlantic Ocean, the modern "American woman" of the white middle-class was at the center of the United States' dramatic expansion of its consumer society and the democracy, abundance, and modernity it represented. Typically accompanying images of this woman were numerous products—modern, gleaming domestic goods, such as refrigerators and washing machines—that were a key part of the consumer-driven "American way of life." Since the majority of these new products were meant for domestic spaces, the home

[39] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 82-88.

[40] Ibid., 95,96

[41] Although there are no official numbers for women's participation in the Resistance, a considerable amount were part of the movement. Female participants varied by age and social class. Some of their Resistance activities included partaking in actual fighting against Fascists and Nazis, providing clothing, shelter, and food for male Resistance fighters, and serving as spies and messengers. Ibid., 101-105, 98.

became the site of the "American way of life." Therefore, the American woman, who was central to the domestic sphere, and the values and notions she represented, became important models for an Italy seeking to solidify traditional ideas regarding gender relations and societal roles, as well as propel itself into a period of modernity, prosperity, and security.

This American model in combination with the legacy of Fascist and Catholic notions regarding Italian women's domestic roles served to tie women to the home. The arrival of new domestic appliances like the refrigerator also played a large part in this process. According to Schwartz Cowan, "in the decades after the Second World War,…the allocation of housework to women had, almost literally, been cast in the stainless steel, the copper, and the aluminum out of which those [technological] systems [in this case, domestic appliances] were composed."[42] How exactly did the refrigerator, an inanimate object, do this? The publicity campaigns of the U.S. government, refrigerator manufacturers, and the Italian press gave meaning and significance, which promoted the traditional housewife model, to the appliance.

Encountering the Refrigerator: Fairs and Exhibitions

The United States government and Italian and American domestic appliance firms used exhibitions featuring the latest household technology at public trade fairs to promote ideals, such as modernity, individualism, and a high standard of living, inherent in consumer capitalism and that were embodied in the appliances on display. World fairs were important venues for the international dissemination of advanced technology and the scientific and engineering knowledge that produced it, as well as for instructing members of the general public that visited

[42] Schwartz Cowan, 212.

the fairs on "how to consume and appropriate [the] novelties."[43] At international fairs in cities such as Paris, West Berlin, and Milan, during the 1950s and 1960s, the refrigerator was displayed as part of the "modern American kitchen." This kitchen was a "certificate of modernity" for anyone who possessed any of its components since it differed greatly from the traditional European kitchen.[44] Whereas the stove was the "heart" of the kitchen in countries such as Italy, the mechanized, rational, and aesthetically pleasing American kitchen's layout was designed around the new streamlined domestic appliances, with the refrigerator typically at the center.[45] This transformation in layout, which was prominently featured in the model American suburban homes on display at the fairs, also marked a change in the kitchen's role in the home. It was no longer a secondary, aesthetically unpleasing, and unorganized space reserved solely for food preparation but, rather, a social space where the housewife "could receive her most intimate friends without fearing the usual discord created by old bulky and irrational furniture."[46] As Emanuela Scarpellini has pointed out, the Italian kitchen went from being Cinderella "in respect to other zones of the house" to "the 'queen' of the house" all because of the modern American kitchen's introduction to Italy.[47]

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[43] Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann, "Kitchens as Technology and Politics: An Introduction," in *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users*, ed. Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2009), 16.

[44] Emanuela Scarpellini, *A tavola! Gli italiani in 7 pranzi* (Roma: Editori Laterza, 2012), 174.

[45] Scarpellini, "Americanization and Authenticity: Italian Food Products and Practices in the 1950s and 1960s," in *The Making of European Consumption: Facing the American Challenge*, ed. Per Lundin and Thomas Kaiserfeld (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 115.

[46] "La donna e la casa," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Settembre-Ottobre 1954, Anno II, n, 2, 25.

[47] Scarpellini, *A tavola!*, 171.

At international fairs and American sponsored exhibitions in Europe, the United States government utilized the kitchen and its appliances to promote its cultural Cold War agenda: democracy and freedom achieved through the consumption of material goods. The most famous U.S. government sponsored display is the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow in which Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev engaged in the so-called Kitchen Debate—an argument over whether capitalism or Communism was the superior system for the postwar order. Although this is the most well-known exhibition of the American home and its technological wonders, and, according to Greg Castillo, is credited with "inducting model homes and household goods into the Cold War," U.S. government use of domestic goods as cultural weapons in fairs started ten years earlier in West Berlin.[48] From that point on, throughout the 1950s, government agencies, such as the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) and the Mutual Security Agency (MSA), organized and provided funding for the display of full-scale models of American suburban homes across Europe.

In light of the tense and uncertain Cold War and distinct socio-economic situations and beliefs in the U.S. and Soviet Union, the government determined that female consumers could be important bulwarks against the spread of Communism in Europe. Accordingly, the model homes featuring the latest in domestic appliance technology (including that in refrigeration) were specifically targeted at women. Therefore, the government's support of these exhibitions illustrated its hope that by purchasing the appliances on display, European women would not only be partaking in the "American way of life" and its high standards of living but they also

[48] Greg Castillo, "Domesticating the Cold War: Household Consumption as Propaganda in Marshall Plan Germany," *Journal of Contemporary* History, 40: 2, (April 2005): 262.

would be building barriers, made of material products, against the potential spread of Communism. In so doing, the government made the refrigerator and other domestic appliances cultural Cold War weapons and rendered women front line soldiers in this battle.

At Italy's most famous and largest trade fair, Fiera Campionaria di Milano, American government sponsored exhibitions contributed to drawing women back to the home.[49] Perhaps the most notable display was the Main Street USA exhibit, co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Commerce, the magazine *House Beautiful*, the Producer's Council, the National Association of Home Builders, and the Prefabricated Home Manufacturers' Institute, at the 1955 Fiera. This display marked the government's first official appearance at the internationally recognized fair. The exhibition consisted of a three room suburban house filled with all of the modern technology and gadgets available to postwar American families.[50] The popular Italian women's magazine *Annabella* provided a vivid description of the kitchen, or "the housewife's paradise" as the article's author referred to it, for its readers:

> In the kitchen, everything is the color of a yellow grapefruit, the refrigerator has a large compartment for frozen foods, the washing machine for clothes and a [dishwasher] for the dishes…[51]

[49] The first Fiera Campionaria di Milano was held in April 1922 and attracted more than 360,000 visitors over its fifteen-day course. According to the Fondazione Fiera Milano's historic archive, domestic appliances first appeared at the Fiera in the 1930s. The annual fair was suspended from 1943-1945 due to the war and recommenced activities on September 12, 1946. Throughout the following decades, the number of participants and exhibitors, as well as the Fiera's national and international importance, continually increased. For example, the number of exhibitors at the 1966 event was twelve times that of the 1946 Fiera. Additionally, the Fiera averaged four million visitors per edition. Fondazione Fiera Milano, Archivio Storico, http://ffm-archiviostorico.etweb.it/index.html

[50] Scrivano, 329.

[51] "Viaggio in America (alla Fiera di Milano)," *Annabella*, 24 aprile 1955, Anno XXIII, n. 17, 40.

Carefully curated and prepared displays, such as Main Street USA's kitchen, achieved the groups' goal of "[presenting] 'the people of Europe with a life-size picture of how Americans [lived].'"[52] However, their aims were much deeper than this simplistic and superficial goal. Taking into consideration the motivating factors for the government's previous and future sponsorships of American home exhibitions in Europe, it is clear that it sought to influence and change Italian domestic customs so that they would be aligned with those of the democratic, consumer capitalist West. For example, Main Street USA featured hostesses—"beautiful girls with the figure of a model, all dressed in a perfect blue suit that clearly shows that even though they are in Italy, they haven't yet eaten spaghetti"—demonstrating the "American way of life" and its material comforts.[53] These hostesses were not there to simply teach Italians about the American lifestyle. Instead, they provided a tangible, visual image of the beauty and style that was being preserved, if not elevated, by the modern American home. The organization of the Main Street USA exhibit in this way reveals the government's deeper ambitions. It hoped that the exhibit would urge Italian women to purchase the products on display and, in so doing, women would find their proper place in the home, as well as adopt the characteristics and roles of the American housewife.

American domestic appliance manufacturers also presented their products at the Fiera di Milano in the postwar period. In the 1950s and 1960s the Fiera was "a showcase of progress" and the "principal place to see the new technology in action before bringing it home."[54] Thus, for these companies, it was *the* place to present their latest and most technologically advanced

[52] Scrivano, 329.

[53] Viaggio in America (alla Fiera di Milano)," *Annabella*, 24 aprile 1955, 40.

[54] Fondazione Fiera Milano, Archivio Storico, http://ffm-archiviostorico.etweb.it/index.htm

products. American domestic appliance firms, such as Philco, Admiral, and Kelvinator, were a constant presence at the annually held fair throughout the Fifties and Sixties.[55] While it is unknown if private American companies explicitly targeted women visitors as the American government agencies did, their displays were successful in attracting female attention. An article in *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* declared that Pavilion 28 at the 1956 edition of the Fiera should no longer be known as the Pavilion of Domestic Appliances and Small Business Suppliers, but rather as "Pavilion 28, where the women stop and the men sigh."[56] Attractive and appealing refrigerator displays, such as the one for Frigidaire's new 126 liter capacity "Kombi" refrigerator, encouraged women to buy the new products, and if they could not afford a new refrigerator, they mentally prepared themselves, their families, and their homes for the eventual purchase of the appliance. This latter behavior was more important than the actual purchase according to the magazine since women "formed the domestic appliance mentality: [which made] the appliance and its modern technology that offer[ed] more comfort…and rest at home, indispensable."[57] American manufacturers', as well as Italian firms' displays contributed to making the refrigerator and their other domestic appliances desired status symbols that were capable of binding women to the domestic sphere and to the duties it required of them.

Encountering the Refrigerator: The Role of the Italian Press

[55] This information was obtained from my examination of *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* from 1953-Gennaio 1974.

[56] "Padiglione 28. Dove le donne si fermano e gli uomini sospirano," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Aprile-Maggio 1956, Anno IV, n. 4, 29.

[57] Ibid.

Although the Fiera di Milano was the most important public forum for domestic appliance manufacturers to present their products, these companies also created their own public displays to promote them. Both American and Italian firms had showrooms and stores throughout the Italian peninsula, with the majority located in Milan and the surrounding area. These showrooms and stores provided another avenue besides the Fiera for the general public to see and interact with the appliance.

For the groups of Italians unable to physically see and interact with the refrigerator and other domestic appliances on display at fairs or in dealers' showrooms, the Italian press, in particular women's, culinary, and trade magazines, brought the appliance, its "miraculous" benefits, and ideas regarding women's domestic roles to this population sector. For example, the March-April 1956 issue of *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* featured an article on a "first look" event staged by Philco for the Italian press at the company's Milan headquarters. The event, which featured Philco's newest products, was hosted by Miss America. It was her duty to instruct the invited guests on the way the appliances functioned and the benefits they provided for both their users and the Italian household. Miss America, who was known for being one of the most beautiful and talented young women in the United States, was used to illustrate one benefit in particular: domestic appliances' capability to bestow upon their female users the restoration and, even, elevation of one's beauty. The article reporting on the event wrote that "the figure of the fascinating woman never harmonized better with the modern comfort and genteel atmosphere" of the domestic appliance filled house.[58] During the presentation of the appliances,

[58] "Miss America deliziosa ambasciatrice della 'PHILCO'," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Marzo-Aprile 1956, Anno IV, n. 3, 52.

> the mistress of the house, the woman of dreams, exquisitely beautiful, fine, delicate, and cultivated, wandered about with infinite grace among the most modern appliances of her kingdom, that man knew to create because her beauty remains intact, not being contaminated by [the] fatigue and exertion [associated with housework not assisted by the modern, technological wonders].[59]

The eighteen-year-old Miss America affirmed this benefit when she told the magazine that with the refrigerator and other appliances, "kitchen work becomes a true pleasure and obtains amazing results without any exertion."[60] These "results" had a double meaning. First, Philco's products eliminated much of the difficulty and lengthiness associated with food preparation and kitchen clean up while producing the same, if not better, results in terms of meal quality and cleanliness. Second, the appliances preserved the woman's beauty. In other words, her beauty was not damaged by the drudgery and toil of traditional, non-mechanized kitchen work. Miss America's presence promoted the notion that the kitchen and the rest of the home was an ideal place for the woman due to modern appliances that brought comfort to life's daily domestic tasks. By having the pageant winner as hostess and "ambassador" for Philco products, the event served to reinforce the ideas of domestic caretaker and contented housewife, derived from traditional Catholic, Fascist, and postwar American female models.

Similarly to Philco's use of Miss America as product spokesperson, magazines featured women's voices in interviews and advertisements as a way of instructing Italians on how to use the refrigerator, as well as to reveal the benefits it created for its users. In the mid-1950s, *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* featured interviews with Italian female film stars that highlighted their relationship with domestic appliances. Actresses, such as Sofia Loren and Silvana

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., 53.

Pampanini, praised the appliances' time saving, comfort creating, and beauty preservation qualities. For example, Pampanini declared: "I am truly an advocate of domestic appliances; they alleviate manual labor, simplifying it and rendering it pleasurable and fast."[61] When asked if "domestic appliances contributed to preserving a woman's beauty," she responded: "Certainly, with modern appliances, the housewife can always be fresh and in order."[62] Loren also spoke about "the easier and more comfortable life" that domestic appliances created for women and said that the refrigerator was the appliance that "during work…relieved [her] of the effort and fatigue" associated with food preparation.[63] Interviews featuring celebrities, such as the two discussed here, were part of a larger collection of articles in Italian periodicals during this period that featured actresses discussing and doing everyday domestic tasks. These magazine features, Reka Buckley contends, set the celebrities "up as accessible, 'real' women with whom readers of women's magazines could identify and to whose lifestyles they could aspire."[64] Therefore, the stars' praise of domestic appliances, including the refrigerator, lent credibility to and gave the devices social capital, thus making the interviews an effective tool in orienting the magazines' female readership towards desiring a refrigerator and the domestic lifestyle it entailed.

The ordinary woman in domestic appliance print advertisements that was meant to represent and appeal to the majority of Italian women also played a part in bringing women back to and keeping them in the domestic sphere. Aesthetic benefits created by the refrigerator were

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[61] "Silvana Pampanini…e gli elettrodomestici," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Dicembre 1954, Anno II., n. 12, 29.

[62] Ibid., 30.

[63] "Sofia Loren…e gli elettrodomestici," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Febbraio 1955, Anno III, n. 2, 24, 25.

[64] Reka Buckley, "Marriage, Motherhood, and the Italian Film Stars of the 1950s," in *Women in Italy, 1945-1960: An Interdisciplinary* Study, ed. Penelope Morris, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2006), 44.

one of the most prominent messages in advertisements for the appliance. Frigidaire's "Sheer Look" refrigerator advertisement from 1957 contained a picture of the company's modern, streamlined product with a woman in an elegant white dress and elbow length black gloves standing next to it.[65] This illustration implies that the refrigerator's time-saving and effort reducing benefits resulted in women being able to retain their beauty, or, in this case, their "Sheer Look." (Figure 15)

[65] "Sheer Look" Frigidaire advertisement, *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Febbraio 1957, Anno V, n. 2, 4.

Figure 15 Frigidaire "Sheer Look" Advertisement, *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Febbraio 1957
Source: Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense. By permission of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism[66]

Two Ignis's advertisements from later in the postwar period also evoke the aesthetic preservation theme. The first advertisement, entitled "In Happy Hours," pictures an elegantly dressed young couple—the man is wearing a tuxedo while the woman is wearing a red gown—sitting across from each other on stools in front of an open and completely stocked refrigerator.

[66] Reproduction or duplication by any means are prohibited.

(Figure 16) It appears that they have just returned home from a late evening of fun (the clock on the wall reveals that it is just past 3:00 a.m. and an open bottle of champagne on the floor suggests that the two are celebrating). The woman looks especially tired, if not completely exhausted. Her heels are off and she is leaning on the refrigerator for support. But, as the advertisement suggests, thanks to the refrigerator's ability to store and preserve food that can be eaten on a moment's notice, she does not have to cook and endure the fatigue, hard work, and damage to her beauty that comes with food preparation in order to feed her hungry husband—who is the only one eating in the advertisement. Although exhausted, the woman manages to still look beautiful and content while performing her role as domestic caretaker, no matter what the hour, because of the benefits provided by Ignis's refrigerator.[67]

[67]"In Happy Hours," Ignis advertisement, *La Cucina Italiana*, Gennaio 1958 Anno VII, 79.

Figure 16 Ignis "In Happy Hours" Advertisement, *La Cucina Italiana,* Gennaio 1958
Source: Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense. By permission of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism[68]

The second Ignis advertisement promoting the company's Frigocongelatore "Quattro Stelle" features a picture of a smiling, clean, and orderly woman with two shopping carts filled to the brim with food. (Figure 17) In addition to highlighting the fact that the refrigerator's freezer compartment allows for food to be preserved longer than ever before ("from a month, to six months, up to a year"), the advertisement's text also urges women to "think of the convenience

[68] Reproduction or duplication by any means are prohibited.

of not having to cook every day."[69] As in Frigidaire's "Sheer Look" advertisement, the "conveniences" created by this refrigerator are not only time-saving but aesthetic as well, which is represented in the protagonist's fresh, youthful, and smiling visage.

Figure 17 Ignis "La tecnica…i vantaggi" Advertisement, *La Cucina Italiana*, Giugno 1975
Source: Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense. By permission of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism[70]

As is evident in the three advertisements examined, the refrigerator gave women more than just relief from strenuous and involved food preparation and additional time for leisure

[69] "La tecnica…i vantaggi," Ignis Frigocongelatore "Quattro Stelle" advertisement, *La Cucina Italiana*, Giugno 1975 Anno XLVI.

[70] Reproduction or duplication by any means are prohibited.

activities; it also helped them protect and maintain their beauty. Taking into consideration a survey on domestic appliance advertising that concluded that refrigerator advertising was 78.03% effective, one can assume that refrigerator advertisements, such as the ones discussed above, were effective tools for transmitting traditional and restrictive concepts about the relationship between women, the refrigerator, and domestic roles to Italian magazine readers.[71]

Other concepts and benefits prominently promoted in magazine articles on and advertisements for the refrigerator reflected key components of Cold War American consumer society—individualism, privacy, security, and stability—that juxtaposed Communist collectivist concepts. From the beginning of the refrigerator's arrival in Italy, magazine articles declared the appliance as a necessity for a modern, civilized, and consumer-based society of which the United States was the best example and which Italy was trying to become. In *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*'s inaugural issue, the editorial emphasized that the acceptance and acquisition of the new domestic appliances was a crucial stage in Italy's path towards modernity. Additionally, it established a connection between the concepts of individualism and modernity, which were at the heart of American consumerism. The editorial contended that purchasing domestic appliances "marked the entrance into modern civilization through the always open doors of individualism."[72]

Individualism's reification in the refrigerator and other domestic appliances contributed to the development of new roles and responsibilities for the Italian family unit, as well as a new

[71] "Risultati sommari di una indagine sulla pubblicità degli apparecchi elettrodomestici," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Ottobre 1955, Anno III, n. 10, 43.

[72] "Per una più vasta diffusione degli apparecchi elettrodomestici," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Novembre 1953, Anno I, n. 1, 3.

family form—the private, nuclear family based on the American model. Scarpellini writes that "electrical appliances defined the family more and more as a self-sufficient unit of production and consumption, creating an intimacy and rituality that regulated the rhythm of domestic life and ended by defining new status levels."[73] By acquiring domestic appliances and incorporating them into family members' daily lives, the Italian family became less of a communal unit and more of a private one that promoted traditional gender roles.

The private, nuclear family assumed another important responsibility in the postwar period—symbolizing and ensuring security and stability in a tense Cold War situation. In the United States, this family type represented stability and guaranteed protection against the menacing communal, collectivist Soviet family model. Elaine Tyler May contends in *Homeward Bound*, that "like their leaders, Americans agreed that family stability appeared to be the best bulwark against the dangers of the Cold War."[74] The home, the site to which the family was rooted, and its technological components also came to represent the security that modern, consumer capitalism created in an unstable and threatening Cold War atmosphere. More specifically, domestic appliances combated the collectivism inherent in Communism since they permitted the housewife to independently, rather than collectively, perform domestic duties. For example, she did not have to wash clothes at a public washing station or rely on the assistance of others in regard to food preparation due to the presence of appliances such as the washing

[73] Scarpellini, *Material Nation: A Consumer's History of Modern Italy*, translated by Daphne Hughes and Andrew Newton, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 148.

[74] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 9.

machine and refrigerator.[75] Therefore, the appliances facilitated women's removal from a more public life.

In Italy, a country simultaneously dealing with lasting memories of war deprivation and a strong Communist presence, the private, nuclear family and its domestic appliances also assumed these same meanings. This development, however, was not solely rooted in the Cold War experience as it was in the United States. Instead, Italians' experiences during Fascist rule and a devastating and destructive war caused the nuclear family and domestic appliances to become symbols of security and stability. During the Fascist years, the regime's autarkic policies combined with deflation and an economic crisis led to the use of poor substitutes for popular foods and in many cases, the absence of common items. For example, "Ethiopian red sorrel [was used] in place of English tea [and] chicory in place of coffee."[76] Surveys on the public's relationship with domestic appliances conducted during the Fifties and Sixties illustrate their association of domestic appliances with security and stability. For example, a research study conducted by the American advertising firm Weiss and Geller on the reasons why the public bought refrigerators concluded that "the refrigerator represented, for many, the guarantee that

[75] In *La rivoluzione candida: Storia sociale della lavatrice in Italia (1945-1970),* Enrica Asquer examines the washing machine's arrival in Italy and how it affected Italian women. She argues that the washing machine transformed the traditional ritual of washing clothes making it less communal and more private. Women no longer washed clothes together at the local river or public washing areas but did their laundry alone in their homes. This transformation in the clothes washing ritual caused Italian women's lives to become more private and thus, resembling the modern American housewife. Enrica Asquer, *La rivoluzione candida: Storia sociale della lavatrice in Italia (1945-1970)* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2007).

[76] Scarpellini, *A tavola!*, 136.

there is food in the house, and the presence of food, in turn, represented stability, security, and affection" that was lacking before and during the war.[77]

Due to research studies such as these, refrigerator manufacturers incorporated the themes of security and stability into their advertisements and magazines emphasized them in their reporting on the appliance. Refrigerator advertisements, such as Ignis's "In Happy Hours" discussed previously, from the 1950s to the 1970s commonly featured the picture of either a fully stocked refrigerator or an empty one ready to be filled with food.[78] Interviews with Italian men and women who became newlyweds and started families during Italy's "economic miracle" also illustrate the importance of having a refrigerator and other modern material possessions that filled the domestic space during this time. According to Enrica Asquer, her interviews with members of Milan's and Cagliari's white collar middle-class during Italy's dramatic cultural, social, and economic transformation reveal that there was a clear connection between the "domestic space and the sentiment of economic security."[79]

The refrigerator's arrival in Italian homes introduced various messages to Italians that espoused the appliance's multiple benefits, the importance of the private, nuclear family, and the traditional gender roles contained within this construct. The majority of the messages that Italians encountered at fairs and exhibitions or in the press derived from concepts inherent in the

[77] "Pubblicità. Un'occhio aperto sul mercato comunale – Il frigorifero e la psicanalisi," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Dicembre 1958, Anno VI, n. 12, 37.

[78] A majority of the refrigerator advertisements from the magazines *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, *La Cucina Italiana*, and *Annabella*, contained photos and illustrations of the refrigerator in these two ways.

[79] Enrica Asquer, "Domesticità italiane: discorsi, conflitti, memorie dagli anni del boom," in *I consumi della vita quotidiana*, ed. Emanuela Scarpellini, (Bologna: Società editrice Il Mulino, 2013), 95.

United States' postwar democratic, consumer capitalist society. But, similarly to Italian refrigerator manufacturers' adaptation of the American refrigerator, Italians used their own history and life experiences to imbue the product with more relatable significance. However, this addition did not alter the effectiveness of refrigerator campaigns in bringing Italian women closer to resembling their American counterpart—Mrs. Consumer, the white, middle-class housewife. In fact, the increasing numbers of Italian women who identified themselves as housewives in the postwar period—from 10.5 million in 1951 to over 12.6 million ten years later—illustrates this point.[80] Therefore, the campaigns rendered the refrigerator a desired commodity and a status symbol capable of making Italian housewives modern women that performed traditional roles.

Transformations in Food Shopping

The refrigerator's arrival in Italy also led to transformations in women's roles in food preparation and purchasing. The developments in refrigeration technology made in the postwar period, such as Ignis's UMICLIMAT and the inclusion of freezer compartments, allowed for foods to be preserved for longer periods of time. This increase in food longevity resulted in the reduction of time that Italian female refrigerator owners dedicated to shopping for food. For example, *La Cucina Italiana*'s advice columnist "Caterina" responded to one reader's concern regarding the potential purchase of a refrigerator by highlighting the appliance's time-saving benefits. She wrote:

[80] Novelli, 209. Luisa Tasca also discusses the increasing presence of Italian housewives in her article "The 'Average Housewife' in Post-World War II Italy." She writes that this position "was the only female profession on the rise." Tasca, 99.

> Think, that with a refrigerator you can avoid having to go out every day to buy food; you can preserve food that would otherwise deteriorate; you can purchase food when the occasion presents itself (for example, one cannot find everything from the butcher that one needs every day of the week)…[the refrigerator] is not a luxury, but a time, energy, and money saver.[81]

Furthermore, the refrigerator gave housewives "the pleasure of planning family meals a day in advance" since they could purchase ingredients for a meal to be made later in the week knowing that the appliance would keep the food as fresh as the day on which it was bought.[82]

The reduction in time spent on food shopping also meant a decrease in the social aspect of the process. Because the housewife could now keep food for longer periods of time she no longer had to buy food as frequently as she had to when she did not own a refrigerator. Consequently, the time spent shopping at small, local food stores, in which social interactions were part and parcel of the commercial exchange, declined. Thus, the consumer did not enjoy the same frequency of conversation with the stores' owners, employees, and other customers with whom she had most likely developed a friendly relationship. As a result, women's roles in regard to food shopping became less social and less communal.

The supermarket, an American institution, supported this alteration in women's food shopping practices. The American company, International Basic Economic Corporation (IBEC) founded by Nelson A. Rockefeller, provided the model and capital—along with Italian funds from textile entrepreneurs Bernardo and Guido Caprotti, Mario and Vittorio Crespi, owners of Italy's leading newspaper *Corriere della Sera,* and other Italians —for Italy's first successful

[81] "La posta di Caterina," *La Cucina Italiana*, Novembre 1952, Anno I, 40.

[82] "Lettera aperta a Teresa," *La Cucina Italiana*, Giugno 1953, Anno II, 43.

supermarket chain, Supermarkets Italiani S.p.A.[83] Before the supermarket's arrival, small stores dominated the commercial sector. The 1951 census shows that out of the 951,382 stores and public businesses recorded, 801,837 had one or two employees, 198 had more than 100 employees, and only one had more than 500.[84] As stated earlier, customer/owner interactions (and an owner's control of the customer) were a common and important component of the commercial exchanges made in the store. The supermarket presented Italians with a new, modern way of shopping for food. First, the supermarket operated on a "self-service" model. This scheme reflected a primary component of consumer capitalism—freedom of choice. At supermarkets, shoppers selected their own products from fully stocked shelves and refrigerated cases, instead of relying on an employee to choose the exact product for them as that which occurred when shopping at the smaller, local grocer.[85] Furthermore, shopping at this new institution entailed, if one so desired, a minimal amount of social contact in comparison to the traditional method of food shopping. Therefore, consumers were free to choose the specific product they desired and how much, if any, social interaction they wanted.

[83] Scarpellini, *Material Nation*, 212, and "Shopping American-Style: The Arrival of the Supermarket in Postwar Italy," *Enterprise and Society* 5:4 (2005): 634-635. The first store was opened in Milan in 1957 and was followed by the opening of two more locations in the city a year later. For more information on IBEC's role in the Italian supermarket's development see Scarpellini, "Shopping American-Style: The Arrival of the Supermarket in Postwar Italy"

[84] Scarpellini, "Shopping-American Style: The Arrival of the Supermarket in Postwar Italy," 628-629.

[85] "Visita al Supermarket," *La Cucina Italiana,* Agosto 1956, Anno V, 559; Scarpellini, "Shopping American-Style: The Arrival of the Supermarket in Postwar Italy."

Another significant supermarket novelty was its seemingly endless amount of food products. The supermarket's products by far outnumbered those available at the local grocer. As a result, shoppers no longer had to go to several stores to find the ingredients needed to make a meal—they were all available at the supermarket ready to be taken home. An article in *La Cucina Italiana* reporting on the daily life of an American family living in Italy described the difficulty the wife had with partaking in the traditional Italian way of food shopping. The magazine wrote that "to do the shopping was, in principle, difficult, [because] she was not used to the small Italian *botteghe* that each had a limited number of products and [thus] she considered this a loss of time."[86] This convenience created by the supermarket in combination with the refrigerator's food preservation benefits led to women shopping for food on a weekly rather than daily basis. A 1966 analysis of Italy's supermarket economy revealed that in Milan 35.2% of people preferred to grocery shop on Saturday, 11.8% on Fridays, 7.4% on Thursdays, 4.2% on Wednesdays, 3.9% on Mondays, and 51% on any day.[87] Furthermore, this increased, and perhaps, overwhelming amount of food, especially to Italians who were not accustomed to seeing so many comestibles in one location, symbolized the abundance that characterized the consumer-driven postwar "American way of life." Because of Fascist and wartime food deprivations, the amplified quantity attracted Italians to the new institution. An excerpt of a letter from Roland Hood, the general director of Supermarkets Italiani's operations in Florence, recounting a police chief's remarks about the frenzy surrounding the opening of the company's Florence location illustrates this point. He told IBEC executives that:

[86] "La famiglia americana," *La Cucina Italiana*, Settembre 1958, Anno VII, 821.

[87] Scarpellini, "Shopping-American Style: The Arrival of the Supermarket in Postwar Italy," 662.

> The chief told me that during the war when there was no food and people were actually hungry that they didn't act this way when they lined up for handouts. He said in his thirty years on the force he has never seen crowds go so wild. You would think everything was for free the way they stampede. We could raise prices on everything in the store and never slow them down. It just seems to be what they have been waiting for.[88]

In addition to the large amount of food available to supermarket shoppers, the actual items sold had time-saving benefits. *La Cucina Italiana* told its readers that the food products were "sold including the service."[89] In other words, much of the difficulty involved in food preparation had already been done for the customer. For example, at a 1956 U.S. government sponsored supermarket display in Rome,

> the vegetables were cleaned…reduced to their eatable parts, ready to cook; for the poultry and meat the only effort required [was] that of removing it from the plastic packaging, before putting it in the pot, because all of the cleaning, that [was] unpleasant and [took] a lot of time away from the housewife, [was] already rationally accomplished in specialized factories.[90]

Additionally, one of the first supermarkets in Milan "only sold prepackaged foods, therefore also the vegetables, meat, fresh fruit, cheese, cured meats, that the store [bought] from the Milan market or directly from the industrial producers, [were] presented without scrap parts, wrapped in cellophane with information regarding the product's weight and price."[91]

The introduction and growing presence of frozen foods in supermarkets also drastically reduced the time spent on shopping for food and preparing meals. Frozen foods allowed women to purchase food that could be stored at home for months at a time, thus reducing one's need to

[88] Quoted in Ibid., 654.

[89] "Visita al Supermarket," *La Cucina Italiana,* Agosto 1956, 559.

[90] Ibid.

[91] "Il supermarket a Milan," *La Cucina Italiana*, Agosto 1958, Anno VII, 749.

frequently purchase food. Furthermore, these products, such as the prepackaged ones discussed above, also removed a good amount of the difficulty involved in meal preparation. In the late 1950s, the European Productivity Agency which received two-thirds of its funding from the U.S. and whose goal was to "direct knowledge and technology transfer [in the areas of business management and food and agriculture] from the United States to Western Europe," conducted research into and surveys on frozen fish marketing and distribution.[92] Additionally, in 1959, the organization created "demonstration regions" in Milan and Rome, as well as in Lyon, "in order to promote the production, distribution, and consumption of frozen food."[93] Despite initial skepticism among Italians regarding the safety and nutritional benefits of these new non-fresh products, frozen food consumption of products such as fish fillets and frozen vegetables increased in the years following the products' introduction onto the Italian market. The publication *Italian-American Business: The Monthly Magazine of the American Chamber of Commerce for Italy* noted that in 1967 per capita consumption of frozen foods in the country had increased by fifty percent.[94] Further, in 1971, the magazine reported that a Doxa survey had found that frozen food consumption continued to increase. It noted that thirty-five percent of families now bought frozen foods whereas in 1967 only twenty percent did.[95]

[92] Zachmann, "Forging Europe's Foodways: The American Challenge," *The Making of European Consumption: Facing the American Challenge*, ed. Per Lundin and Thomas Kaiserfeld (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 74.

[93] Ibid., 76.

[94] "News from Italy – Consumption of frozen foods," *Italian-American Business: The Monthly Magazine of the American Chamber of Commerce for Italy*, December 1967, Vol. XVIII, N. 12, 30.

[95] "News from Italy – Frozen food market expands," *Italian-American Business*, March 1971, Vol. XXII, N. 3, 14.

The supermarkets that arrived in Italy in the late 1950s and whose presence increased throughout the Italian peninsula in the following decades were modeled on American supermarkets such as the one on display in Rome in 1956. Consequently, the American institution supported changes created by the refrigerator by initiating a growth in more private, less communal and cooperative modes of shopping for food that significantly differed from traditional Italian methods.

Conclusion

The refrigerator is a true symbol of Italy's miraculous economic and industrial postwar recovery, as well as the country's transition to a modern mass consumer society. The domestic appliance industry was one of the driving forces that produced this dramatic and unprecedented transformation. In just under twenty years—from the refrigerator's first appearance on the Italian market in 1951 to 1967—the Italian industry became the second largest refrigerator producer in the world. Another significant, and perhaps, more important, aspect of the appliance's arrival in Italy from the United States was the social changes it engendered. Even though Italian and American manufacturers adapted the device to suit the Italian context, the Italianized refrigerator still carried with it concepts that represented key components of American consumer capitalism—individualism, freedom of choice, abundance, and a high standard of living—and that also promoted traditional gender roles.

Publicity campaigns created and supported by Italian and American manufacturers, the United States government, and the Italian press played a significant part in imbuing the refrigerator with these meanings. Exhibits of full scale American suburban homes with an abundance of domestic appliances, refrigerator advertisements, and special events staged to

promote a company's new product line all targeted women. Accordingly, the refrigerator and its meanings had the largest influence on this group. These entities used the modern American woman, the white, middle-class housewife, as the model in crafting their campaigns. In so doing, they transferred, in addition to the new domestic technology, Mrs. Consumer's relationship with domestic appliances and her role as dedicated housewife to Italy. For example, the campaigns highlighted the benefits that Italian female refrigerator owners could enjoy and that American housewives were already enjoying. According to the exhibits, advertisements, and articles, Italian women who purchased a refrigerator could expect to have more time to devote to non-domestic duties, to preserve their beauty more easily, and to spend less time dedicated to shopping for food. *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* noted that the use of the refrigerator and other domestic appliances "gifted" women seventeen hours and thirty minutes of free time each week that otherwise would be dedicated to performing household duties. The magazine suggested that this extra time could be "dedicat[ed] to the children when, returning from school, they all need family assistance" and used to "calmly [spend] the evening at her husband's side, maybe sitting in front of a television or engaged in conversation."[96] These campaigns' promotion of the woman as domestic caretaker merged with traditional Catholic and Fascist notions regarding women's societal roles that were still very much present in postwar Italy. As a result, these notions in combination with the refrigerator's increasing presence in Italy tied women to the home and solidified traditional gender relations.

[96] "Gli elettrodomestici regalano alle donne circa sette anni di vita," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Gennaio 1967, Anno XV, n. 1, 58.

Taking into consideration the heightened tensions between democracy and Communism in Italy during this time, the refrigerator and its American concepts and women's relationship with the appliance made women primary protagonists of the cultural Cold War. The consumer capitalist concepts embedded in the refrigerator contrasted with the Soviet Union's Communist and collectivist societal vision. Because of this difference, the United States government used domestic appliances to promote the country's superior social, economic, and cultural system in order to bring Italians, especially females, over to the side of consumer capitalist democracy and thus stem the Communist tide.

In the postwar period, the refrigerator became an appealing and very desirable commodity amongst Italian women from all classes despite the fact that initially only a very few could actually afford one thus making it one of the great status symbols of the "economic miracle." In the decades following the refrigerator's first appearance in Italy, as incomes rose and the appliance's price declined, refrigerator sales increased and it became a greater presence in homes. Although the fatigue and effort associated with food preparation and other domestic tasks were reduced thus granting more time to women, they did not use this extra time on themselves as many magazines and promotional material suggested. Rather, it was spent on long-established motherly and housewife duties. For example, a teacher in Milan told *La Cucina Italiana* that despite buying "all of the domestic appliances," she "did not succeed in having time to go to the cinema or to take a walk, over all [she] could not leave her son at home and [she] would not entrust him to a nanny."[97] In reality, domestic appliances did not "liberate the female

[97] "La posta di Caterina," *La Cucina Italiana*, Aprile 1955, Anno IV, 256.

element from the slavery of [housework]" as *Apparecchi elettrodomestici* claimed they did.[98] Thus, while the refrigerator brought modernity to the Italian household it also helped to solidify the relationship between women and the home and perpetuate the notion of the woman as the "angel of the hearth."

[98] "Gli elettrodomestici regalano alle donne circa sette anni di vita," *Apparecchi elettrodomestici*, Gennaio 1967, 58.

Chapter 4

The "American Way of Life" in Print: Beauty Culture in the Italian Women's Magazine *Annabella*, 1945-1975

In 1965 the Italian weekly news magazine, *L'Europeo*, published a series of articles under the title "The Woman in Italy" in its December 12 issue. Wanting to discover "what had changed [for women] from after the war to today," the articles examined a variety of topics—work, marriage, fashion, and beauty—in order to give readers a better understanding of who exactly was the Italian woman of 1965. One clear change noted by this investigation was the growing relationship between women and consumer culture. The magazine wrote that this relationship had brought significant changes to women's daily lives and their aspirations. The invasion of American beauty products (even products that did not come from the U.S. were nonetheless identified as being American) contributed to this important postwar development and the transformations in Italian women's physical appearance and identities.

Nerio Minuzzo's article on beauty, *la bellezza*¸ in this issue of *L'Europeo*, provides a descriptive and insightful portrait of "the typical beauty of 1965." He writes:

> The age is indefinable: eighteen or twenty-five? Straight hair, too blond or too dark, the chin and cheeks appear as if they have been engraved by a futuristic chisel,… eyes enhanced by compact dyes, eyelids that bat rapidly under the weight of unnatural eyelashes.
>
> Emblematic beauty but daily and stereotypical, devoid of citizenship, circulating in Via Veneto like it does in Chelsea or in Kurfuerstendamm. Beauty [that is] codified and proposed with infinite iterations by the information media, coming from the pages of women's magazines, from television screens, and from advertising posters, that by now live next to us, [and are] serially repeated, at all levels.[1]

[1] Nerio Minuzzo, "La Bellezza," *L'Europeo*, 12 dicembre 1965, Anno XXI, N. 50, 54.

Minuzzo's critical and perceptive depiction raises an important question: how did beauty products come to have such a strong influence on women such that a majority of them used these products to create an image of themselves that was "daily" and "stereotypical?" This question takes on even more significance when considering that twenty years prior, female beauty and its related products were the reserve of a small, select group of privileged upper-class women, and were also vehemently opposed by the Fascist regime and Catholic Church. The confluence of several key cultural, social, and economic changes following the Second World War made "female beauty… a product of wide consumption."[2] As a result, notions and images regarding female beauty in the Italian peninsula were challenged, transformed, and standardized.

One important factor contributing to this change was the revival of major Italian publishing houses and their weekly women's magazines immediately following the end of the war. These popular magazines had a significant influence on their upper middle and middle-class female readers. As Adam Arvidsson noted in *Marketing Modernity: Italian Advertising from Fascism to postmodernity*, an examination of the Italian advertising industry in the 20th century, these magazines' contents, especially the advertisements, provided a "schooling in modernity" for their female readership; in effect, influencing women's decisions and behaviors during their country's transition to a modern, industrial, consumer-based society.

In addition to the magazines' postwar revival and growth, defining factors of Italy's "economic miracle"—unprecedented internal migration from South to North and from rural to urban areas, the economic recovery and subsequent rise in incomes, the development of mass consumerism, and the increasing presence of American culture and consumer products,

[2] Ibid.

especially films featuring glamorous Hollywood stars—made obtaining an ideal standard of beauty based on U.S. models an increasingly important desire among Italy's female population. Using beauty products, as many magazine cosmetic advertisements argued, increased a woman's chances of succeeding in the country's growing urban and anonymous environments; places in which the familiarity and security of the countryside or small town and the benefits that accompanied it no longer existed. Consequently, demonstrating beauty became an important way to illustrate one's belonging to this society. Furthermore, due to the dominance of American cosmetics and their attendant images of beauty in the pages of the women's magazines, Hollywood actresses' and Mrs. Consumer's—the modern postwar American woman—youth, radiant personality, elegance, and ability to attract the opposite sex came to define the ideal standard of beauty in Italy.

By the time of Minuzzo's article and *L'Europeo*'s investigation into the "Italian Woman of 1965," being beautiful and using the appropriate consumer products to do so were firmly established norms and practices among Italian women. In the following ten years, the Italian beauty ideal changed to reflect the emergence of a more liberated, autonomous woman that came about due to the development of the women's movement. Adapting to this social development, American cosmetic companies such as Max Factor and Elizabeth Arden, who were among the first U.S. firms to advertise their products in Italy immediately following the war, evoked key concepts of the movement in their advertisements to maintain their popularity among Italian women, as well as to increase their products' profitability.

Therefore, in the three decades following the war, the American conception of beauty had a strong presence in postwar Italian female culture, provoking significant changes to previously held notions of beauty and the way in which Italian women fashioned themselves. Ultimately,

American beauty products and practices led to a standardized beauty ideal in Italy derived from American models.

Beauty and Cosmetics in the United States and Italy

Both the United States and Italy had distinct ideas of beauty that underwent alterations in definition more than fifty years before the end of the Second World War. These alterations occurred due to social, cultural, and economic changes in both countries. The rapid urbanization of mid to late nineteenth century America created "an anonymous world of strangers" that "disrupted older norms governing face to face contact," in which familiarity was the measure. [3] This development led women to create a "sincere" public identity for themselves. In other words, women insisted on having a transparent display of emotions that would identify them as honest and true persons and deserving of respect. As such, the "sincere" middle-class woman used very little or no makeup so as not to obstruct the visibility of her "authentic self." This transparent and authentic presentation was in stark contrast to that of the much maligned, duplicitous, and heavily made-up woman of ill-repute. The middle-class women's "sincere" appearance distinguished them from the so-called "painted women" who took advantage of the anonymity and unknown elements of the new urban culture to achieve their goals and advance in society.[4]

The American preference for the "authentic self" and the stigma against makeup and made-up women changed in the years after the First World War. The increased growth of movement to urban centers, the rise of consumerism, leisure, and national markets, and the

[3] Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) xvi, 153.

[4] Ibid., 84, 88, 194.

development of a cosmetic mass market led to the emergence of a new type of female model that became very popular—the Modern Girl. The Modern Girl was her own woman; independent, fashionable, a consumer, and most importantly for this study, she unashamedly used makeup to create a beautiful and attractive personality. This visible use of cosmetics directly challenged the traditional mid to late nineteenth century notions of beauty. Furthermore, it represented a shift from an insistence on presenting one's "authentic" or "interior self" in public to a desire to show off a "personality" that could be constructed through artificial means: clothes, accessories, and cosmetics.[5] Rather than being rejected by the majority of American society as a result of this challenge to prevailing norms, the Modern Girl became an immensely popular figure both in the United States and abroad. Internationally, the Modern Girl was adapted to fit each country's specific social and cultural context.[6]

The 1930s Hollywood female star was another American figure representing this new beauty ideal that influenced foreign women's self-identity and public appearance. Hollywood actresses were the embodiment of modernity, beauty, and glamour.[7] In a time of worldwide

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[5] Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), 166.

[6] For more information on the international dissemination of the Modern Girl and foreign countries' adaptations of this model see The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

[7] Stephen Gundle argues that glamour is a "quintessentially modern phenomenon." He writes that "important inputs came from the lower reaches of society as well as the top. The elite capitalist society acquired glamour because it was self-created; its exclusivity was relative, not absolute. In the context of an expanding commercial culture, a shared language of allure consisting of materialism, beauty, and theatricality was forged with contributions from various actors from the higher and the lower echelons of society. Its polyvalent appeals meant that it captured the

depression, their glamorous and luxurious on- and off-screen personalities and lifestyles not only fascinated American and international audiences but also inspired hope and desires of emulation among movie-goers. The high regard held for film stars and their elevated social standing caused their customs—beauty routines, diet, and leisure activities—to become standards to which to aspire and, if financially possible, to adopt. Therefore, the actresses' use of makeup in their films and everyday lives, along with the popularity of the Modern Girl figure, terminated the stigma against cosmetics and the women who used them. Kathy Peiss writes that "alluring actresses wearing mascara and lipstick supplanted immoral kohl-eyed Jezebels."[8] Thus, wearing makeup no longer meant one was of ill-repute but rather an attractive, beautiful, and modern woman.

Despite international film-goers' veneration of the Modern Girl and Hollywood actresses, not all foreign governments were pleased with the popularity of these figures and the new beauty ideal associated with each. This was especially true in Italy, a country with a long historical relationship between beauty and Italian identity. According to Stephen Gundle, the centrality of beauty to Italian public culture and its close relationship with Italian identity dates back to the masterpieces produced by the great Renaissance painters and poets.[9] Since that period of great intellectual and cultural output, notions of beauty were used to define Italian female identity. In a country accustomed to the presence of foreign models due to Italy's long history of foreign invasion and rule, the arrival of the Modern Girl and Hollywood film stars in Fascist Italy was

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imagination in an age when deference was giving way to democracy. Glamour contained the promise of a mobile and commercial society that anyone could be transformed into a better, more attractive, and wealthier version of themselves." Stephen Gundle, *Glamour: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6-7.

[8] Peiss, 141.

[9] Gundle, *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xviii.

nothing new. However, their popularity among young Italian women combined with the rise in new public commercial and leisure spaces, in which women could show off their best adaptations of American models, were viewed by the Fascists as an unwanted invasion and development. Ultimately, the Modern Girl and Hollywood actresses were threats to the regime's control over Italian women.

The new American beauty models challenged ideals that Mussolini and the Fascists had constructed and propagated in order to create a strong national identity that tied women to the state. The most noticeable differences between the American and Fascist models of beauty were in women's aesthetic appearance and body type. On one end of the spectrum were the Modern Girl and Hollywood actresses—independent, thin, cosmopolitan, and "decadent" women who used cosmetic products. The Fascist regime referred to this image as *donna crisi*, or "the crisis woman."[10] On the other end of the spectrum was the *donna madre*, or "the mother woman"—the robust, fertile, rural Italian woman preferred by the regime.[11] This battle between modernity and traditional female images persisted throughout the Fascist period thus signaling Mussolini's failure to produce a "model of Italian beauty that was widely appreciated either inside or outside the country."[12]

[10] Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 73, 211.

[11] Ibid., 73, 212.

[12] Gundle, *Bellissima*, 106.

The Fascists' excessive emphasis on nationalism and national identity negatively affected Italians and their sense of nationhood.[13] Moreover, it made Italian identity, including beauty ideals, open to foreign influence in the postwar period. The modern, elegant, youthful, and beautiful female consumer of postwar America—Mrs. Consumer—provided a desirable model of female beauty and ultimately, self-identity for Italian women. How did Italian women come into contact with this American ideal? They encountered it in the popular weekly women's magazines of the postwar period, which had a significant cultural and social influence on their readers.

Women's Magazines, Advertisements, and the Advertising Industry in Italy

In Italy, women's magazines first appeared in the mid-nineteenth century after unification and thus sought to create a national, female public. By the 1880s, this national impulse gained strength, indicated by the development of numerous publications that provided education for middle-class Italian women with the goal of *fare gli italiani* (to make Italians).[14] The interwar

[13] Christopher Duggan writes that "Italy emerged from the Second World War, as it had done from the unification process in 1860 and the Great War in 1918, deeply split and profoundly uncertain to its identity." Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 532.

[14] The various provinces and kingdoms of Italy unified in 1861. Despite the country's territorial unification, it still remained divided along regional, cultural, and social lines thus creating the desire among politicians and intellectuals to unify the country's inhabitants by instructing them on how to be citizens of the new nation-state. This proved to be a challenging task that would be a constant issue throughout Italy's history. As Massimo d'Azeglio said on December 3, 1864, "What is the goal towards which we are all striving? To make Italy once again into one body, one nation. Which is easier to unite: divided cities and provinces or divided hearts and minds? In the case of Italy in

years of the twentieth century witnessed the proliferation of periodicals that focused on the home, both in a familial and aesthetic context, as well as those produced by the Catholic and Fascist organizations, such as the *Unione femminile cattolica italiana* and the *Fasci femminili*, respectively.[15] Moreover, five of Italy's most important women's periodicals were founded at this time: *Rakam* (1930), *Lei* (1933, which became *Annabella* in 1938), *Eva* (1933), *Gioia* (1937), and *Grazia* (1938). They contained sections on domestic advice, entertainment news, short stories, fashion, and other popular culture items, bringing the public and private spheres together and also fostering the bond between women and consumerism that became full-blown after the Second World War.[16]

Lei, according to Maria Antonella Pelizzari, "[stood] out for [depicting] a cosmopolitan [and consumer-driven] lifestyle." The magazine featured "lively and slender women, aware of their own new image and enmeshed in a fantastic world of romantic novels and movie stars, self-confident and passionate, at ease wearing comfortable clothing and bathing suits, smiling and flirting."[17] These women depicted in *Lei* were the Italian variation of the Modern Girl and Hollywood actresses. By featuring this female image, the magazine attracted upper and upper middle-class female readers who themselves were "modern women"—"daring and well-to-do

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particular, I think the second is far harder than the first." Women's magazines became one way of achieving this goal. Ibid., 217.

[15] Gisella Bochicchio and Rosanna De Longis, *La stampa periodica femminile in Italia: Repertorio 1861-2009* (Roma: Biblink editori, 2010), 14-20.

[16] Ibid., 20.

[17] Maria Antonella Pelizzari, "Make-believe: fashion and Cinelandia in Rizzoli's *Lei* (1933-38)" *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 20:1 (January 2015): 37.

creatures, able to shrug off the patriarchal regime, Catholic conservatism and [that were] embracing consumerism."[18] *Lei*'s readers had the personal desires and financial capabilities to acquire this consumer-based lifestyle deriving from the United States.

Following the brief suspension of the magazines during the war, the publications reappeared shortly after the end of fighting. It was during the postwar period that Italy's women's press came into its own and "became a gigantic business counting tens of millions of readers."[19] At the start of the 1960s, for example, Italian women's magazines had a total circulation of 6,845,000 copies.[20] The Mondadori publication, *Grazia,* was the leading magazine with 350,000 copies while *Annabella*, published by Rizzoli Editore, came in second place with 300,000 copies.[21] The magazines' popularity and success meant that they had a prominent place in upper middle and middle-class women's lives, acting as advice guides for readers.

The postwar period not only experienced a dramatic growth in the women's press, but an increasing presence of images and articles related to the United States and the "modern American woman" in these publications as well. The proliferation of these magazines and their reporting on American female culture raises the important questions of how and what kind of role models these magazines promoted. In her examination of the *Ladies' Home Journal* in the

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[18] Ibid., 40-41.

[19] Luisa Passerini, "The Ambivalent Image of Woman in Mass Culture," trans. Joan Bond Sax in *A History of Women in the West. Vol. V. Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century,* ed. Françoise Thébaud (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 337.

[20] This figure includes *fotoromanzi* and non-weekly magazines. Giocchino Forte, *Persuasori Rosa* (Napoli: ESI, 1966), 114.

[21] Ibid.

early twentieth century United States, for example, Jennifer Scanlon argues that the magazine, through its advice columns, fiction writing, and advertisements, created a "consensus view" of appropriate gender conventions and racial, as well as class identities, that served to define the "American woman." Different points of view were offered in these pieces, seemingly promoting the possibility of choice yet, having "the average woman… represented by the consensus view."[22] Consequently, a "prototype" of American womanhood was created for its readers—white, middle-class, Protestant, and devoid of racial or ethnic characteristics. This prototype, "an amalgam defined and limited by race, class, and ethnicity but promoted as 'average,'" facilitated the presence of a standard, monolithic image and idea of an early twentieth century female consumer.[23]

What place did consumerism take in this campaign? *Ladies' Home Journal*'s contents also were meant to "break down women's resistance to spending money and integrate them more fully into their roles as consumers."[24] In the early twentieth century, the consumer was promoted as a new female convention and quickly came to be equated with modernity. Emily S. Rosenberg writes that "images of modern, mobile, consuming women became standard icons within American representations of modernity."[25] As the image circulated around the world, along with American consumer products, it came to represent the "semiotic equation: America = modernity

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[22] Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

[23] Ibid., 6.

[24] Ibid., 13, 16.

[25] Emily S. Rosenberg, "Consuming Women: Images of Americanization in the 'American Century'" *Diplomatic History* 23:3 (1999): 482.

= consumption = modern women," further solidifying the bond between women, consumerism, and modernity. After the Second World War, the U.S.'s leadership position, the Cold War struggle with the Soviets, and a weakened Western Europe made American women "icons of freedom and progress" affecting an alteration in the modernity equation: "America = modernity = consumption = freedom = modern women."[26] Postwar Italian women's magazines subscribed to this latter equation by promoting the active consumption of American modernity in all of its material forms, as well as the freedom women experienced while doing so.

Specifically, the magazines' advertisements played a primary role in orienting the publications' readerships towards desiring the modern American beauty ideal and buying the cosmetics that would enable them to achieve this ideal. Advertisements constituted a significant portion of space in these postwar magazines. For example, between 1953 and 1963 many of these periodicals had either doubled or tripled their advertising space. *Grazia*'s ad space increased from 28.9 percent of the magazine's contents to 43.7 percent while *Annabella*'s increased from 20.3 percent to 39.5 percent.[27]

The American aspect of the advertisements did not only consist of the actual products and democratic, consumer capitalist ideals being sold. It was also present in the form of the advertisements themselves. In fact, in the 1920s and 30s Italian advertising firms borrowed techniques and styles from top advertising companies in the United States in order to modernize their operations. For example, Italian advertisers adopted a new scientific conception of advertising developed in the U.S. that focused on theoretical concepts such as the "theory of

[26] Ibid., 490, 487.

[27] Forte, 82.

suggestion" and the communicative value of goods. Because of this adoption, the consumer took on a more important position in the industry's advertisements. In particular, the advertisements appealed to an individual consumer's private needs and concerns.[28] The greater emphasis on the "self" stood in stark contrast to the Fascist regime's emphasis on the collective nation. The Italian advertisement industry's transformation during the Fascist period signaled its move towards a capitalist modernity. In turn, this development enhanced its ability to sell postwar modernity and more specifically, the abundance, freedom, privatization, and affluence of the "America dream."

Beauty advertisements in *Annabella* in the three decades after the war sold the aesthetic aspects of the "American dream" to its female readers. *Annabella,* one of the most popular women's magazines in postwar Italy, was founded in 1933 as *Lei: rivista di vita femminile* and published by the Rizzoli publishing company.[29] In 1938, the periodical was renamed *Annabella* due to the Fascist regime's imposition of the use of the informal you, "tu," rather than the formal you, "lei," to address people. Publication of the magazine was suspended for a little over a year (July 1, 1944 to July 5, 1945) due to the war. When it returned to newsstands, *Annabella* focused on traditional themes found in women's magazines before the war: beauty, fashion, cooking, domestic decoration, and current events.[30] The magazine also maintained *Lei's* precedent of featuring internationally inspired images of modern, cosmopolitan women. *Annabella* and its

[28] Adam Arvidsson, *Marketing Modernity: Italian Advertising from Fascism to postmodernity,* (London: Routledge, 2003), 54, 61.

[29] Maria Canella and Elena Puccinelli, "Schede delle riviste. Lei, Annabella, Anna e A_Anna," in *Lei e lei altre. Moda e stili nelle riviste RCS dal 1930 a oggi*, ed. Maria Luisa Frisa (Venezia: Marsilio Editore, 2011), 377.

[30] Ibid., 379.

beauty advertisements, in particular, utilized the image and equation described by Rosenberg to sell modern American beauty. Moreover, the periodical "schooled" readers on how to create attractive, modern, radiant, and elegant personalities for themselves as a means of ensuring success in a new and unfamiliar urban, industrial, consumer society.

"In America è vietato essere brutte": American Beauty Products and Italian Women[31]

American cosmetics for a woman's head to toe beauty routine were a dominating presence in *Annabella*'s advertisements from the late 1940s to the 1970s, serving to inform and transform Italian women's ideas regarding beauty. These advertisements endorsed an American beauty ideal that symbolized glamour, affluence, youth, happiness, sex appeal, and well-being. Beyond the aesthetic aspects, advertisements for American cosmetics also promoted characteristics inherent to the U.S.'s democratic, consumer capitalist society, such as freedom of choice and the primacy of the individual, or the individual family unit. In light of the intensifying international and domestic Cold War, the transfer of this American beauty model to Italy had cultural as well as political significance. The American beauty model's strong presence in *Annabella*'s advertisements contributed to defining the standardized beauty ideal in postwar Italy.

The Glamour Factory

Just as Hollywood films flooded the Italian market following the end of the war, Hollywood actresses, the ultimate representatives of American beauty, had a dominating

[31] "In America it's forbidden to be ugly," *Annabella,* 23 gennaio 1955.

presence in *Annabella's* beauty advertisements in the first postwar decade.[32] Italy's social transformations brought these stars, or *le dive* as they are called in Italian, closer to their admiring public than ever before. Sociologist Francesco Alberoni wrote at the time: "During the end of the 1930s and 1940s the star reproduced characters and symbols of the leisure class. After the war, the relationship gradually changed, the class structure fell, the size of society grew, therefore, the star became much closer to the public: it was like she was the one [of them] who had made it."[33] This increased proximity rendered the stars' words, opinions, and advice more authoritative and credible. In the advertisements, these women, whose elegant, bright personalities and appearance were manufactured by the studio system, advised readers on how they too could construct a similar personality that was worthy of Hollywood stardom and its beautiful, luxurious lifestyle. In so doing, the actresses, who were commodities themselves, sold an "American way of life" and its beauty ideals.[34]

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[32] As a result of the Monopoly Law, a protectionist measure passed by the Fascist regime that "gave the Italian company ENIC (Ente Nazionale Industrie Cinematografiche) a monopoly on the purchase, import and distribution in Italy and its colonies of all foreign films," and the subsequent decision of Hollywood producers to pull out of the Italian market, the number of American films in Italy between 1939, when the decree when into effect, and 1945 was greatly reduced. Following the end of the war, American films flooded the Italian market. The number of Hollywood films imported into Italy in 1948 was 668, and "in 1949 they accounted for 73 percent of box office takings." David Forgacs and Stephen Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 207; Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 33, 45.

[33] "Il Mito," *L'Europeo*, 12 dicembre 1965, Anno XXI, N. 50, 42.

[34] Gundle, *Glamour*, 192.

Advertisers employed the popular cinematic technique the "close-up" in advertisements to illustrate the effectiveness of a company's products in creating beauty. The "close-up" shots of the stars were also used to draw the reader into the advertisement. Roland Marchand writes that this technique, first developed by American advertising agencies in the 1920s and 1930s, "not only attracted attention, it also fostered the habit of intense self-scrutiny."[35] In a growing urban environment filled with unknown elements, the "close-up" heightened consumers' desires to achieve the Hollywood beauty ideal in order to ensure their success in Italy's rapidly changing society.

Elizabeth Taylor, Rita Hayworth, Deborah Kerr and other actresses sold products such as face powder, lipstick, and eye shadow that promised to hide natural imperfections of the face, give users a new, fresh look, and create an exciting, attractive, and irresistible personality. The advertisements were particularly appealing because they revealed Hollywood's beauty secrets by making the same products used by the stars available to the general female public. More importantly, the products' affordability made obtaining the Hollywood beauty ideal a realizable goal for many Italian women.

The Max Factor Company played a key role in spreading the Hollywood beauty ideal throughout the Italian peninsula and in democratizing beauty in the country. Max Factor, a Polish cosmetician who had immigrated with his family to the United States in 1904, was *the* makeup artist to the stars during his lifetime. When he began working in the Hollywood film industry in

[35] Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 62.

1914, he was the first person to use makeup specifically designed to be seen on film.[36] In the late 1920s, Max Factor and Company began selling products that had been specifically made for the screen to the general public.[37] In so doing, Max Factor revealed Hollywood beauty secrets and made them accessible to film fans in the U.S. for the first time. This meant that women were able to buy the same products used by their favorite film stars, thus permitting them to imitate the actresses' appearances.

In postwar Italy, the company took advantage of the end of the Fascist regime, an increased presence of American culture, and Italians' increased financial capabilities to make its cosmetics similarly appealing and accessible. A Max Factor advertisement for its Color Harmony Line in *Annabella* highlighted the novelty of the company's products in Italy and the Hollywood beauty it bestowed upon users. In the advertisement, Rita Hayworth told readers that "grand news" had come from Hollywood, saying:

> I am happy to tell you that all of the celebrated beauty products of Max Factor Hollywood, in the harmonies created by him, and his 'Touch-Up Service' are now available in Italy. You can participate in the beauty secrets that Max Factor has revealed to all of the stars and American women.[38]

Hayworth's announcement made it clear that thanks to the arrival of Max Factor cosmetics in Italy, for the first time, more women than ever before could be as beautiful and glamorous as the stars.

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[36] Julie Willet, ed., *The American Beauty Industry Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2010), 115-116.

[37] Fred E. Basten, *Max Factor: The Man Who Changed the Faces of the World* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995), 61.

[38] Max Factor Armonia di colori Advertisement, *Annabella*, 10 ottobre 1948.

A significant number of Max Factor advertisements in *Annabella* also reinforced this concept of uncovering the magic of Hollywood beauty by using the movie tie-in advertising method. The advertisements, featuring testimonials from actresses and references to their latest films, seemed to promise readers that any woman could make herself up to be as charming and attractive as the actresses were in their films. In one advertisement, Hedy Lamarr as Delilah in Cecil B. DeMille's *Samson and Delilah*, told readers: "It has finally arrived!!! The most fascinating of secrets of Hollywood… [Pan-Stik Makeup] created for the stars and for you by Max Factor Hollywood."[39] (Figure 18) In another advertisement, readers were assured that if they used Max Factor Pan-Cake Makeup their faces "[would] assume the delicate aspect of porcelain" like Elizabeth Taylor's visage in *Father of the Bride*.[40] Other advertisements for Max Factor lipstick and Pan-Cake Makeup guaranteed women that they would have "fresh and attractive" lips like Dorothy Lamour's in *The Greatest Show on Earth* or a "new, exciting beauty [and] fresh and natural appearance" similar to Deborah Kerr's in *Quo Vadis*.[41] The connection between makeup, actresses and their films, and Hollywood beauty established in these advertisements promoted the idea that using Max Factor cosmetics permitted any Italian woman to easily achieve the same beautiful, film-worthy look of Hollywood's glamour goddesses.

[39] Max Factor Pan-Stik Advertisement, *Annabella*, 21 ottobre 1951.

[40] Max Factor Pan-Cake Makeup Advertisement, *Annabella*, 11 marzo 1951.

[41] Max Factor Rosso per labbra Advertisement, *Annabella*, 15 febbraio 1953, Max Factor Pan-Cake Makeup Advertisement, *Annabella*, 15 marzo 1953.

Figure 18 Max Factor Pan-Stik Advertisement, *Annabella*, 21 ottobre 1951
Source: Centro Documentazione Periodici Rcs Mediagroup, Milan, Italy

Advertisements also spoke to the wide accessibility of Max Factor cosmetics. The company's advertisement for its lipstick featuring Dorothy Lamour, for example, highlighted the product's affordability by informing readers that "Max Factor's prices are accessible to all purses."[42] This direct reference to the products' affordable prices removed beauty and makeup from the reserve of a select, small group of wealthy women, rendering it accessible to Italian women beyond the upper-class. In addition to emphasizing the products' reasonable prices, advertisements also noted where the company's products—the makeup of the stars—could be purchased. For example, the advertisement featuring Hedy Lamarr told women that they could find Pan-Stik Makeup for sale at the department store La Rinascente.[43] The greater accessibility

[42] Max Factor Rosso per labbra Advertisement, *Annabella*, 15 febbraio 1953.

[43] Max Factor Pan-Stik Advertisement, *Annabella*, 21 ottobre 1951.

of Max Factor cosmetics contributed to the democratization of beauty in Italy and an increased presence of beauty products in Italian female culture.

While the name Max Factor and the concept of "Hollywood beauty" were synonymous in the United States and Italy, other American cosmetic manufacturers made references to Hollywood glamour when selling their products. Westmore Cosmetics, an American brand developed by the Hollywood makeup artists the Westmore Brothers—"the four beauty magicians, confidants and friends of the most splendid American stars"—also ran advertisements that displayed Hollywood beauty in *Annabella*.[44] One particular advertisement contained an image of Marilyn Monroe applying the company's makeup to demonstrate that Westmore products did indeed guarantee "balance, beauty, and success."[45] Advertisements such as this illustrate the fact that cosmetic manufacturers viewed Hollywood as an effective advertising tool.

The significance of Marilyn Monroe's appearance in the Westmore Cosmetics advertisement goes beyond the transfer of a Hollywood inspired beauty routine to Italy. The actress was the ultimate representation of the "blond woman," an American female model exported to postwar Europe. Monroe's peroxided light blond hair gave her an angelic and "virtuous" quality that, according to Lois Banner, "legitimized and heightened her sexuality."[46] Thus, blondness and sex appeal became new and significant components of the American beauty ideal that was sent to Italy.

At the height of Italy's "economic miracle," the "blond woman" and her "chromatic aura [that] was attributed with a variety of meanings that were all associated with the American model

[44] Westmore Cosmetics Advertisement, *Annabella*, 8 aprile 1962.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 284.

of the consumer society, prosperity, and modernity" took a prominent place in the country's society and culture.[47] A good example of this can be seen in Federico Fellini's film *La dolce vita* (1960) in the character of Sylvia, a caricature of Hollywood's exuberant, vacuous, and sexually appealing version of the "blond woman," played by the equally exuberant and voluptuous Swede Anita Ekberg. Additionally, many of the beauty advertisements in *Annabella* featured images of blond women which diverged from both the stereotypical and traditional depictions of the ideal dark haired Italian woman. This blond femininity introduced a new and different conception of beauty to Italy that linked hair color with beauty, sexuality, prosperity, modernity, and consumerism.

Taking advantage of the increased proximity between film stars and the public to sell their products to *Annabella*'s female readership, American manufacturers also used Italian actresses in their advertisements. Advertisements featuring testimonials from and pictures of Italian stars Sofia Loren and Virna Lisi assured Italian female consumers that they too could obtain to a similar degree the on- and off-screen beauty of Hollywood's most glamorous stars.[48] Italian women could relate to these actresses, or perhaps even see themselves in the actresses, since they shared the same national origins. Therefore, the advertisements reinforced the notion that this American beauty model was a realistic and achievable goal for Italian women.

The firmly established link between the term "Hollywood" and extraordinary, irresistible, fascinating beauty prompted non-American makeup manufacturers to draw a connection between their products and the American film industry. In short, they sought to take advantage of the

[47] Gundle, *Bellissima*, 170.

[48] Lux Advertisement, *Annabella*, 29 aprile 1956; Max Factor Italian Touch Advertisement, *Annabella*, 6 maggio 1956.

social capital that Hollywood held in postwar Italy to make their products profitable. For example, advertisements for the British soap Lux, which was developed by the Lever brothers in the late nineteenth century, prominently featured Hollywood actresses, and referred to the product as the "soap of the 'Stars.'" Additionally, an advertisement for the product claimed that "9 out of 10 stars" agreed with Joan Fontaine (who was featured in the advertisement) that the soap, "so pure and white…left the skin clear, fresh, and luminous" making the user "more attractive…more admired."[49] Myrna Loy, in another advertisement, added that a woman, "thanks to Lux, [would] be sure of her charm and her success."[50]

Other non-American cosmetic manufacturers used the term "Hollywood" in the naming of their products. Paglieri, an Italian manufacturer, sold a face powder named "Velluto di Hollywood" (Hollywood Velvet). The company advertised that the powder "had the same characteristics as those Hollywood compacts."[51] In addition to Paglieri's "Velluto di Hollywood" face powder, other beauty products, such as foaming bath soap, also appropriated the term "Hollywood" despite their foreign or unknown national origins. Company names were another way in which manufacturers tried to use Hollywood's social capital for their financial benefit. For example, a face cream manufacturer named itself Harlow, a clear reference to the first Hollywood blond, Jean Harlow.

While companies, such as Paglieri, sought to profit from the popularity and the high regard for Hollywood, they also diversified their products from actual American brands by creating cosmetics that were more suitable for their Italian clientele. In the "Velluto di

[49] Lux Soap Advertisement, *Annabella*, 21 gennaio 1951.

[50] Lux Soap Advertisement, *Annabella*, 18 febbraio 1951.

[51] Paglieri Velluto di Hollywood Advertisement, *Annabella*, 7 gennaio 1951.

Hollywood" advertisement, Paglieri also noted that their product was better suited for "the nature of the Latin woman's delicate complexion." As a result, the face powder would create a "perfection never reached before."[52] This diversification highlights the important process of cultural adaptation that occurred in many aspects of the transnational cultural exchange between the United States and Italy. As illustrated in previous chapters and in Paglieri's adaptation of an American idea and product, Italian firms themselves had agency, changing American models rather than submissively accepting them and producing carbon copies of the models. Despite this example of agency, Hollywood and more generally, American beauty ideals still maintained a strong grip on Italian conceptions of beauty in the postwar period.

Beauty and *Benessere*

Beauty advertisements in *Annabella* also promoted the concept of well-being, or *benessere*, contending that engaging in a complete head-to-toe beauty routine was crucial for maintaining one's health, sense of serenity, and fascinating personality. For example, a promotional piece in the magazine for Elizabeth Arden cosmetics told readers that "a beautiful presence [is] a mirror of health." It also contended that "a healthy and sensible life combined with a daily beauty routine; [are] the ways that make [women] nice, pleasing to the eye, cordial, and full of charm."[53] The idea of well-being was composed of characteristics, such as prosperity, affluence, abundance, and modernity, that defined postwar consumer American society and its female representative, Mrs. Consumer. In the advertisements, well-being and its component parts

[52] Ibid.

[53] "Terza Lezione Beauty School," *Annabella*, 30 settembre 1962, 15.

could be found in references made to the time-saving, fashionable, and elegant qualities of the cosmetics, as well as in the variety of types and brands of products advertised in the magazine's pages.

Advertisements for numerous cosmetic products that varied by type, quality, and brand represented the abundance of goods that characterized the prosperous, booming American mass consumer society. The products advertised were designed for the visible body parts that contributed to defining a woman's personality. In the magazine's pages readers could find face creams for day and night use and those that concealed wrinkles or made them disappear altogether; body cream; lipsticks and nail polishes of various shades; makeup for the eye—eye liner, mascara, and eye shadow; hair care products—hair spray, hair color, and even a combination of the two (Helena Rubinstein's Hair Color Spray); and hair removal cream. These products were manufactured by various cosmetic companies such as Max Factor, Elizabeth Arden, Pond's, Helena Rubinstein, Lara Scherk, and Helene Curtis.

This immense product variety and volume also represented the American democratic ideal of "freedom of choice" that the United States promoted in the immediate postwar and Cold War periods. The wide range of beauty products advertised to Italian women was a distinct change from the period before and during the war. During this time, restrictive Fascist policies, traditional Catholic views towards cosmetics, and wartime exigencies deprived the majority of these women of the ability to engage in such an extensive beauty routine, or any kind of routine at all. After the war, however, a significant number of women were now able to choose from an extensive range of cosmetics in order to create a beautiful, complete, and healthy personality. The abundance of beauty products sold in *Annabella*'s pages and the multitude of choices they

offered to readers promoted Italian women's democratic right of "freedom of choice," and hence, the prominent postwar association between beauty, well-being, and freedom.

Makeup advertisements' focus on a product's time-saving aspects symbolized modernity. As discussed in previous chapters, the time-saving benefit that the refrigerator and supermarket created for Italian women was a hallmark of their modernity. Thus, it is no surprise that cosmetic companies emphasized this benefit when advertising their products in *Annabella*. Typically, the new time-saving cosmetics were a transformation of several makeup products and application procedures into one product and one easy application step. For example, the woman featured in Revlon's Contempera advertisement told *Annabella*'s readers:

> It's easy to be beautiful…Thanks to 'Contempera' I discovered the secret of complete and instant makeup, the secret of an ideal makeup. Now, thanks to 'Contempera,' and only to 'Contempera,' I am perfectly made-up in an instant. No more with the habitual procedure: first moisturizing cream, second foundation, third powder, 'Contempera' is the fusion of moisturizer, foundation, and powder scientifically [created] to give my face a velvet and seductive aspect.[54]

Helena Rubinstein's Cover Fluid and Max Factor's Crème Paff also simplified a woman's beauty routine. Rubinstein's product was advertised as being "immensely easy" to use, while Max Factor claimed that its Crème Paff was a "modern miracle" that allowed women to create "an accurate and perfect face in the same time it takes to prepare a cup of instant coffee."[55] As is evident from these advertisements, many new postwar cosmetics were more efficient and less time consuming than their predecessors. They simplified, streamlined, and reduced the time devoted to a daily beauty routine, giving women more time to dedicate to their families or

[54] Revlon Contempera Advertisement, *Annabella*, 1 ottobre 1961.

[55] Helena Rubinstein Coverfluid Advertisement, *Annabella*, 17 aprile 1960; Max Factor Crème Paff Advertisement, *Annabella*, 22 settembre 1957.

themselves. Furthermore, the products' time-saving characteristic identified them with modernity, a very much desirable ideal among Italians looking to move on from the devastation of the war. Thus, buying and using Revlon's Contempera, Max Factor's Crème Paff, and other time-saving cosmetics became crucial for any Italian woman seeking to not only be able to easily make herself beautiful, healthy, and happy, but also to be identified as a modern woman fully immersed in Italy's increasingly modernizing society.

References made to a product's elegant nature in beauty advertisements symbolized postwar America's and more specifically, Mrs. Consumer's prosperity. Many advertisements highlighted the elegant appearance that women could obtain by using a company's lipstick, face cream, and eye shadow. Beyond the ability of a specific product to make a woman aesthetically elegant, the products' packaging also contributed to giving women a touch of style, grace, and refinement—attributes typically associated with the well-to-do. Several advertisements highlighted a product's stylish and luxurious packaging. In this way, the makeup container itself became a fashion accessory that was as glamorous and chic as a bejeweled necklace or bracelet.

The promotion of the cosmetic container as fashion accessory featured prominently in Max Factor advertisements. For example, the company's Cipria came in "an elegant new artistic white and gold plastic box" and its Crème Paff was packaged in "an elegant and indestructible ivory case."[56] Additionally, consumers could purchase Max Factor's Hi-Society makeup in either an ebony or tortoise shell colored oval case.[57] These Max Factor advertisements, as well as those of other companies, made reference to specific colors or materials—gold, ivory, ebony—that

[56] Max Factor Cipria Advertisement, *Annabella*, 6 febbraio 1949; Max Factor Crème Paff Advertisement, *Annabella*, 9 maggio 1954.

[57] Max Factor Hi-Society Advertisement, *Annabella*, 1 novembre 1959.

were associated with a stylish luxury that was previously available only to the wealthy. However, the postwar cosmetics' affordability allowed middle-class women who bought the elegantly packaged makeup to obtain an air of affluence that up to that time was difficult to obtain.

Illustrations or photos of affluent women that represented an elegant, refined, and elevated beauty ideal were also featured in *Annabella*'s beauty advertisements. These women's presence also served to solidify the link between elegant beauty, prosperity, and *benessere*. Many of the advertisements attributed these women's elegance to their respectability, as well as to their fashionable qualities; they were women who remained abreast of the latest fashion trends and wanted makeup that complemented their sartorial choices. For example, advertisements highlighted the fact that the spokeswomen wore lipstick colors "of the new fashion" and of "high fashion," and eye makeup shades that were not only "attractive and of good taste" but that "respond[ed] as much to the boldest fashion whims as to the desires for a discreet *maquillage*."[58] By using fashionable, chic makeup, these women appeared to magazine readers as put together and thus, exuding a respectable elegance that signified prosperity and well-being.

Another advertisement technique that helped to cement the connection between elegance and affluence was that of directly referencing sums of money that only the wealthy possessed. This technique was employed in Revlon's "Million Dollar Look" campaign. One advertisement for the makeup line, for example, featured a picture of a woman in a red suit, fur hat and collar with red painted nails and red lips elegantly lounging in a chair with the New York skyline in the background. (Figure 19) This woman was, as the advertisement said, "the image of a million

[58] Elizabeth Arden Advertisement, *Annabella*, 29 marzo 1959; Max Factor Color Fast Lipstick Advertisement, *Annabella*, 4 marzo 1950; Helena Rubinstein Advertisement, *Annabella*, 29 gennaio 1961.

dollars!...she is a goddess or a queen, she is the soft intuitive elegance of a woman of luxury, the youthful freshness of spring…she has the world at her feet."[59] While the red lipstick and nail polish advertised were certainly not expensive, nonetheless, simply using these products would give women "an aspect full of delicious charm, [and a] symbol of refined elegance"—a "million dollar look."[60] In other words, an expensive appearance that was not reflected in the products' prices. This increased ability to obtain an affluent elegance by using reasonably priced makeup products illustrates the increased accessibility to and democratization of beauty in postwar Italy.

[59] Revlon Million Dollar Look Advertisement, *Annabella*, 27 ottobre 1963.

[60] Ibid.

Figure 19 Revlon Million Dollar Look Advertisement, *Annabella*, 27 ottobre 1963
Source: Centro Documentazione Periodici Rcs Mediagroup, Milan, Italy

"Gli uomini possono invecchiare; le donne no!": Youth[61]

The tagline from a Helena Rubinstein advertisement—"Men can age, women can't!"—perfectly encapsulates one of the most important aspects of the American beauty model: youth. According to this ideal, being or appearing young made a woman beautiful, while visible signs of aging detracted from her beauty and consequently, hindered her chances for being socially and financially successful.[62] Therefore, beauty advertisements in *Annabella* prominently promoted youth as a crucial component of being beautiful, and in so doing, rendered it an important component of Italian women's conceptions of beauty.

A significant number and wide range of products advertised in the magazine's pages promised to give women a youthful appearance. Helena Rubinstein's lipstick line Indélibase, for example, gave women's lips a "soft, moist, and young look that made them attractive" while its Young Look and Minute Make-Up products had "a natural and young tone."[63] In fact, the lipstick in the Young Look collection claimed to give one's lips "the freshness of flowers in bloom."[64] Therefore, by using this lipstick one could achieve an appearance that was as fresh as the arrival of spring and as young as spring's newly blossoming flowers. Estée Lauder also sold cosmetics that bestowed youth to users, among them the company's Youth Blend, which gave

[61] "Men can age, women can't!," Helena Rubinstein Advertisement, *Annabella*, 3 giugno 1956.

[62] The relationship between beauty and financial success and/or security is discussed in the next chapter on Catholic and Communist responses to American female culture.

[63] Helena Rubinstein, Indélibase Advertisement, *Annabella*, 26 luglio 1953; Helena Rubinstein Young Look Advertisement, *Annabella*, 17 maggio 1959.

[64] Helena Rubinstein Young Look Advertisement, *Annabella*, 17 maggio 1959.

women "a fresh, healthy, youthful radiance…so natural that it [seemed] to spring 'from inside.'"[65]

In addition to giving women a youthful appearance, beauty products also claimed to maintain a woman's youth once she had reached that "certain age"— usually thirty-years-old. Advertisements featured skin care products with names such as "Erace," "Calice di Giovinezza" ("Chalice of Youth"), and "Estoderme Youth-Dew."[66] Products such as these promised to revitalize one's skin and remove unwanted blemishes, crow's feet, and wrinkles, with their advertisements telling readers that they could aesthetically "remain young after the age of thirty."[67] One Revlon advertisement even went so far as to tell readers that "there aren't any age limits" to being beautiful as long as women used the company's Renaissance Treatment Collection that gave their skin "a youthful beauty that was not possible to have before now."[68] Persuasive text such as this was, of course, accompanied by pictures of women with the clearest, blemish free skin ever seen. For example, a Helena Rubinstein advertisement for the company's skin cream contained a picture of a youthful, wrinkle free woman holding a baby.[69] In the context of beauty, this image of mother and child implied that Rubinstein's Skin Life skin cream would make a woman's skin look and feel just like a baby's.

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[65] Estée Lauder Youth Blend Advertisement, *Annabella*, 31 maggio 1964.

[66] Max Factor Erace Advertisement, *Annabella*, 5 giugno 1955; Max Factor Calice di Giovinezza Advertisement, *Annabella*, 30 novembre 1958; Estée Lauder Estoderme Youth-Dew Advertisement, *Annabella*, 28 luglio 1963.

[67] Helena Rubinstein Advertisement, *Annabella*, 24 febbraio 1957.

[68] Revlon Renaissance Treatment Collection Advertisement, *Annabella*, 21 ottobre 1965.

[69] Helena Rubinstein Skin Life Skin Cream Advertisement, *Annabella*, 23 novembre 1958.

"Oggi mi ha guardato!": Sex Appeal[70]

In addition to appearing young, elegant, healthy, and affluent, being beautiful also meant being able to attract men; simply put, to have sex appeal. Both Hollywood films and wartime pin-ups featuring voluptuous American actresses and models introduced into Italy new ideas of sexual appeal that largely concentrated on the female body. The bodies of postwar Hollywood actresses Rita Hayworth and Marilyn Monroe are prime examples of this new sensuality contained in the American beauty model. Both women represented a real life version of the "pin-up girl," "the healthy, American cheerleader type—button-nosed, wide-eyed, long-legged, ample hips and breasts, and above all with the open, friendly smile that discloses perfect, even, white teeth."[71] This new sexual beauty spoke to Italians' desires to move on from the ravages of war. As Stephen Gundle writes, Hayworth's curvaceous figure both physically and symbolically "filled the demand in post-war Italy for a dream of abundance and freedom," making her, as well as other voluptuous actresses, popular figures in the country.[72] This popularity was influential in making bodily sensuality an important aspect of Italians' notions regarding female beauty.

In order to complement this new focus on the body, cosmetic companies promoted their products' seductive qualities to show readers that an elegant, attractive face was necessary for women to reach their full sex appeal potential. In other words, the companies made it clear in their advertisements that having a voluptuous body was not enough; a woman had to have a sexy, beautiful face too. It was as if the companies were asking women: "Without a made-up

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[70] "Today he looked at me!" Elizabeth Arden Crème extraordinaire Advertisement, *Annabella*, 27 settembre 1959.

[71] T.B. Hess, "Pinup and Icon," in T.B Hess and L. Nochlin, *Women as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art 1730-1970* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), 227 quoted in Gundle, *Bellissima*, 110.

[72] Gundle, *Bellissima*, 110.

face, how can you expect to garner the attention of men?" Therefore, makeup and beauty treatments for the face were crucial components in creating a woman's sexual allure.

Revlon advertisements, in particular, highlighted their products' ability to make women sexually desirable. Charles Revson, his brother Joseph, and chemist Charles Lachman established Revlon as a nail enamel company in 1932. By the 1950s, Revlon's sexually bold advertisements, such as those for its "Fire and Ice" lipstick campaign that "portrayed a fantasy of the 'high class tramp' who 'somehow you know [is] really a nice girl" had, as Kathy Peiss writes, "definitively changed the sexual resonance of cosmetics advertising."[73] Previously, cosmetic advertisements featured a restrained and implicit female sexuality. They "acknowledged women's sexuality but contained it safely in the story of a heterosexual romance and marriage…relying on double entendre and flirtation."[74] Revlon made sexual desire explicit, putting it front and center in its advertisements. Typically, a picture of a solitary, "self-absorbed—or self-sufficient—woman" with moist, lush lips, vibrantly colored eyelids, and a "come-hither" expression unaccompanied by men was the main focal point of the advertisements.[75] These women were in control of their sexuality and well aware of how to use it to get the man they wanted.

Revlon advertisements attributed a woman's sex appeal to a magical, enchanting, fascinating, and mysterious face. The company's Touch and Glow makeup claimed to make a woman's skin so splendid and young that it would be as "seductive as the magic of candle light"

[73] Peiss, 245, 249.

[74] Ibid., 249.

[75] Peiss, 251.

while its Love-Pat makeup "render[ed] [her] complexion enchantingly perfect."[76] Revlon's Sphinx Kit, consisting of lipstick, nail polish, and eye makeup, gave women a seductive, sexually appealing "Cleopatra Look"—"mysterious eyes that enchant…nail polish [that is] the most seductive…intense pink, *a passionate pink*."[77] Moreover, the "Cleopatra Look" advertisement spoke of the products' ability to win men over: "What will the Cleopatra Look woman's destiny be? Will she have empires at her feet? Rare jewels? The love of great men? That happened once. It can happen again!"[78] (Figure 20) The presence of the "self-absorbed or self-sufficient" seductress alongside the advertisements' text illustrated for *Annabella*'s readers that making oneself up, in addition to having a voluptuous body, was fundamental for eliciting sexual desire from men, and ultimately, for being beautiful.

[76] Revlon Touch and Glow Advertisement, *Annabella*, 12 maggio 1957; Revlon Love-Pat Advertisement, *Annabella*, 10 febbraio 1957.

[77] This advertisement appeared in *Annabella* approximately seven months before the film *Cleopatra* (1963) starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, which was partly filmed at Rome's Cinecittà studios, was released in the U.S. Therefore, this is another example of the connection made between Hollywood and beauty in the advertisements. Revlon Cleopatra Look Advertisement, *Annabella*, 4 novembre 1962.

[78] Ibid. In addition to promoting a typical American beauty ideal, the American cosmetic companies also occasionally created and advertised products modeled after a foreign, historical beauty ideal, such as Revlon's Cleopatra Look and its evocation of Ancient Egypt. Interestingly enough, the companies also created cosmetics that had Italy and Italian beauty—the Renaissance and Venice, for example—as their reference points. In instances such as these, American companies interpreted these foreign ideals through an American tinted beauty lens. In so doing, the companies did indeed promote a mysterious foreign beauty, but one that reflected American ideals regarding what true beauty meant.

Figure 20 Revlon Cleopatra Look Advertisement, *Annabella*, 4 novembre 1962
Source: Centro Documentazione Periodici Rcs Mediagroup, Milan, Italy

Learning How to be Beautiful

In order for women to successfully create a look and personality for themselves that replicated those advertised in *Annabella,* they had to be instructed on the proper beauty techniques, most of which derived from the States. While the magazine's columns gave beauty advice to readers, cosmetic companies used their advertisements to "school" women on how to

be beautiful. Advertisements, such as Max Factor's Pan-Stik advertisement featuring Hedy Lamarr, often contained step-by-step illustrations of the proper way to apply a specific product (see Figure 18).[79] Other advertisements informed readers that an instructional guide was included with the purchase of the specific product. Both Pond's and Elizabeth Arden gave consumers a record featuring lessons in beauty. Elizabeth Arden's Bellezza a 45 giri included "a record at 45 rpm that on one side gives all the instructions to correctly follow a complete skin care [routine] and on the second [side] teaches how to make oneself up in the most modern and perfect manner."[80] Pond's record, entitled "Beauty Phone," "[would make one] an expert in [her own] beauty." All she needed to do was "listen and she [would] be more beautiful."[81] The companies' instruction manuals played a significant role in creating a standardized beauty model in Italy that reflected the American beauty trends and ideals discussed above.

In addition to this hands-off teaching method, several cosmetic companies established brick and mortar beauty salons or sales boutiques within department stores throughout the Italian peninsula. While Max Factor, Estée Lauder, and Revlon all had their own stores or boutiques in Italy, Elizabeth Arden was the name most closely associated with the concept of the beauty salon, a place where women went to be pampered, made beautiful, and to learn the best and most suitable beauty routines for themselves. By the 1960s, the company had one hundred sixteen stores worldwide, several of which were located in Italy, and which were prominently advertised in *Annabella*. Known for their red door, Arden's salons could be found in the most elegant and high-end shopping districts in the country, most notably on Via Montenapoleone in Milan and in

[79] Max Factor Pan-Stik Advertisement, *Annabella*, 21 ottobre 1951.

[80] Elizabeth Arden Bellezza a 45 giri Advertisement, *Annabella*, 29 aprile 1962.

[81] Pond's Beauty Phone Record Advertisement, *Annabella*, 20 aprile 1967.

Rome's Piazza di Spagna.[82] The company also opened boutiques in the most well-known Italian department store, La Rinascente.[83] The salons' and boutiques' locations signified the elegant, respectable, and high-end nature of Arden's cosmetics. Indeed, it was Arden, along with other early twentieth century cosmetic moguls, who "[took] 'beauty culture' out of the realms of snake oil salesmanship and into the realms of respectability."[84] She created, packaged, and advertised cosmetics in such a way that signified their belonging to the upper echelons of American society.

The extensive, luxurious beauty treatments and pampering women received at Arden's salons also contributed to making a beauty routine and makeup use respectable. Arden created the "total beauty" concept—going to a salon to receive a head-to-toe beauty treatment that not only made one beautiful but restored or gave one a sense of serenity, happiness, and youthfulness. In *War Paint: Madame Helena Rubinstein and Miss Elizabeth Arden, Their Lives, Their Times, Their Rivalry*, Lindy Woodhead writes that women at the salons could receive "oxygen facials, deep tissue massage, exfoliation, depilation, eyelash dyeing, freckle-bleaching, manicures, pedicures, self-tanning, metabolic testing, naturopathic water treatments, heat treatments, [and] paraffin waxing."[85] They could also attend "yoga, gymnastics, deportment, grooming, stretch and anti-stress classes and even fencing classes."[86] Further, clients were able to eat a health conscious, yet delicious meal at one of the salon's "light-diet dining rooms" and

[82] Elizabeth Arden Pure Red Advertisement, *Annabella*, 30 gennaio 1955.

[83] "Una Porta Rossa anche alla Rinascente," *Annabella*, 28 luglio 1966.

[84] Lindy Woodhead, *War Paint: Madame Helena Rubinstein and Miss Elizabeth Arden, Their Lives, Their Times, Their Rivalry*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003), 2.

[85] Woodhead, 6.

[86] Ibid.

finish their day with makeup lessons and a visit to the "in-house hairdresser."[87] Although customers at Arden's La Rinascente boutiques could not receive the same extensive pampering, they could receive specialized advice on "the most correct way to make oneself up according to the proper type, age, and means" from three expert beauticians.[88]

While women learned important techniques to make themselves beautiful at the salons and boutiques, these beauty centers also promoted one of Arden's most important beauty concepts—individual gratification. Woodhead writes that Arden firmly believed that

> women deserve time for themselves. That women need some pampering. That women who spend time on a beauty regime that makes them feel better about themselves are not being self-indulgent or vain. That a beauty regime, good grooming, 'putting one's face on,' a healthy lifestyle, vitality and above all the confidence that these things gives, are essential tools for coping with life in today's combative, competitive, often cruel world.[89]

Therefore, Arden's call for women to frequent her salons and engage in a beauty routine as a means of feeling good about themselves was a call for individual gratification. This promotion of the individual was one of American consumer capitalism's defining characteristics. Postwar developments in the U.S. that emphasized a privatized, individually focused lifestyle, such as an increased dedication to leisure activities—going on vacation and participation in recreational activities—and the construction of single family suburban homes, are prime examples of this notion.[90] As such, the salons' existence in Italy represented the presence of and Italians'

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[87] Ibid.

[88] "Una Porta Rossa anche alla Rinascente," *Annabella*, 28 luglio 1966.

[89] Woodhead, 9-10.

[90] In *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America*, Lawrence Culver writes that "in the twentieth century, a people once obsessed with collective endeavors proved increasingly isolated and atomized, demanding gated communities and privatized security forces…In Southern California, recreation and

acceptance of an American derived beauty ideal whose concepts were in opposition to contemporary and traditional Italian beliefs—Catholic, Communist, and Fascist—that prioritized the good of the group, or the nation in the case of Fascism, over that of the individual. Therefore, the invasion of American cosmetics and their attendant ideals, such as *benessere*, freedom of choice, and individual gratification, played an important cultural and political role in postwar Italy by orienting Italian women towards a democratic consumer capitalist lifestyle.

Conclusion: Changes in the Beauty Ideal

The elegant but sensual, young, and healthy modern made-up woman seeking to attract men was not a static beauty ideal. Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing into the 1970s, this model underwent changes to reflect the emerging women's movement and its call for women's liberation and autonomy. Recognizing the movement's gathering strength and influence among Italian women, cosmetic companies advertised their products in a way that aligned with the movement's beliefs.

Both Elizabeth Arden and Max Factor advertisements evoked one of the women's movement's key concepts—liberation. Arden's advertisement for its Directionale makeup contended that the product was "makeup as liberation," freeing women "from modern life's inevitable attacks, fatigue, [and] stress."[91] Furthermore, the advertisement claimed that

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leisure became synonymous with privacy… [this model of leisure and recreation had] implications far beyond the region itself," becoming an important aspect of postwar America's mass consumer society, and in the context of this dissertation, in postwar Italian society as well. Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

[91] Elizabeth Arden Directionale Advertisement, *Annabella*, 2 marzo 1971.

Directionale represented the "new femininity: dynamic, aggressive, without complex, psychologically evolved"—characteristics that, perhaps, could also be used to define the consciously aware and socially active women involved in Italy's feminist movement.[92] In another Directionale makeup advertisement, Elizabeth Arden depicted its product as more than just a reflection of the movement and the social and cultural changes it engendered. The company implied that Directionale was one of the catalysts for these changes stating: "No one knows where female emancipation will end. But where it will begin, yes."[93] This particular product allowed women to have a sleek and coordinated beauty routine that liberated them from "hours and hours in front of the mirror."[94] As such, women who used Directionale were able to live a "more engaging, active life."[95] Directionale was not the only Arden product that liberated women. The company's PTNI – Pulire, Tonificare, Nutrire, Idratare ("Clean, Tone, Feed, Moisturize") skin treatment guaranteed to put women's "skin in freedom." Moreover, purchasing this product was an act of "choosing [one's] freedom."[96]

Max Factor similarly highlighted women's freedom to choose by using the makeup that appealed to them, rather than that which appealed to others. The *Le bambole non amano* ("Dolls do not love") advertisement perfectly illustrates this idea. The advertisement told readers:

> You are not a doll. You live reality: you became aware of yourself, of your personality, of your feelings. It is 'beauty time' for you. And your lifestyle is here in your image: your

[92] Ibid.

[93] Elizabeth Arden Directionale Advertisement, *Annabella*, 9 novembre 1971.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Elizabeth Arden PTNI Advertisement, *Annabella*, 27 aprile 1971.

> freedom to be a woman. Choose 'your' freedom from among dozens of Max Factor collections and hundreds of products.[97]

Thus, as the advertisement said, women were no longer meant to be objects, or dolls, but rather liberated women who were fully aware of their needs and desires, as well as firmly in control of their lives and destinies.

The standardized beauty ideal in Italy, by the early 1970s, had become different from its earlier incarnations. It transformed from images of a Hollywood glamour goddess and of a youthful and elegant seductress into one of a liberated, confident, and autonomous woman. Despite this transformation, American companies, by focusing on their products' liberating qualities, remained the primary producers of Italy's new beauty ideal. In this manner, American derived models of beauty were still very much a part of conceptions of Italian female beauty.

Overall, in the three decades following the end of the Second World War, American ideals of female beauty influenced Italian women's conceptions of their own beauty. This was due to the significant popularity of Italian weekly women's magazines, such as *Annabella*, and the dominating presence of American beauty product advertisements in the magazines' pages. These advertisements called for Italian women to be glamorous, youthful, elegant, healthy, and sexually appealing—all significant components of the postwar American beauty ideal. Additionally, the advertisements also endorsed key tenets of democratic consumer capitalism—freedom of choice, democratization, and individual gratification—that contrasted with Communism, the other social and economic model competing for prominence in Italian society. As such, products coming from the States not only influenced the way in which Italian women aesthetically fashioned themselves, but also in how they identified themselves—as the Italian

[97] Max Factor Le bambole non amano Advertisement, *Annabella*, 2 novembre 1971.

"Mrs. Consumer," a modern made-up, fashionable woman exercising her democratic right to participate in Italy's growing consumer capitalist society.

This identification, women's consumption of the American beauty ideal, and the overall pervasiveness of American consumer cultural models throughout Italian society introduced a new and threatening component into the country's intense internal political, social, and cultural struggle for the "hearts and minds" of Italians being fought between the Catholic Church, the Christian Democrats, and the Italian Communists.

Chapter 5

Noi Donne and *Famiglia Cristiana*: Communists, Catholics, and American Female Culture in Cold War Italy

The events between 1943 and 1946—the defeat of Fascism, the end of the Second World War, and the end of the Italian monarchy—represented a break with the past and ushered in aspirations and hopes for a different and brighter future for Italians. This rupture with the past also set the stage for a cultural, social, and political battle in the country that would last for most of the second half of the twentieth century. The struggle for political control primarily involved the Christian Democratic Party (DC) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI), both former members of the anti-Fascist coalition that had fought against Fascists and Nazis in the last two years of the war. On the cultural and social level, the PCI, whose party policy had a significant cultural component, remained a primary protagonist. On the opposite, and conservative, end of the spectrum, the Catholic Church assumed primacy in this struggle for social and cultural dominance in postwar Italy. The PCI and the Church promoted diverse visions of Italian society. On one hand, the Catholics endorsed the family as the cornerstone of society, while on the other hand, the Communists promoted socialism and collectivism as the sound foundation for Italian society.

Initially, this social and cultural battle remained an internal struggle for creating order in a ruined country and constructing a postwar national Italian identity.[1] However, the invasion of

[1] Rosario Forlenza writes that the decades-long battle between the Church and the Communists was an internal development based on a historical relationship between the two entities, rather than an external development

American culture in the form of consumer capitalist models and products in the mid-1950s transformed this internal, bipolar struggle into a tripolar one between the Catholic Church, the Communists, and the United States.[2] From this point on, the real struggle in the Cold War period for the Church and Communists was not with each other, but rather, with the growing presence of American consumer culture in the country, its perceived detrimental influence on Italians, and the social and cultural changes it engendered. Consequently, Catholic and Communist leaders were now faced with the challenge of determining how to make sense of these rapid changes for themselves, and most importantly, for their followers.

The leaders used their popular cultural publications, in particular magazines, as a forum for discussion, as well as a guide for readers, on how to deal with the new consumer products and models in Italy. It became especially important for the Catholics and Communists to reach the female readership of their respective magazines since much of the American consumer culture was targeted at women. Furthermore, these Italian women were encountering the new culture on an ever more frequent basis. Because of this increased exposure, the Catholics and Communists used the magazines *Famiglia Cristiana* and *Noi Donne*, respectively, to instruct women, who were at the forefront of the country's consumer revolution, on how to deal with the new models and behaviors of consumption that they encountered.

This chapter examines how *Famiglia Cristiana* and *Noi Donne* responded to the challenges posed by the presence of Mrs. Consumer—the white, middle-class, modern suburban

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imposed on Italy due to the development of the Cold War. Rosario Forlenza "In Search of Order: Portraying the Communist in Cold War Italy," Unpublished paper, 2015.

[2] Angelo Ventrone, "L'avventura americana della classe dirigente cattolica," in *Nemici per la pelle: sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. Pier Paolo D'Attore (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1991), 147.

American housewife who represented American female consumer culture in the postwar period—in the areas of beauty, entertainment and celebrity, and shopping. Far from an outright rejection, the two publications included American consumer modernity into their pages and adapted it to fit their visions of the ideal postwar Italian woman. They mediated the influence and novelty of American consumer culture by offering selected criticism and praise that were in line with important Catholic and Communist beliefs, such as modesty and religious morality, and collectivism, equality, and financial morality, respectively. As such, the women that emerged in these two magazines were modern, consuming women who nevertheless remained loyal to the core ideological beliefs of the Church and Communists.

Political and Social Developments in the Early Postwar Period

During the final years of the war, the Communists and the Christian Democrats united under the anti-Fascist banner to bring an end to Fascism and the war. In the period from the end of fighting in 1945 to the crucial 1948 parliamentary elections, political, social, cultural, and ideological differences between the two former partners led to the breaking up of this coalition. This deterioration also marked the beginning of a political, social, and cultural contest for Italian society fought between the DC and the PCI that came to define Italy's First Republic.

In the immediate postwar period, Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti sought to keep intact the anti-Fascist alliance so as to promote and ensure unity in the new Italy. He made concessions to the DC with the hope that they would bring forth a progressive democracy that contained some of the PCI's vision for Italian society. Unfortunately for the Communist leader and his party, this did not occur as the DC opposed the notion of a progressive democracy with a

platform that contained a "commitment to the capitalist system, anti-communism, and [the promotion of] Catholic morality."[3]

The platform's last component linked the DC with the Catholic Church and its followers, thus establishing a special relationship between the conservative political party and the religious organization. Both the DC and the Church shared a hatred of Communism and emphasized the importance of Catholic morality and the family as bulwarks against the spread and entrenchment of atheistic and socialistic Communist ideals among the Italian people. Despite this shared hostility towards Communists, the two groups expressed different opinions in regard to economic, social, and cultural influences coming from the United States. The Christian Democrats were more accepting of the economic and social changes caused by the invasion of mass American consumer capitalism whereas the Church, especially in the late 1940s and 1950s, was much more resistant to these changes.

In addition to its special relationship with the DC, the Church exercised a long, and significant, influence over Italians. Catholicism's prominent position in the new Italian Republic was reinforced with the inclusion of Article 7 in the new constitution put into effect on January 1, 1948. Article 7 maintained the Lateran Pacts of 1929 signed by Mussolini and Pope Pius XI, which made "Catholicism [the] official religion of the state [and] made religious education compulsory in state schools."[4] The extension of the Lateran Pacts into the new Republic perpetuated and solidified the bond between the Italian state, its people, and the Church. Further, the article was one step in the process of marginalizing the power and reach of the Communists.

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[3] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 83.

[4] Ibid., 101.

The final stages of the ending of the anti-Fascist alliance and the start of a polarized struggle between the DC, Catholics, and Communists occurred in the build up to and in tandem with the crucial elections of 1948 and 1953. First, Alcide De Gasperi, leader of the DC, decided in May 1947 to form a government based on a center right coalition, thus excluding the left. De Gasperi's decision, in effect, divided Italy into two distinct political, social, and cultural formations: a conservative alliance between the DC and the Church and the leftist based Popular Front coalition between the PCI and the Socialist Party (PSI). Second, the 1948 elections to determine the composition of the country's new constituent assembly solidified this division and the end of the anti-Fascist coalition. In the election, the DC won 48.5% of the vote as well as an absolute majority in the Chamber of Deputies while the Popular Front won 31% of the vote. This outcome initiated the DC's political domination. Although the left lost the election, the PCI managed to increase their number of deputies, at the expense of their Popular Front partners, the Socialists, thus making the Communists Italy's dominant party of the left.[5] Third, in the 1953 election, the PCI once again increased their number of parliamentary representatives whereas the DC's numbers decreased despite the conservative party winning the overall election. Specifically, the DC percentage of votes declined to 40.1% while the PCI gained 22.6% of the vote. The PCI's percentage combined with that of the Socialists, which was 12.7%, was a 4.3% increase from the two parties' combined result as part of the Popular Front in 1948. As a result, the Communists remained a constant presence and threat to the DC's and the Church's control over Italian society.[6]

[5] Ibid., 118.

[6] Ibid., 143.

This unique political and cultural situation in Italy—a country rebuilding from war while simultaneously engaging in an internal struggle between the conservative forces of the DC and Catholic Church and the PCI, the largest Communist party in Western Europe—made the country a strategic game piece in the international Cold War chess match that was developing at the same time. As such, the two superpowers fighting the Cold War battle, the United States and the Soviet Union, took a strong interest in postwar Italy. For the United States, which was seeking to ensure a capitalist, democratic Europe, this interest meant providing Italy with financial aid in the form of UNRRA and Marshall Plan funds, and supplying comestibles and other desperately needed material goods to the country and its people. For the Soviet Union, which, in contrast, was looking to build a Communist Europe, this interest meant maintaining a connection with the PCI and making the party a member of the Cominform, the alliance of Communist parties. As a result of this external interest in Italy's domestic situation, the country increasingly became part of a larger, international Cold War struggle.

The internationalization of Italy's political, social, and cultural struggle made the United States and the Soviet Union, and their respective ideologies, increasingly significant presences in Italian society. Each superpower became reference points for specific groups. For example, the country's business class viewed the U.S. as the land of modernity, progress, possibility, and above all, prosperity. For Italian entrepreneurs and industrialists looking to rebuild their companies, the U.S.'s consumer capitalist enterprises were *the* model to follow. In contrast, Italy's working class Communists considered the Soviet Union to be the land of peace and social

justice; a society in which the collective good was prioritized over the individual's good.[7] But, the combination of the DC's political power and its alliance with the United States, which itself was not lacking in economic strength or desire to export its products to war-ravaged Europe for political and economic reasons, as well as the absence of commercial competition from the Soviets, allowed for American consumer capitalist models, products, and ideas to have a greater presence in Italian society and culture than those coming from the Soviet Union.

American products, such as makeup and domestic appliances, appealed to many Italians because they represented a lifestyle that contrasted sharply with the deprived lives they led during the war and under the Fascist regime. They wanted to begin living in a modern and prosperous world and thus purchased American products in order to achieve this goal. Purchasing these objects also meant buying the ideals of freedom of choice, affluence, and individualism that the objects contained, ideals that diverged from those endorsed by the Soviet Union. Buying American consumer products, and the "American way of life," transformed Italians' behaviors and attitudes. In this manner, American consumer culture, in addition to U.S financial aid, became part and parcel of Italy's Cold War struggle.

The acquisition of American consumer products and the subsequent gradual "Americanization" of Italian society were threats to both the Catholics and Communists since American consumerism contained capitalist ideals that undermined core aspects of each group's ideology. Catholic critiques of American consumerism regarded, above all, the dangers it posed to the family, the cornerstone of Italian society, and Catholic morality, which in the context of

[7] Stephen Gundle, "Cultura di massa e modernizzazione: *Vie Nuove* e *Famiglia Cristiana* dalla Guerra Fredda alla Società dei Consumi," in *Nemici per la pelle: sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. Pier Paolo D'Attore (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1991), 239.

consumer culture meant modesty in behavior and appearance. The Church feared that purchasing American consumer products, and their attendant ideals such as individualism and materialism, would "cancel [Catholics'] faith and [morality]" and undermine the stable foundation of society—the family.[8] According to the Church, the erosion of the family, Catholic faith, and morality would subsequently lead to the deterioration of Italian society.[9]

On the other end of the ideological spectrum, the Italian Communist critique concentrated on American consumer culture's perceived ability to undermine the collective nature of Communism, as well as the ideological purity of the party. Togliatti considered culture to be very important for constructing and maintaining social order and thus, gave it an active role in the PCI's struggle for socialism to become the governing system in Italian society.[10] Initially, the party leader brought intellectuals into the PCI to "confound the bourgeois impression that the [PCI] comprised uncultivated barbarians and hotheads."[11] The ideas produced by Italian Communist intellectuals became part of the Party's program for educating its working-class members. In this way, the Communists tied together their political platform with the culture of its members, and constructed a socialist society with a strong intellectual, cultural foundation.[12]

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[8] Bruno Wanrooij, "*Pro Aris et Focis.* Morale cattolica e identità nazionale in Italia 1945-1960," in *Nemici per la pelle: sogno americano e mito sovietico nell'Italia contemporanea*, ed. Pier Paolo D'Attore (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1991), 199.

[9] Ibid., 211.

[10] Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow: The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 12, 6.

[11] Ibid., 2.

[12] Ibid., 21.

Popular American culture—films, music, comics, and material goods—threatened to dilute this purity. Watching films or listening to rock and roll music that promoted the individualistic, materialistic, and avaricious "American way of life," and buying products belonging to this lifestyle, also threatened the collective nature and action inherent to the PCI's identity and ideology. Therefore, Communist leaders feared that the U.S.'s mass consumer society would seduce the Party's members, "erode the bases of left-wing support," and mark the end of the PCI's socialist vision for Italy.[13]

Both Catholic and Communist critiques of American consumer capitalism in the early years of the postwar period contained an apocalyptic tone. According to these groups, this new culture, its ideas, and its models would destroy Catholic and Communist visions of Italian society and drag Italy into a religiously and financially immoral Dark Ages. Recognizing the danger that the "American way of life" posed to the Church's and the Communists' influence in Italian society, the two groups mobilized on a popular culture level to combat this threat.

In the early postwar period, each group had a different relationship with the growing mass media market in Italy. The Catholic Church was more receptive to this market and more adept than the PCI at using mass media and popular culture to spread its message. In contrast, the PCI's cultural strategy, as discussed earlier, consisted primarily of eschewing the new mass media and instead, using intellectual writings, a much more limited avenue, to connect with potential members. In response to the growing power of mass media and the Church's increasing control of the market, the PCI changed its cultural strategy, moving away from a dependence on intellectuals and towards a greater dependence on popular culture to spread its message.

[13] Ibid., 76, 82-83.

Magazines were used by both groups to maintain their relevance among Italians and to combat the invasion of American consumer capitalism and the changes it brought to Italian society. Specifically, the Catholic magazine, *Famiglia Cristiana*, and the Unione delle Donne Italiane's (UDI, a women's collateral organization of the PCI) magazine, *Noi Donne*, became important cultural weapons in this three-way struggle for the hearts and minds of Italian women.

Famiglia Cristiana and *Noi Donne*: A History

The first issue of *Famiglia Cristiana* was published on December 25, 1931 by the Catholic foundation Pia Società San Paolo, which had been founded some sixteen years before by Don Alberione in the northern Italian town of Alba. The magazine was primarily directed at women, providing information for readers in the areas of the home, cooking, economic and farming matters, and religious life. In fact, *Famiglia Cristiana*'s subtitle was "weekly magazine for women and daughters."[14] After a brief suspension during the war, the publication returned and aimed at reaching a broader audience consisting of women, men, daughters, and sons. The magazine's subtitle was changed to "weekly magazine for families" and its content now included issues relevant to Italy's male population. Despite the broadened scope, women still remained the targeted audience. The majority of the magazine's readers resided in the northern Italian regions of Piedmont, Lombardy, and Veneto, and belonged to the urban middle-class or rural classes.[15]

[14] Gundle, "Cultura di massa e modernizzazione: *Vie Nuove* e *Famiglia Cristiana* dalla Guerra Fredda alla Società dei Consumi," 244-245; "La nostra storia," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 20 dicembre 1970, 20-22.

[15] Gundle, "Cultura di massa e modernizzazione: *Vie Nuove* e *Famiglia Cristiana* dalla Guerra Fredda alla Società dei Consumi," 260.

The first issue of *Noi Donne* was published in July 1944 in Naples by women united and organized "in the fight for the defense of their men and children, against the roundups and hunger, for the end of the war, of massacres, and of bombing."[16] The publication soon came under the direction of the UDI, which had been founded in Rome just two months after the publication of *Noi Donne*'s first issue. In the first years of publication, *Noi Donne* was mainly a bulletin of the UDI, providing news, political, and organizational information to readers. In this manifestation, the magazine sought to inform readers on "what women in progressive democratic countries had accomplished," as well as to "democratize [Italian women's lives] by clarifying [their] problems and the method and the will to resolve them."[17]

Beginning in the 1950s, both publications underwent changes in layout, content, and overall aims that made them less of informational brochures and more so vehicles for endorsing their particular viewpoints in response to the growing presences of American consumerism and the Cold War in Italy. *Famiglia Cristiana* wanted to shape its readers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in line with Catholic doctrine in order to combat the threat of the "American way of life." As Stephen Gundle notes, the publication became a "type of printed sermon rather than one pronounced from the pulpit."[18] The magazine's "sermons"—its articles and responses to readers' letters in the advice column *Colloqui le risposte del Padre*—instructed readers on how to use Christian doctrine as their guide to living in Italy's modernizing society. The magazine, which was in Italian homes, facilitated the diffusion and permanence of the Catholic message among

[16] "5 anni fa," *Noi Donne*, 24 luglio 1949.

[17] "Che cosa leggono le donne? Il pubblico femminile preferisce il rotocalco" *Noi Donne*, 20 marzo 1945, 13.

[18] Gundle, "Cultura di massa e modernizzazione: *Vie Nuove* e *Famiglia Cristiana* dalla Guerra Fredda alla Società dei Consumi," 245.

the country's population. The increasing circulation figures—27,000 in 1938, 384,000 in 1955, 1 million in 1960, and 1.7 million by 1973—indicates that *Famiglia Cristiana*'s "sermons" were reaching more Italians as the postwar period progressed. When taking into consideration the fact that the dual presences of American consumerism and the Cold War were also growing during this same period, the circulation increase illustrates the importance given to a popular cultural item by Catholics as a means of competing with these foreign influences.

Noi Donne also underwent layout and content changes in the 1950s that transformed it from an informational bulletin into a publication that resembled the glossy, popular weekly women's magazines. The revised *Noi Donne* featured color photos of celebrities and contained sections devoted to fashion and beauty. The magazine's transformation, on one hand, signaled a partial acceptance of an increasingly consumer-oriented society. On the other hand, though, it allowed for *Noi Donne*'s editors and journalists to highlight the injustices of consumer capitalism and to promote their socialist vision for Italian female society. In so doing, similarly to *Famiglia Cristiana*, the Communist magazine provided readers with a guide on how to make sense of and live in Italy's changing society.

Famiglia Cristiana, *Noi Donne*, and American Female Culture

A balance between an acceptance of American consumer culture and a critical stance towards this culture, filtered through Catholic and Communist lenses, characterized the approaches adopted by both *Famiglia Cristiana* and *Noi Donne* to address American consumerism's encroachment on Catholic and Communist influence on Italian female society.

La Bellezza

One of the most noticeable changes in the postwar period to Italian female culture regarded the physical appearance of Italian women. From an increasing use of makeup (so as to give themselves personalities like their favorite Hollywood film stars) to the growing prominence of modern, chic, and affordable American ready-to-wear inspired clothes on Italian women, Italian upper to middle-class women were engaging in Italy's flourishing consumer market filled with products of American origin. The topic of beauty, *la bellezza*, became one of the areas in which *Famiglia Cristiana* and *Noi Donne* provided a partial resistance to the invasion of American female consumerism as a means of protecting its readers' Catholic and Communist integrities, respectively.

Famiglia Cristiana urged its female readers to demonstrate "Christian elegance"—an American beauty model subdued by Catholic morality—in their outward appearance. This idea contrasted with the heavily made-up woman featured in beauty advertisements and fashion spreads in the popular women's weekly magazines, such as *Grazia* and *Annabella*. The ideal modern Catholic woman, according to *Famiglia Cristiana*, could wear makeup so long as she had a modest appearance that aligned with Catholic morality. The promotion of this ideal could most often be found in the magazine's beauty and advice columns.

In the 1960s, *Famiglia Cristiana*'s beauty columns, such as *Vi voglio tutte belle* (I want you all to be beautiful), provided information on the latest trends and products in the beauty industry. More importantly, the columns advised readers on how to use the new developments in *la bellezza* so as to create an appearance that remained within the boundaries of Christian elegance. The discussion of the beauty techniques and the industry itself in the magazine's pages indicates that Catholic women were allowed to use makeup. However, cosmetic products had to be used to enhance, not disfigure, one's features, for practical reasons, or to "correct evident

defects."[19] For example, the article "ABCs of Bellezza" told readers to use face powder to cover pimples or acne and lipstick to keep lips soft.[20] The *Vi voglio tutte belle* columnist told readers that eye makeup was meant to enhance the wearer's soul, not to make them (her eyes) appear "impersonal and ridiculous like a doll, or worse like a clown."[21] In another issue, the columnist warned readers that using cosmetic products to drastically change one's features—hair color and skin tone—would not bring happiness, adding that "there is nothing more depressing, anonymous and dull than a brunette camouflaged as a blond or vice versa."[22] Cosmetics, such as lipstick, eye liner, and hair dye, could not be applied in a showy and excessive manner that distorted a woman's features, and her inner personality as well. Therefore, *Famiglia Cristiana*'s beauty columns and articles promoted a Catholic woman whose made-up face was simple, decent, and of good taste, not gaudy, exaggerated, and false.

This same ideal was promoted in the advice columns of Padre Atanasio, which responded to readers' letters that expressed concern with the increased usage of makeup among Italian women and how it affected their characters. In one letter, P.V. from Naples told the Padre that when "[he] found himself in front of a made-up girl, [he] felt a sense of repugnance because he considered her to be a woman of bad taste."[23] Padre Atanasio's response echoed sentiments found in the beauty columns discussed above. He told P.V. that a woman's "sentiment is revealed more by [her] behavior than by makeup" and thus, "makeup, understood in the right

[19] "Come mai la Chiesa non parla più di rossetto?,"*Famiglia Cristiana*, 19 aprile 1964, 3.

[20] "Vi voglio tutte belle. L'ABC della bellezza," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 18 ottobre 1964, 42.

[21] "Vi voglio tutte belle. Buon gusto e no per la bellezza degli occhi," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 31 maggio 1964, 42.

[22] "Vi voglio tutte belle. Un caso tra tanti,"*Famiglia Cristiana*, 29 novembre 1964, 56.

[23] "Fin dove è consentito truccarsi," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 7 ottobre 1962, 3.

manner, is lawful."[24] He also added that an excessively made-up woman was someone who "lacked an *aesthetic sense* or more so *good sense*. Nothing else." Thus, makeup use did not reflect poorly on a woman's character.

However, Padre Atanasio did acknowledge that beauty products and models contained a negative aspect—the fact that cosmetic products could be used in an insincere way that solely benefitted oneself. He told readers that "makeup should never be a trick, but a magic touch that gives brightness to reality" and that a woman who uses beauty products "to seduce men, sins gravely."[25] By making these statements, the Padre warned against the materialism, greediness, and artificiality of the consumer-based "American way of life" which accompanied the American beauty products and models being diffused throughout Italian society.

Another letter raised the question of whether engaging in a beauty routine was at odds with Catholic doctrine. Specifically, the letter writer asked if it was lawful for "a woman who observes all of the duties of a good Christian life…to put into practice all of the suggestions that one reads in '*Vi voglio tutte belle*.'" Once again, the Padre advocated for an understated makeup use that improved one's inner personality and/or concealed defects. He responded: "a reasonable and moderate use of beauty products, is not unlawful…[and that] it could be part of a Christian elegance, without extending to coquetry or vanity."[26] Similar to the previous response discussed, the Padre also used his answer to discuss and condemn the negative aspects of engaging in an extensive and excessive beauty routine. He advised readers that they should not invest too much

[24] Ibid., 3.

[25] Ibid., 3-4.

[26] "Colloqui le risposte del padre. È lecito farsi belle?," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 5 settembre 1965.

money in making themselves appear beautiful and elegant, insisting that "a lot of money [used to buy] cosmetic products would be put to better use if donated to the hungry."[27]

The financial aspect of adopting an American influenced beauty routine was another topic of concern amongst *Famiglia Cristiana*'s readers. In the letter of the week in the magazine's May 28, 1961 issue, a reader expressed concern over the fact that Italian women were spending money on unessential cosmetics and other superfluous material products, rather than using that money in an unselfish way such as providing assistance for one's family or the needy. In his response, the Padre expressed similar worry over the greed and materialism that accompanied Italy's developing mass consumer society. He also agreed with the letter writer's analysis that this materialistic self-indulgence was eroding the good sense and morality of Italian women, and more generally, Italians. He wrote: "the mania of the exaggerated and wasteful *bella figura* was possessing the powerhouse of good sense: the family…and this is the gravest danger." Continuing, the Padre advised the letter's author and *Famiglia Cristiana* readers that "one will need, then, to still take into account that, even when all the possible materials to put one on show are available, it is only right to limit oneself, if only in respect for the poverty of others or if only not to humiliate those who know and love us."[28]

The responses to these letters illustrate that *Famiglia Cristiana*, and the Church, promoted an ideal of beauty that adapted the popular American beauty model in a way in which it aligned with Catholic expectations of women's appearance, character, and societal responsibilities. The Church permitted women to adopt an American beauty routine, but only to a

[27] Ibid.

[28] "Troppi sacrifici per far bella figura," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 28 maggio 1961.

certain extent. As such, a modest, practical, and reasonable makeup use was approved by the Church, while an excessive use that demonstrated vanity, self-indulgence, and greed was condemned. The Catholic woman had to exercise restraint and modesty in her makeup use in order to achieve Christian elegance and ultimately, "to make [herself] worthy of being introduced in the reign of eternal splendor and magnificence."[29]

Noi Donne supported Italian women's use of cosmetics, but in a way that did not conform to the standardized beauty models that were created as a result of the introduction of the American beauty ideal into postwar Italy. Grazia Cesarini, the author of an article on the world of Italian beauty entitled "Il caro trucco," ("Dear makeup") maintained that all women should be able to use makeup. She declared that "beauty should be for everyone, not an exclusive privilege of those who possess millions."[30] However, she advised readers that beauty product use "should be limited to the essentials of maintaining clean skin, for neutralizing the harmful effects of makeup, [and] for camouflaging defects."[31] Therefore, trying to imitate the makeup styles featured in Hollywood films or on models in the popular women's magazines, did not, in reality, make one beautiful. Instead, women who followed these models were left with a false beauty and false identity. Thus, the magazine provided the following advice: the "more [women] refuse to follow a standard of beauty imposed by fashion or a commercial launch of a 'star', the better [their] probability of being beautiful is."[32] In this manner, *Noi Donne* expressed similar

[29] "Colloqui le risposte del padre. È lecito farsi belle?," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 5 settembre 1965.

[30] "Il caro trucco," *Noi Donne*, 31 agosto 1963, 22.

[31] Ibid., 20.

[32] "La bellezza non si copia," *Noi Donne*, 24 agosto 1963, 9.

guidelines and ideals for makeup use as did *Famiglia Cristiana*—practical, restrained use that highlighted one's individual outer and inner beauty.

Whereas *Famiglia Cristiana* criticized the negative effects that American beauty models had on Italians' sense of morality, *Noi Donne* pointed its criticism at the negative societal consequences that the elevation of a standardized notion of beauty created for Italian women. In several articles on the relationship between Italian women and beauty, *Noi Donne* investigated the barriers that beauty created for women seeking work in the service sector. The labor sector was important to the UDI since it was viewed as an avenue towards women achieving "emancipation" and formal equality.[33] In the article "La bellezza non si copia" ("Beauty cannot be copied"), the magazine examined the increasing requirement that a woman be beautiful in order to be hired for a job that put her in constant contact with the public, such as a supermarket clerk, a department store saleswoman, and an airline hostess, for example.[34] The author of the article posed the following question to readers: "Is it possible that, at the expense of other intellectual and cultural gifts, that beauty is an essential factor for success, prestige, and fortune?"[35] According to her interviews with women working in the service sector, *la bellezza* was indeed a problem. A female supermarket employee said that at the supermarket where she worked, "[the] managers looked at everything from head to toe and the beautiful ones had a job, the others not."[36] A department store clerk also confirmed the bias towards employing women who represented the popular homogeneous beauty ideal. She told *Noi Donne* that

[33] Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 140-141, 157.

[34] These occupations were direct outgrowths of the "Americanization" of the Italian economy.

[35] "La bellezza non si copia," *Noi Donne*, 24 agosto 1963, 8.

[36] Ibid., 6.

> until two years ago, before being hired, it was obligatory to attend short courses of *maquillage*. They consisted of four or five makeup lessons…The problem was not that (having to take the classes), more so it was the fact that they expected us to come to work always [looking] perfect and very made-up.[37]

Even though the beauty courses were no longer required, the clerk affirmed the fact that the female employees were still expected to "represent *la donna*, that with a capital 'D.'"[38] Simply put, the woman who personified the standardized ideal of femininity. Thus, in the world of female service sector work, beauty was prioritized over intellectual and cultural capabilities in the hiring of employees. A comment from the supermarket employee perfectly illustrates this unfair reality: "If you are ugly, you can go around for a year, without finding a job."[39]

In addition to the employment challenges Italian women faced, *Noi Donne* asserted that "the obligation to be beautiful" denied women their own individual identities and autonomy, in effect, turning them into "objects born to be possessed by someone."[40] The magazine claimed that the standardized models of beauty, influenced by the American beauty ideals and products that proliferated in postwar Italian culture, made women dependent beings. They were dependent on the popular press for advice on their appearance, and on shallow employers for work opportunities and their financial security. The "obligation to be beautiful" created by the "new morals" of a consumer capitalist system devalued women and their capacities, made them slaves, and created the conditions for an unjust society based on "brutal and non-human values."[41]

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[37] "Rossetta e stanchezza," *Noi Donne*, 29 agosto 1971, 21.

[38] Ibid., 21.

[39] "La bellezza non si copia," *Noi Donne*, 24 agosto 1963, 6.

[40] "La bellezza obbligatoria," *Noi Donne*, 29 agosto 1971, 18.

[41] Ibid., 17; "La bellezza non si copia," *Noi Donne*, 24 agosto 1963, 9.

This analysis reflects the rhetoric of oppression and liberation used by the burgeoning Italian women's movement of the 1970s. Moreover, it signals Italian women of the left's growing disillusionment with American consumerism and the changes it brought to Italian society. As such, *Noi Donne,* in the early to mid-1970s, began to turn away from American consumer models. The magazine, instead, offered harsh criticism, in place of the partial acceptance promoted in the previous decades, for the ways in which consumer culture had perpetuated women's secondary status in Italian society. In contrast, *Famiglia Cristiana,* in the 1970s, continued to present a viewpoint similar to that which it expressed in the previous decades.

Hollywood and Celebrity

Hollywood actresses and other celebrities were representatives of the latest beauty and fashion trends coming from the United States. As discussed in the previous chapter on beauty products, societal changes in Italy (the transformation in class structure and the migration and increasing mobility of Italians) combined with the country's rapidly developing mass media and commercial markets put these glamorous women in much closer proximity to the public than ever before. The actresses and celebrities, and their luxurious lifestyles, became reference points for many Italian women seeking to close the door on a past characterized by deprivation and to enter into a modern, affluent, consumer-oriented society similar to that inhabited by their favorite stars. As such, Hollywood actresses' and American celebrities' growing influence over Italian women posed another danger to Catholic and Communist influence on Italian female society. As a result, the so-called *dive americane* (American stars) came to take a place in the Catholics' and Communists' struggle with American consumer products, models, and ideals.

The popular Hollywood actresses of the postwar period were a sort of "artificial product" manufactured by the studio system.[42] These women did not represent organic, natural beauty. Furthermore, according to the Church, they lived an immoral lifestyle and worked in an amoral business. For example, Padre Atanasio wrote in *Famiglia Cristiana* that the entertainment business "in general is too often subservient to human passions" and that if one develops an admiration for entertainers "[one will] experience a deformation of conscience and Christian living."[43] For this reason, the Catholic magazine did not endorse these women as did the popular weekly women's magazines. In fact, they were rarely featured in the publication.

When they did appear in the magazine, *Famiglia Cristiana* used Hollywood actresses and celebrities and their lifestyles as examples of what was wrong with the consumer, materialistic "American way of life." For example, the letter of the week in the September 2, 1962 issue examined the lifestyle, personality, and afterlife prospects of one of the most iconic film stars of the postwar period, Marilyn Monroe. The star's sensuality—her voluptuous body, the nude photos of her, which became the centerfold for the first issue of *Playboy*, and her "allure of the pin-up"— went against Catholic principles regarding appearance and behavior.[44] Moreover, the star represented the promotion and selling of sex, which, in Catholic opinion, was a deplorable component of the U.S.'s consumer capitalist society. In the letter, which appeared in the magazine approximately a month following the star's death, Eva Rinaldi harshly criticized Monroe. She wrote:

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[42] Gundle, *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 142.

[43] "Colloqui con il padre. Siamo ammiratrici delle dive, degli attori, siamo matte per i cantanti," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 9 ottobre 1960, 7.

[44] Lois Banner, *Marilyn: The Passion and the Paradox*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 4.

> I read the sad story of Marilyn Monroe and I had to conclude a terrible thing. A woman that continually lived in sensuality, that was married three times, that worked in exclusive films, that just a few weeks before her death made completely nude photographs, that died in an artificial sleep caused by barbiturates, cannot merit anything but hell. This seems to me a logical conclusion, is that not true?[45]

While the Padre, in his response, acknowledged that Monroe "was not a saint" and "had a tendency to undress herself more than dress herself, to prostitute herself more than preserve herself, to change husbands more than form a family," he did not condemn the blond actress as did Rinaldi.[46] Rather, he placed the blame on that which produced and promoted this immoral lifestyle and behavior—the Hollywood film industry, which, for Catholics, represented the greed, materialism, and amorality of American consumer capitalism. In trying to place the blame on Hollywood, the Padre posed the following questions to readers: "Who can say how much movie producers' [who he referred to as "the true chameleons of human exploitation"] flattery influenced her, a substantially elementary creature, [an] orphan without means?" and "Is movie magnates' stubbornness to want to eternally consider her a doll not one of the explanations for the tragedy of Marilyn Monroe?"[47] After providing examples of the industry's exploitation of Monroe, he came to the conclusion that the "delusions from the world, from cinema, and in front of the shameless pretense of film producers to continue to consider her a creature without a soul and as meat on display" were some of the causes of her untimely death.[48] In other words, she had been a victim of the excesses and artificiality of a consumer-based society.

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[45] "Marilyn Monroe è andata all'inferno?," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 2 settembre 1962.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

Additionally, in his response to Rinaldi's letter, the Padre called into question the public's participation in Italy's growing commercial, consumer, and hence, immoral society. He reprimanded Italians for going to films that had "shameless and scandalous 'scenes.'" He also added that by paying to see these films, Italians were "[prostituting] their consciences."[49] Thus, he advised readers to reflect on the role they played in "constructing myths" that promote behaviors and models in opposition to Catholic teachings. The Padre's comments illustrate not only the Church's negative view of the Hollywood film industry, specifically, its exploitative, sensual, and depraved nature, but also the Italian public's willingness to participate in and adopt the models and behaviors of this "American way of life."

Unlike *Famiglia Cristiana, Noi Donne* featured Hollywood actresses in a positive light. In the first decade after the war, the magazine endorsed socially conscious and "real" actresses whose political and social beliefs and actions aligned with those of Italy's left. For example, Lauren Bacall was featured on the cover of *Noi Donne* with the headline: "The actress Lauren Bacall declares herself against the use of atomic energy as an instrument of war."[50] Katharine Hepburn also became one of the magazine's "cover girls" since she was "for peace."[51]

In regard to Hepburn, *Noi Donne* appreciated her authenticity and anti-conformity to popular Hollywood norms. For example, the article "Un giorno con Katharine Hepburn" ("A Day with Katharine Hepburn") told readers that while on the set of her latest film, the actress wore pants and barely any makeup most of the time. In light of the discussion above on the relationship between Hollywood actresses and beauty, Hepburn's fashion choice and natural

[49] Ibid.

[50] *Noi Donne*, 19 settembre 1948.

[51] *Noi Donne*, 1-15 dicembre 1947.

appearance contrasted with those of the majority of her contemporaries. She was, in the eyes of *Noi Donne*, a "simple and cordial woman" and thus, a role model for all women.[52]

Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Communist magazine featured popular American actresses that were not noted for their political stances. For example, the magazine contained articles on Elizabeth Taylor and Kim Novak.[53] The inclusion of Hollywood actresses illustrates the fact that Hollywood and its promotion of an affluent, materialistic "American way of life" was not seen as a severe threat to Communist influence in Italian female society.

For *Famiglia Cristiana*, this lifestyle remained a genuine threat as American consumer culture and its ideals became a significant and even permanent part of its readers' lives by the 1960s, and consequently, denied the Church the ability to completely reject them. Due to this growing menace, the Catholic magazine sought to find a female celebrity that represented the perfect combination of American consumer modernity and Catholic moral ideals to positively discuss in its pages. The magazine would thus promote this celebrity as the ideal modern Catholic woman—an example for its female readers after which to model themselves.

Famiglia Cristiana found its role model in the new First Lady of the United States, Jacqueline Kennedy. As First Lady, Kennedy was the female representative of the U.S., including its booming consumer society. Jackie's refined, gracious personality, elegant appearance, cultured background, Catholicism, as well as her role as mother and wife, made her the Catholic magazine's prime example of Christian elegance. She projected a glamorous, aristocratic, reserved image that contrasted sharply with the artificial and sexualized film stars of

[52] "Un giorno con Katharine Hepburn," *Noi Donne,* 12 settembre 1954, 8-9.

[53] Maria Casalini, *Famiglie comuniste. Ideologie e vita quotidiana nell'Italia degli anni Cinquanta*, (Bologna: il Mulino, 2010), 292.

the period.[54] As Stephen Gundle writes, Kennedy was "distinct from the erotic ideals of consumer society."[55] *Famiglia Cristiana* praised her clothing choices, commenting that she was always fashionably and respectably dressed.[56] Additionally, articles highlighted her notable educational background and cultural interests and talents. For example, one article noted that Jackie had studied in France, could speak multiple languages, including Italian, and played the piano. Moreover, the article also noted that she attended museum exhibitions, appreciated modern art, and painted in her free time.[57]

Beyond Jacqueline Kennedy's cultured, worldly, and distinguished aspects, it was her status as mother and wife, as well as her Catholicism, that endeared her to *Famiglia Cristiana*'s editors and readers. The magazine portrayed Kennedy as *the* image of the "'angel of the hearth'—mother first and then wife, tutor of morality and affection" that was promoted by the Church.[58] Several of the Catholic magazine's articles spoke of the difficulty with which Kennedy had in having children, including the dangers that childbearing posed to her life. In discussing this topic, the First Lady was depicted as being determined to perform God's role for her—that of loving mother. Instead of expressing fear, doubt, or even, abandoning this responsibility, she faced the challenges that came with fulfilling the role of loving mother with courage. For example, articles included comments from Jackie that spoke to her fortitude and bravery. In one

[54] Gundle, *Glamour: A History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 269.

[55] Ibid., 273.

[56] "Jacqueline la Prima Signora D'America." *Famiglia Cristiana*, 19 febbraio 1961.

[57] Ibid., 18.

[58] Luisa Tasca, "The 'Average Housewife' in Post-World War II Italy," *Journal of Women's History* 16:2 (2004): 94.

article she was quoted as saying: "I will have all the children that God wants to give me. And one knows that I will make the necessary sacrifices" while another article included the following comment from the First Lady: "I do my duty."[59]

In regard to her role as a wife, Kennedy was described in *Famiglia Cristiana*'s articles as devoted to and supportive of President Kennedy. One article noted that she had been a "tireless nurse" in taking care of her husband when he was ill and constantly made sure that the president did not smoke an excessive amount of cigarettes.[60] The qualities discussed made Jacqueline Kennedy, according to *Famiglia Cristiana*, the perfect representation of the Church's ideal modern Catholic woman—a woman who, displaying Christian elegance, elegantly adapted to the growing consumer society while preserving her primary role as "angel of the hearth." For this reason, the magazine used Kennedy as a role model for the publication's readers.

However, Jacqueline Kennedy did not maintain this distinction for the entire decade of the 1960s. Her 1968 marriage to Greek billionaire shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis brought an end to *Famiglia Cristiana*'s reverence for and elevation of the former First Lady. The marriage went against two important Catholic principles. The first regarded the character of her new husband. The Catholic magazine viewed him as a greedy, womanizing, and dishonest billionaire that had made his money by "violating more than one civil and moral law."[61] Further, the magazine claimed that he had not won Jackie over with genuine, natural affections of love, but

[59] "Jacqueline la Prima Signora D'America." *Famiglia Cristiana*, 19 febbraio 1961, 17; "Personaggio alla ribalta Jacqueline Kennedy," *Famiglia Cristiana,* 5 marzo 1963, 29.

[60] Ibid., Ibid.

[61] "Ma perchè Onassis," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 3 novembre 1968, 17.

rather with the "weapons of the rich"—jewelry and extravagant gifts.[62] This method of courting Jackie revealed, according to the magazine, that Onassis wanted Kennedy not because he loved her, but rather because his "ambition,…cunning,…exhibitionism" made him desire her, or "maybe even for business."[63] Therefore, Onassis represented a system and set of ideals—consumer capitalism—that destroyed a person's virtuous, genuine, modest, and gracious qualities.

The second principle to which the magazine took offense regarded the issue of divorce, which, by the late 1960s, had become a major topic of debate in Italian politics and society. The Church was adamantly opposed to divorce. In fact, at the time of the Kennedy-Onassis marriage, divorce was illegal in Italy.[64] In regard to the couple's nuptials, the Church considered Kennedy's marriage to the Greek shipping magnate to be invalid since Onassis was divorced, having been granted a divorce from his first wife in 1960. While some Catholics questioned whether the marriage was legal or not since the Catholic Church and Greek Orthodox Church each had their own rules regarding divorce, *Famiglia Cristiana* made the Church's position (the position that all Catholics should take) clear, providing the following comment from Mons. Vallaine of the Vatican press:

> If Jacqueline Kennedy is an adult and was '*campus sui*,' in other words capable of understanding and wanting, she should have been able to know, at the time of her marriage to Onassis, what the Church's law is around marriage to the divorced. There are

[62] Ibid., 18.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Legislation legalizing divorce was first passed in 1970. The legality of divorce was reconfirmed in 1974 by the Italian government.

> firm points, and among these, the prohibition to marry someone who has already been married. Knowing this, she knew to be going against a precise norm of the Church.[65]

Therefore, in the eyes of *Famiglia Cristiana* and the Church, Jacqueline Kennedy had abandoned her Catholic morality and virtue for a perceived indulgent, materially based life with an immoral, greedy playboy. In becoming an Onassis, Jackie "migrated from taste to waste and joined Liz [Taylor]," making her no better than the Hollywood actresses that the Catholic magazine looked down upon.[66] Therefore, "the most shocking marriage of the year," represented for the Church and the magazine the coming to fruition of their worst fears of American consumer capitalism—money, materialism, and greed triumphing over Catholic modesty, morality, and elegance.[67]

In contrast to *Famiglia Cristiana*'s original position on Jackie Kennedy, *Noi Donne* did not shower the First Lady with praise, instead, providing a mix of admiration and criticism for its readers. On one hand, the magazine acknowledged that Kennedy was indeed a gracious, refined, cultured, and sympathetic woman.[68] In particular, it hoped that her intelligence, distinguished cultural education and knowledge, and ties with "some of the most progressive American intellectuals" would, perhaps, help to bring "proper culture" to America. In other words, to promote and popularize intellectual, "high" culture in the States.[69]

On the other hand, *Noi Donne*'s articles questioned, rather than endorsed, the image of perfection that was attributed to her by the popular press. The article "Ritratto di Jacqueline dal

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[65] "Jacqueline è scomunicata?" *Famiglia Cristiana*, 3 novembre 1968, 3.

[66] Sarah Bradford, *America's Queen: The Life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis* (London: Viking, 2000,) 71, quoted in Gundle, *Glamour*, 302.

[67] "Ma perchè Onassis," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 3 novembre 1968, 18.

[68] "Jackie e l'America," *Noi Donne*, 18 giugno 1961, 9.

[69] "Ritratto di Jacqueline dal vero," *Noi Donne*, 5 febbraio 1961, 7.

vero" ("The Real Portrait of Jacqueline") examined the verity of three characteristics of Kennedy constantly publicized in and praised by the media: "[her] incarnation of the typical American girl,…[her being an]exquisitely feminine creature, perfect mother and wife, [and being] the tranquil and sweet element of the Kennedy couple."[70] According to *Noi Donne*, Jacqueline's privileged upbringing, educational background, experiences abroad, and cultural knowledge made her exceptional and thus, very different from the majority of American women. In no way could she be the "incarnation of the typical American girl." Additionally, her exceptionality made it difficult for the Communist magazine to believe that she was just the "passive or decorative element" of the Kennedy couple.[71] Because of these contradictions between the real and the popular image, *Noi Donne* presented both a positive and critical opinion of the First Lady.

This approach is evident in the Communist magazine's discussion of her second marriage. Jackie's transformation from the First Lady of the United States to second wife of jet-setter billionaire Aristotle Onassis did not receive the same harsh criticism from *Noi Donne* as it did from *Famiglia Cristiana*. This fact can perhaps partly be contributed to women of the Italian left's support of divorce. As such, her marriage to the divorced Onassis was neither a grave nor significant issue for the Communist magazine.

Instead, the point of contention for *Noi Donne* was the financial immorality permitted by American consumer capitalism as exemplified by her new husband's extraordinary wealth and tactless personality. Similarly to *Famiglia Cristiana, Noi Donne* did not paint a pretty picture of

[70] Ibid., 6.

[71] Ibid., 7.

the shipping magnate. He was depicted as an avaricious, ruthless, and heartless playboy that was a product of a corrupt, immoral consumer society. For example, the magazine called him a man that had "harshly exploited thousands and millions of other men in his life, drawing money from their hard work, [and] from their aching poverty."[72] The magazine also contended that the Kennedy-Onassis marriage was nothing more than "a business contract."[73] Therefore, *Noi Donne*'s criticism of Jackie's second marriage fell in line with Italian Communist opposition to the corrupt consumer capitalist system that valorized inequality, rewarded greed, and promoted decadence.

Shopping

Whereas American consumer capitalism's erosion of Catholic morality was the most prominent fear expressed in *Famiglia Cristiana, Noi Donne* viewed this system's financial immorality, more specifically, monopoly capitalism and worker and consumer exploitation, as the greatest threat to Italian society. Consequently, the United States frequently appeared in the Communist publication as the "land of the dollar"—a capitalist society that encouraged the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few and the financial and labor oppression of the majority. For example, in an article profiling the U.S.'s most modern city, New York, the author asserted that in "a socialist society man is truly, 'the precious capital'…in the capitalist society, of which New York is the faithful mirror, man counts for nothing insofar as he can be exploited for the benefit of a few. His life is worth nothing."[74] Therefore, in the magazine's

[72] "Jackie: Vedova tutta d'ora," *Noi Donne*, 6 aprile 1975, 47.

[73] Ibid.

[74] "Dopo Mosca ho visitato New York," *Noi Donne*, 19 marzo 1950.

opinion, the major American commercial, financial, and media corporations' consolidation of wealth and power through unjust and exploitative methods made the United States anything but a country of equality.

According to the Communist magazine, supermarkets and department stores, commercial institutions primarily frequented by women, were prime examples of these unfair and unequal aspects of American consumer capitalism. They were institutions that solely benefitted owners, not consumers and workers. Furthermore, they eliminated competition in the marketplace, serving to destroy many small shopkeepers' livelihoods and financial security, as well as to upset the commercial equilibrium. As such, the rise and spread of American inspired supermarkets and department stores in postwar Italy became a frequent topic of discussion in *Noi Donne*'s pages. Although Communists opposed these institutions' operating principles, the growing presence and popularity of supermarkets and department stores in Italy made the magazine recognize and accept their permanence in their readers' lives.

Noi Donne discussed both the positive and negative aspects of the supermarket's appearance in the country. One benefit highlighted by the magazine was the supermarket's typically lower prices, which allowed one to buy non-essential products. For example, a fashion spread in the magazine entitled "Supermoda al supermercato," ("Super fashion at the supermarket") which featured pictures of models shopping in a supermarket, told women that the supermarket contained an assortment of drinks and snacks that could be purchased to entertain friends and acquaintances.[75] Therefore, shoppers could buy products that were not vital to their survival. Moreover, the fashion spread applauded the time-saving benefits that the supermarket's

[75] "Supermoda al supermercato," *Noi Donne*, 27 gennaio 1963.

abundance of products created. Since the supermarket contained a variety of food-stuffs and non-comestibles, the magazine noted that women no longer had to travel to several stores to find the products they needed for the week.[76] Furthermore, this product variety and abundance, in combination with the increasing presence of refrigerators in Italian homes, meant that women could now do all of their food shopping for the week in just one visit to the supermarket, rather than in multiple trips to different small grocers several times a week.[77]

Additionally, the availability of pre-prepared and frozen foods on supermarket shelves gave women extra time as well, in this case, time away from the kitchen. In an article describing the new supermarket to readers, *Noi Donne* wrote that these products "[are] the first breach in a fortress that seemed impregnable: the kitchen where the woman is until now 'condemned to

[76] The fashion spread noted that shoppers could find non-food items, such as "dishtowels, plastic toys, and toiletry items," at supermarkets as well. Ibid.

[77] *Noi Donne* also praised the time-saving benefits offered by domestic appliances in its pages. An article reviewing the 1961 Milan Domestic Appliance Fair commented that the products "save precious time and alleviate the fatigue of housework." However, as the 1960s progressed and as Italy entered the 1970s, the magazine's tone towards domestic appliances became much more critical, calling into question the verity of the claim that the appliances did indeed create less housework for women. For example, one article referred to this claim as being one of the "deceptions of *benessere* (well-being)," while another wrote that the continual purchase and private use of domestic appliances, would "nail [women] to the throne of queens of the house." Therefore, despite having a house filled with domestic appliances, such as refrigerators and washing machines, "women would never be free." *Famiglia Cristiana* supported the use of domestic appliances throughout the entire postwar period. "Gli amici a 220 volte," *Noi Donne*, 15 ottobre 1961, 14; "Il purgatorio di tutte," *Noi Donne*, 4 aprile 1964, 9; "Caro frigo quanto mi costi?," *Noi Donne*, 25 maggio 1968, 19.

reign,'" and where she is a "prisoner for several hours a day."[78] Therefore, buying these pre-prepared and frozen foods greatly reduced the time women had to spend feeding their families.

Noi Donne asserted that this reduction in time spent on shopping for and preparing food was "indispensable" for the modern, cultured, working woman of the postwar period. The magazine suggested that women could use this "gained time" for "entertainment, to the education of children, and for their own cultural and social education."[79] The supermarket's contribution to reducing women's culinary domestic burdens and increasing their opportunities for the improvement of themselves and their children resulted in *Noi Donne* accepting, rather than rejecting, the commercial enterprise. In fact, the magazine viewed the supermarket as contributing to women's social progress.[80]

However, *Noi Donne* warned readers that women's social advancement could only occur if the Italian supermarket did not become a duplicate of its American counterpart. Specifically, the newly launched supermarket system could not become the same monopolistic and exploitative institution that existed in the States. For example, in the same article that praised the time-saving benefits of shopping at a supermarket, the magazine expressed fear of the Italian institution coming under the control of "the big private groups."[81] If this happened, the magazine contended, small grocers would be put out of business due to the attractive conveniences and lower prices offered by the supermarket. As a result, unemployment and poverty among Italians

[78] "La rivoluzione della spesa," *Noi Donne*, 26 maggio 1957, 25.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

who worked in this sector would grow.[82] This situation, though, was not solely a hypothesis. In the article "La borsa della spesa. Dietro la facciata" ("The Shopping Bag: Behind the Facade"), the magazine explained to readers that it had already occurred in a Roman neighborhood where the opening of a supermarket had led to the failure of "almost all of the small businesses [in the area] within months."[83]

Noi Donne also warned readers that small shopkeepers and their employees would not be the only ones to suffer. The Communist publication contended that this elimination of competition would allow supermarket owners, once they had consolidated their control of a region or area, to "impose the prices they want" in order to create the maximum profit possible.[84] In other words, prices would be much higher than they initially were, and could, perhaps, even be higher than those at the local, small grocer who had been put out of business by the supermarket. The consumers, who had become loyal supermarket shoppers, would then have to accept the higher prices since no other food shopping alternatives existed. Therefore, rather than saving money, supermarket shoppers would be spending more while the supermarket owners pocketed the profits. In illustrating this potential dire turn of events for readers, *Noi Donne* argued that supermarkets controlled by a few, big private groups would exploit consumers and small shopkeepers, thus serving to impoverish Italians.

In order to prevent and combat these negative consequences created by supermarkets, the Communist magazine proposed that supermarkets be run by cooperatives. Cooperative control would ensure fair prices for consumers and maintain the commercial economic equilibrium.

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[82] "La borsa della spesa. Dietro la facciata," *Noi Donne*, 3 agosto 1958, 33.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

Shoppers would no longer be exploited since, as the magazine said, "[cooperatives] truly have the interests of consumers at heart and they have fought in their defense for years."[85]As such, supermarkets would be a great benefit for the modern woman and would surely contribute to women's social advancement. Overall, cooperative run supermarkets would put Italy on the path to becoming a "more modern and progressive country."[86]

The department store, for *Noi Donne,* was another institute that represented commercial deception, inequality and exploitation. An article on La Rinascente's Milano Piazza del Duomo location illustrated these negative qualities that lay behind the store's marble façade, its fanciful decorations, and its magical moving staircase, the escalator. The article's author, Lina Anghel, clearly stated that La Rinascente was "not the department store for everyone as is presented in its propaganda brochures."[87] Rather, the store's expensive merchandise prevented the majority of Italians, whose "money [was] less than little," from purchasing the products.[88] As such, they were being excluded from engaging in the same consumer experience and enjoying the same products as Italians who had the financial means to shop at the store. Therefore, La Rinascente did not represent or create equality, which in Communist eyes was a crucial component of their ideal vision for Italian society.

The overwhelming presence of American products in La Rinascente also represented another negative aspect of the store. Anghel implied that this abundance of America symbolized the department store's owners' preference for making a profit rather than assisting in the

[85] Ibid.

[86] "La rivoluzione della spesa," *Noi Donne*, 26 maggio 1957, 25.

[87] "Da New York a Milano l'orso Teddy," *Noi Donne*, 12 gennaio 1952, 13.

[88] Ibid.

recovery of local Milanese, and more generally, Italian, manufacturers and suppliers. In choosing to fill its store primarily with American products, La Rinascente denied work to Italian businesses seeking to rebuild after the war. In this way, then, La Rinascente showed itself to be a greedy, selfish, capitalist institution that was similar to those in the U.S.

In the case of La Rinascente's fashion sector, the priority given to American products proved to be especially damaging to the store's employees. In order to produce American ready-to-wear designer Henry Rosenfeld's creations for the Italian market, the store's owners established an American manufacturing system, which, as Anghel wrote, was "a system of major exploitation with the maximum intensification of work," in its factory.[89] Furthermore, Rosenfeld ready-to-wear creations' poor sales performance, due to the styles' unpopularity among the Milanese who had a "more sober and original taste," worsened the workers' situation.[90] Anghel reported that because of this "half failure for La Rinascente," the store's owners "[wanted] to fire a good part of the employees [at the factory where the Rosenfeld clothes were produced.]"[91] She continued that the remaining work to produce Rosenfeld clothes would be given to home workers "where labor costs less—because unfortunately, it is easier for the industrialist to escape the payment contributions—and where the competition is enormous because of the existing high unemployment."[92] Therefore, La Rinascente's pursuit of profit by promoting the acquisition of American consumer modernity was damaging to the interest of the Italian labor force.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

Despite this condemnation of La Rinascente, *Noi Donne* did not forbid readers to shop at department stores. In fact, the magazine's harsh critical stance lessened throughout the postwar period. Several years after the appearance of the article discussed above, *Noi Donne* featured articles on products that readers could, and should, buy from department stores, such as Standa and even, La Rinascente. For example, the article "Natale nei grandi magazzini" ("Christmas in the Department Stores") provided photos of UPIM and La Rinascente merchandise, such as makeup, a vacuum cleaner, and a ceramic baking dish, that would make excellent Christmas gifts.[93] Another article urged readers to go to their local Standa to discover and buy the latest beauty products. Doing so would provide benefits for shoppers that went beyond the aesthetic enhancement of one's appearance, which resulted from applying the new cosmetic products. The article contended that spending time shopping at Standa "[would] be a pleasing and soothing way to spend a little bit of free time."[94] The presence of positive articles on department stores such as these in *Noi Donne,* as well as the much more pessimistic article on La Rinascente Milano Piazza del Duomo, demonstrates the magazine's partial acceptance of this American consumer capitalist commercial institution. While the department store represented the worst of American consumer capitalism, the Communist publication could only criticize the institution to a certain extent. This limited criticism was due to, as with the supermarket, the growing popularity and presence of the department store in Italian women's lives in the postwar period. A firm opposition to the store, thus, could potentially alienate a majority of the magazine's readers and supporters of the struggle for a socialist Italy who wanted to participate in a modern, consumer society.

[93] "Natale nei grandi magazzini," *Noi Donne,* 22 dicembre 1957, 18-19.

[94] "Belle con gli spiccioli," *Noi Donne*, 4 maggio 1963, 32.

In contrast to *Noi Donne*, *Famiglia Cristiana* did not criticize American consumer capitalist commercial institutions, such as the supermarket and the department store. In so doing, the magazine demonstrated a full acceptance of the prominent place these stores had come to occupy in Italian society, as well as the social and cultural changes they had engendered. Discussions on shopping at supermarkets and department stores rarely appeared in the Catholic magazine. When articles did appear on these topics, *Famiglia Cristiana* focused its attention on advising female shoppers on how to adapt to and behave in these new consumer paradises according to Catholic principles. In the article "C'è anche una maniera nel fare la spesa," ("There's also a way to shop") the magazine advised readers "not to wear flashy clothes," "to keep in mind the rights of others," and "to use true politeness with the saleswomen" when shopping.[95] In so doing, women would demonstrate modesty and graciousness, crucial components of Christian elegance. Therefore, as with other topics previously discussed, *Famiglia Cristiana* was primarily interested in the preservation of Catholic principles in confronting American consumer culture's presence in Italy.

Conclusion

Italy's Cold War cultural contest for the hearts and minds of Italian women was a three-way struggle between the Catholic Church, the Italian Communists, and the United States. The arrival of American consumer products and models in postwar Italy and their growing influence on upper to middle-class, and eventually working-class women, provided the two domestic groups with a common enemy—the materialistic, immoral, and avaricious "American way of

[95] "C'è anche una maniera nel fare la spesa," *Famiglia Cristiana*, 1 aprile 1962, 26.

life" as represented in the products and models that belonged to its consumer capitalist society. Both the Catholics and the Communists employed popular culture publications, their magazines *Famiglia Cristiana* and *Noi Donne*, respectively, in this struggle. Each magazine incorporated, rather than rejected, this new culture into its pages, interpreting its novelty and mediating its influence for readers. The magazines advised Catholic and Communist women on how to adapt to and adopt aspects of American female consumer culture while still maintaining core Catholic and Communist beliefs. In so doing, *Famiglia Cristiana* and *Noi Donne* exhibited a partial acceptance of American female consumer culture. They permitted readers to take part in an American influenced beauty routine, to be inspired by appropriate Hollywood actresses or celebrities, and to shop at American influenced department stores and supermarkets in the Italian peninsula. This was done so as not to lose relevance and influence in Italy's modernizing, secularizing, and increasingly consumerist society. However, this acceptance was only partial; there was much of American consumerism with which Catholics and Communists found fault.

Despite having a common enemy—the United States and its consumer capitalist society—*Famiglia Cristiana* and *Noi Donne* expressed diverse critiques of this society. This difference becomes evident in the examination of each magazine's discussion of beauty, the world of entertainment and celebrity, and shopping. In their critiques of these three categories, *Famiglia Cristiana* focused more on the erosion of Catholic morality while *Noi Donne* concentrated on the financial immorality that permitted social inequality and the exploitation of workers and consumers. By discussing these negative aspects, both magazines put restraints on Catholic and Communist women's participation in the postwar consumer-driven female "American way of life" that invaded Italy in the postwar period. These restraints were established in order to prevent the dilution of Catholic and Communist ideology, as well as the

erosion of each group's support bases. Therefore, the limits created by each publication served to define for readers the ideal modern Catholic and Communist woman of the postwar period—a woman who participated in Italy's growing consumer society in a manner that fell in line with each group's core beliefs.

Conclusion

In September 2015, Dolce & Gabbana, the internationally recognized luxury Italian fashion brand, and one of the symbols of Made in Italy[1], announced the launch of its new lipstick dedicated to Italy's most iconic and famous actress, Sophia Loren.[2] The company website described the lipstick, called Sophia Loren N°1 Lipstick, as being "more than just a lipstick, [it] is a living tribute from Dolce & Gabbana to Sophia and all women."[3] The Sicilian fashion duo of Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana created the product's "bright cherry red" color to "enhance the deep pigmentation of [Loren's] lips," thus, rendering the lipstick color "[Loren's] red…her signature."[4]

In addition to creating this "truly unique" lipstick for Loren, Dolce & Gabbana also paid homage to the film icon by casting her in their short film advertisement for their new perfume,

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[1] "Made in Italy," in the world of fashion, denotes Italian excellence in this sector. The term, used in this way, dates back to the 1970s when Italian ready-to-wear clothes rose to prominence on the international fashion scene, with Milan becoming one of the world's top fashion capitals on par with Paris, and the designers, such Armani, Versace, and Ferré who were based in the city becoming as equally popular and acclaimed, if not more so, as their Parisian counterparts. Furthermore, "Made in Italy" fashion represents the successful combination of Italian industry, specifically that of Lombardy which is known for its numerous textile companies, and Italian creativity. Sofia Gnoli, *Un secolo di moda italiana. 1900-2000* (Roma: Meltemi editore, 2005), 197-198.

[2] Laura Scafati, "D & G, un rossetto per Sophia Loren," *Vanity Fair Italia* online, September 24, 2015, http://www.vanityfair.it/beauty/make-up/15/09/24/dolce-e-gabbana-rossetto-sophia-loren-n-1

[3] "Dolce & Gabbana Sophia Loren N°1 Lipstick," http://www.dolcegabbana.com/beauty/makeup/lips-products/sophia-loren-1-lipstick/

[4] Ibid.

Dolce Rosa Excelsa. With Loren starring, Giuseppe Tornatore directing, and Ennio Morricone providing the uplifting and soaring score, the short film is the coming together of the best of the Italian film world to promote Italian fashion, creativity, and spirit. Although there is a strong presence of *italianità* in the film (the promotion of Italian clothing and beauty products, and an Italian protagonist, director, and composer), it recalls the intersection of Italy's miraculous postwar recovery with consumer culture and, in light of this dissertation, the role that American consumer capitalism—its products and models—played in the country's dramatic economic, social, and cultural transformation.

The film is divided in three acts, Act I Rinascita, Act II Festa, and Act III Meravigliosa. Act I Rinascita begins with Loren leading a group of five young handsome *ragazzi* (boys), dressed casually in jeans, sweaters, and shirts, into the courtyard of a dilapidated countryside villa. The building and the grounds are in shambles and the interior of the villa is no better, with holes in the frescoed ceiling, graffiti on the door panels, and dirt everywhere. The derelict villa and the darkness that prevails on the interior symbolizes the physical destruction and devastation that Italy incurred during the war.

However, this is the last depiction of Italian defeat and weakness. With courage, determination, and strength, Loren rolls up her sleeves, says "*Andiamo ragazzi! Coraggio!*" ("Let's go boys! Courage!) and sets off to work, directing the *ragazzi* in the restoration of the villa, like a conductor directing his orchestra at La Scala. The film star pushes the boys on saying "*Forza!*" ("Strength!") and even participates in the manual labor herself by painting door panels, applying stucco, and cutting overgrown tree branches. This hard work is rewarded when the *ragazzi* break through a wall to discover a hidden grand room filled with artistic treasures—a

beautiful fresco, statues, paintings, and antique furniture. Perhaps the owners of the villa had constructed this wall to protect their family treasures from wartime burglary.

Act II Festa shows us Loren's and the *ragazzi*'s preparations for the *festa* (party) celebrating the villa's restoration to its former glory. The *ragazzi* hose down, washing away the sweat and dirt they accumulated during the restoration, and then put on the finest Dolce & Gabbana suits. In so doing, they transform themselves from everyday countryside laborers into elegant, stylish, upper middle-class *uomini* (men). This transformation symbolizes the elevation of one's social status that American consumer culture promised to give to Italians who bought its products and believed in its messages in the postwar period. While the *ragazzi* transform themselves into *uomini*, Loren prepares the meal for the party, in particular the *sugo* (sauce) which she is shown tasting and approving. She then gets ready, dressing herself in an elegant, sleek black Dolce & Gabbana dress that reveals her well-preserved curvaceous figure, and applying her eponymous lipstick.

The final act, Act III Meravigliosa, begins with local townspeople arriving in the villa's garden for the celebration. The viewer is shown a group of women of all shapes, sizes, and ages dressed in Dolce & Gabbana spring dresses that recall the style of postwar Italian fashion. One of the transformed *ragazzi* hands a beautiful, lush rose to one of the elegantly made up girls, the young model Kate King, and kisses her hand. This act is a recognition of beauty; a beauty that has been created by material goods—clothes and cosmetics—and that is appealing to men.

Next, all eyes turn to Loren as she enters the scene, descending in a stately manner from the villa's second floor balcony, where she had been observing the party, to join her fellow partygoers. Upon her arrival, the attendees surround Loren. King approaches the film star and hands her the rose. Loren takes hold of the rose, looks at it, and says "*Meravigliosa!*"

("Marvelous!"). This act is another acknowledgment of beauty, but this time it is a recognition of an iconic and timeless beauty that Loren possesses and represents. Thus, the passing of the rose from the boy to King to Loren tells us that true beauty is ageless and for all types of women if one uses the right beauty products and wears the right clothes. The film ends with a shot drawing back from the party to reveal a lively celebration and a beautifully restored villa.[5]

The short film's theme of *rinascita* (rebirth) and the presence of fashion, beauty products, and the cinema speaks to the growing bond, and its solidification, between Italian women and American female consumer culture during the three decades following the end of the Second World War in 1945. This bond had a profound effect on how Italian women lived their lives in the postwar period, creating unprecedented and unimagined changes.

The *ventennio* (the twenty years of Fascist rule) and the Second World War left Italy physically damaged and its people emotionally scarred. The country emerged from the war with a devastated landscape, severely damaged industries, an economy in shambles, citizens who were faced with the difficult task of rebuilding their lives and their Italian identity, and a newly formed government, with two opposing factions, the DC and PCI, that was charged with rebuilding Italy.

In the eyes of the two superpowers that emerged from the war, the United States and the Soviet Union, this economic, political, and social situation made Italy a strategic piece in the two countries' Cold War struggle for global superiority. As such, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union sought to shape Italy and its people along the lines of their respective political, economic, and

[5] *Dolce & Gabbana Dolce Rosa Excelsa*, directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, 2016, http://www.dolcegabbana.com/beauty/perfumes/women/dolce-rosa-excelsa-eau-de-parfum/

social visions—consumer capitalist democracy and Communism, respectively. The U.S. sought to win Italy over with financial aid and consumer products that represented modernity as well as important democratic, consumer capitalist concepts, such as freedom of choice, individualism, prosperity, and a high standard of living, that sharply contrasted with the Soviet model and Communist ethos. Furthermore, American aid and products also represented the U.S.'s booming postwar economy and its citizens' prosperity, two things that the Soviets could not boast of having or creating for their people. Simply put, the U.S. was fighting on a commercial and financial level with which the Soviets could not compete.

As a result of this advantage, American consumer products and models, as well as images of American consumerism, invaded and came to dominate postwar Italy, dramatically changing Italian society in the process. This great transformation had a profound impact on Italian women, at first from the upper and upper-middle classes and then later in the postwar period those from the middle-classes, who were the primary targets of American consumer culture. Products, such as cosmetics, the refrigerator, and mass produced ready-to-wear fashion along with American derived or inspired commercial institutions—the supermarket and the department store—and their American-style of shopping, introduced new models of behavior and ways of life that promised prosperity, a higher standard of living, and relief from burdensome and tiring daily chores to Italian women seeking to emerge from the suffering they endured during the war. For women of the working and lower-classes who were financially unable to purchase all that American consumer modernity offered, their aspirations and desires were affected, as opposed to their concrete domestic lives, by the arrival of American consumer products, models, and images.

American consumer culture's influence on Italian women had a broad range, affecting women in multiple areas of their daily lives. These areas of influence included popular women's magazines, the world of beauty, the world of shopping, and domestic appliances. Popular Italian weekly women's magazines played a significant role in promoting American female consumer culture. These magazines, such as *Grazia* and *Annabella*, underwent a process of modernization in the postwar period. Inspired by modern and groundbreaking American magazines, such as *Time* and *Life*, Italian popular magazines, in general, were transformed into glossy publications that resembled their American counterparts. This layout change and the inclusion of content related to U.S. consumer culture laid the foundation for the changes in Italian women's lives that occurred after the war.

One aspect of American female consumer culture that was heavily featured in these magazines was the American ideal of beauty. American beauty products' arrival in postwar Italy led to quintessentially American characteristics of beauty, such as affluence, youth, and sex appeal, that were promoted by each product, to become key aspects of Italians' notions of beauty. This meant that wearing lipstick, face powder, nail polish, and other cosmetics were crucial for an Italian woman if she wanted to be considered beautiful.

In regard to commercial institutions, supermarkets and department stores modeled on their American counterparts taught Italian women how to *comprare all'americana*, or shop the American way. This meant that women were now shopping at large, impersonal retailers that lacked the familiar, intimate relationship between consumer and proprietor that existed at the small local grocer or neighborhood *sartoria*. Furthermore, these institutions' abundance of new, modern, and American products contrasted with the scarcity of material goods that characterized wartime and the first years after the war.

Modernity and individualism also defined the changes brought to women's lives by domestic appliances, in particular the refrigerator. This technologically advanced appliance deriving from the United States created modern methods of food storage for Italian women, allowing them to purchase food less frequently, and in turn, diminishing the time spent on shopping for food and interacting with the food store owners. The refrigerator and its freezer component also individualized food preparation by providing for the existence of pre-prepared and frozen foods that could be stored in the appliance and that also decreased the necessity of creating a meal from scratch which frequently required the assistance of other women. Despite the refrigerator's modernity, the appliance promoted a traditional role for women that defined them as mothers and wives, and relegated them to the domestic sphere. This role of "angel of the hearth" echoed the ideal that Fascist and Catholic doctrines promoted.

Italian women's contact with American female consumer culture was facilitated by U.S. companies searching for new markets for their products, as well as by Italian entrepreneurs seeking to rebuild their companies and to make them the most modern and profitable enterprises in Italy. Italian women encountered the new consumerism in a variety of ways: through visual media, television and film; print media, popular weekly women's magazines, which were filled with advertisements promoting the latest beauty products; public events, such as trade fairs featuring the latest domestic appliances; and commercial institutions, department stores and supermarkets. While American refrigerator companies, such as the Admiral Corp. and Philco, and cosmetic companies, such as Max Factor, Revlon, and Elizabeth Arden, exported their products to Italy, the Italian entrepreneurs Arnoldo Mondadori of Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Umberto and Cesare Brustio and Aldo Borletti of La Rinascente, and Giovanni Borghi of Ignis, also played a crucial role in bringing America to Italian women. Thus, there were both push and

pull factors occurring on both sides of the Atlantic that resulted in American consumer culture's dominating presence in postwar Italy.

Italian entrepreneurs' desire for and pursuit of American consumer modernity demonstrates that Italians had agency in this process of transnational cultural exchange. While the U.S. certainly did influence Italians' cultural taste in the postwar period, it did not dictate their likes and dislikes; Italians had a strong voice in this process. The company owners chose products and models that appealed to them and then adapted them to fit the Italian context. In so doing, they gave the products and models an Italian character.

In the multiple ways in which these products, models, and images of American female consumption arrived and manifested themselves in Italy, they all promoted Mrs. Consumer, the white middle-class suburban American housewife of the postwar period. She was a woman that enjoyed a modern and comfortable lifestyle due to the presence and abundance of advanced domestic appliances and other consumer goods that filled her home.

The fact that this new culture changed Italian women's daily routines is an important point that needs to be emphasized. The arrival and acceptance of American female consumer culture prompted fundamental changes in how these women lived from day to day, in turn affecting the way in which they identified themselves. The Italian women who consumed American female consumer culture and incorporated it into their daily routines came to have certain lifestyle traits and aspirations of the American Mrs. Consumer. Additionally, their role as consumers gave Italian women a significant power denied to them in other realms.

American consumer culture was not welcomed by all Italians, however. The Catholic Church and Italian Communist Party viewed the U.S.'s consumer products and models as severe threats to their desire for social and cultural influence over the Italian public. American

consumerism represented principles, in particular individualism and materialism, that were in opposition to Catholic and Communist values. Catholics believed that American consumer capitalism's promotion of these two ideals threatened the stability of the family—which according to the Church was the cornerstone of society—and Catholics' morality, whereas Communists saw them as undermining the party's collective nature and ideological purity. In an attempt to reduce the growing popularity of American consumer culture among Italian women, Catholics and Communists used their popular magazines, *Famiglia Cristiana* and *Noi Donne*, respectively, to transmit their beliefs in regard to Italy's new and developing consumer culture.

But American consumer culture was a strong force whose importance to Italy's postwar redevelopment and growth, as well as to its people could not be denied. Recognizing that a complete rejection of this new culture could potentially alienate followers and hence, erode each group's support bases, the Catholic and Communist publications mediated American consumer culture's influence by providing readers with versions of modern consuming women that fell in line with Catholic and Communist beliefs. In essence, they illustrated for readers what they considered to be the "proper" path to modernity.

Therefore, American female consumer culture became a part of postwar Italian society, leaving a mark that can be seen in the twenty-first century with companies that are still in operation to this day and whose existence and/or success can be partly attributed to American consumer culture's arrival in Italy after the Second World War.[6] In this period, this culture's

[6] As discussed in the dissertation, the American consumer products sold and the models adopted and adapted by Italian companies, such as Arnoldo Mondadori Editore and La Rinascente, as well as U.S. financial aid after the war to these companies and to textile firms, who played a crucial role in the rise of Italian fashion onto the world fashion

growing popularity among Italians, especially Italian women, pushed Italy towards democratic, consumer capitalism and facilitated the formation of a mass consumer-based society that valued the ideals of that economic, commercial, and cultural system.

By placing this analysis of American female consumer culture's presence in postwar Italy, its influence on Italian women, and on Italian society and culture in the larger discussion of the impact of the U.S.'s global power in the twentieth century, the dissertation shows that American consumer culture was a crucial component in the U.S.'s postwar efforts to spread its political, economic, and cultural beliefs throughout the world. The diffusion of American consumer products, models, and images introduced new democratic, consumer capitalist ideals to diverse areas, influencing foreign populations, and connecting these locales in the process. As a result, the postwar international diffusion of American consumer culture facilitated the creation of a more globalized world. While the U.S. was a superpower, local actors—entrepreneurs, consumers, economic and cultural institutions—exerted their own power when confronting the invasion of American consumer culture in their countries by adapting the commodities to fit their specific life circumstances and experiences. Therefore, internationally, American consumer culture often took on a local character, and was thus not always an exact replica of what existed in the States.

Another important aspect highlighted by the dissertation is the important position that women had in this transnational cultural flow, which contrasts with the male dominance found in the political and economic aspects of the U.S.'s global assertion of power in the twentieth

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stage, were important components of these companies' ability to rebuild, grow, and be successful after the war. Both Mondadori and La Rinascente still exist and are still leading companies in their respective commercial sectors.

century. Women were the primary targets of consumerism. As such, they held a significant power as consumers that was indeed recognized by the producers and advertisers of American consumer culture. This important status rendered women vehicles for the diffusion of American democratic consumer capitalist models and ideals in Italy and throughout the world. Furthermore, they also became front-line soldiers in the U.S.'s cultural Cold War struggle.

These two groups—local actors and women—are essential analytical elements for having a comprehensive understanding of the process, nature, and extent of America's global cultural reach in the postwar period. This knowledge enhances and deepens understandings of the construction of local identities in relation to outside pressures, as well as understandings of U.S. foreign relations after the Second World War.

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