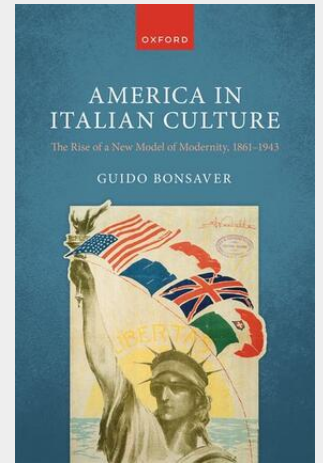


Bonsaver

America in Italian Culture

The Rise of a New Model of Modernity, 1861-1943

When America began to emerge as a world power at the end of the nineteenth century, Italy was a young nation, recently unified. The technological advances brought about by electricity and the combustion engine were vastly speeding up the capacity of news, ideas, and artefacts to travel internationally. Furthermore, improved literacy and social reforms had produced an Italian working class with increased time, money, and education. At the turn of the century, if Italy's ruling elite continued the tradition of viewing Paris as a model of sophistication and good taste, millions of lowly-educated Italians began to dream of America, and many bought a transatlantic ticket to migrate there. By the 1920s, Italians were encountering America through Hollywood films and, thanks to illustrated magazines, they were mesmerised by the sight of Manhattan's futuristic skyline and by news of American lifestyle. The USA offered a model of modernity which flouted national borders and spoke to all. It could be snubbed, adored, or transformed for one's personal use, but it could not be ignored. Perversely, Italy was by then in the hands of a totalitarian dictatorship, Mussolini's Fascism. What were the effects of the nationalistic policies and campaigns aimed at protecting Italians from this supposedly pernicious foreign influence? What did Mussolini think of America? Why were jazz, American literature, and comics so popular, even as the USA became Italy's political enemy? America in Italian Culture provides a scholarly and captivating narrative of this epochal shift in Italian culture.



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