

AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND ITALIAN WOMEN:
THE SEXUAL ECONOMY OF OCCUPIED NAPLES, 1943-1945

by

FRANCESCA RUVOLO

A Dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School-Newark

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of History

Graduate Program in

written under the direction of

Dr. Susan Carruthers

and approved by

Newark, New Jersey

May, 2016

© [2016]

Francesca Ruvolo

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

American Soldiers and Italian Women:

The Sexual Economy of Occupied Naples, 1943-1945

By: Francesca Ruvolo

Dissertation Director:

Dr. Susan Carruthers

By 1943, the effects of war had taken its toll on Naples as the city lay in ruins and its people were starving. They were described by soldiers as returning to the Dark Ages; hungry and craving for miracles and cures. What set Italy apart from other occupied areas was its dual occupation: by the Allies in the south and the Germans in the north. More specifically, Naples was the largest resting camp for Allied servicemen as well as a city governed by corruption and the mafia known as the *Camorra*. As the city of Naples grew desperate, a thriving black market emerged within the city's broken walls. Moreover, as women were helpless and passive, ready to be taken physically by their occupiers, as well as the sole providers for their families, prostitution became commonplace. Thus, I will discuss the emergence of a sexual economy in Naples, most significantly how American soldiers have discussed Naples as a place of crime, prostitution, sexually-transmitted disease, and desperation. Finally, the ways in which American soldiers have been discussed in fiction, most significantly in *The Skin* and *The Gallery*, point to an American invasion

rather than occupation. We are thus presented with a new American GI, one bordering on *conqueror* rather than *liberator*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all of my professors and fellow students in the History Department at Rutgers-Newark who have guided me in becoming a much better graduate student. Dr. Beryl Satter helped me immensely with my first full-length research paper last year, thus giving me a foundation for this dissertation. I owe a special thank you to my advisor, Dr. Susan Carruthers, who especially helped me throughout this whole process, which at times, was incredibly intimidating. She was very patient with my many changes, revisions, and attempts to make sense of a lot of source material. With her guidance, I have become a better writer and student. I also have to thank my very loving family and fiancé, Michael Schuhrer, who have been very compassionate and patient in these past months.

Finally, I am thankful for my grandfather, Vincenzo Milano, who introduced me to subject of the Allied occupation of Naples. Although I did not have the pleasure of meeting him as he passed away four years before my birth, his stories of wartime Naples and life as an Italian soldier during the Second World War have certainly jumped through time. Without hearing of his stories, I would not have the interest in digging further. I am lucky to be a child of Italian immigrants, who, like many immigrants in the years past and today, aim to create better lives for themselves and their children and surpass the hardships they faced in a country ravished by war.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
TITLE PAGE	i
COPYRIGHT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1	18
Why Naples?: The Italian Port City as a Major Juncture for Allied Functions, Corruption & Prejudice	
<i>Naples: A City Destroyed</i>	20
<i>Neapolitans as “Ginsoes” & “Wops”</i>	24
<i>Black Market</i>	34
CHAPTER 2	41
U.S. Military Attempts & Failures to Control Rampant Sex, Venereal Disease, & Fraternization in Naples	
<i>The U.S. Army and the Politics of Sex in Occupied Naples</i>	43
<i>Sex for Survival</i>	50
<i>Racism or Tolerance in Naples?</i>	53
<i>Italian Women as Prostitutes Rather than Brides</i>	60
CHAPTER 3	64
<i>The Skin & The Gallery: How Historical Fiction Discusses the Sexual Economy of Naples</i>	
<i>The Gallery</i>	75
<i>The Skin (La Pelle)</i>	79
<i>The Skin, Film Adaptation by Liliana Cavani</i>	86
CONCLUSION	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY	95

INTRODUCTION

Prominent histories of the Allied invasion of Italy focus on the strategic campaigns of British and American forces attempting to thwart retreating Germans.¹ This focus on the military ignores a major portion of post-armistice Italian occupation: its people. Therefore, what occurred to the civilian population when thousands of servicemen passed through or lived in their towns and cities is poorly represented in historical literature. Southern Italy, particularly Naples, was severely devastated by the war as it was far less industrialized than the north and Allied and German bombing campaigns nearly destroyed the city. Moreover, Naples was a major landing zone, port, and transfer station for Allied troops. The dire situation in Naples caused a rise in corruption and black market activities, thus overhauling and evolving the Neapolitan postwar economy. Desperation triggered immorality and vice. In the words of an American GI, “well, [in] Italy, the morals were awful. I saw men pimp ... for their wives, you know. They were hungry. They wanted food, and, for a can of C rations, you could go [get] whatever you wanted.”² As troops occupied and passed through Naples, GI rations were bartered for goods and services, which undoubtedly included sexual activities. Italian women bore the brunt of occupation as a large portion of the remaining population was women, children, and the elderly, thus leaving women to financially support their families. By examining the memoirs, letters, and interviews of American servicemen, we

¹ Stuart H. Hughes. *The United States and Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), D. W. Ellwood, *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century*, (Oxford, 2012), Rick Atkinson, *The Day Of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy 1943–44*, (London, 2007), D. W. Ellwood, *L’alleato nemico: la politica dell’occupazione anglo-americana in Italia, 1943–1946*.

² Lea Terry. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler and Kevin McGuire. January 26, 1995.

begin to piece together the city of Naples during occupation. The city's unique situation is reflected in the primary source material as it discusses the economies that emerge as a result of the black market and prostitution. While the experiences of Neapolitan civilians are far less discussed in secondary sources, there are several pieces of historical fiction that deal with the city of Naples during occupation. In conjunction with primary sources, two novels in particular, *The Gallery* and *The Skin*, further discuss the prevalence of a sexual economy in Naples based on corruption and despair. However, these novels portray Allied soldiers in ways undiscussed in primary sources. While American media and servicemen refer to the Allied occupation of Naples as a successful liberation, fiction imparts readers with considerable doubt. Rather, Allied soldiers are also shown as power-hungry, lustful, and eager participants in corruption.

Between the summer of 1943 to the spring of 1945, the Italian peninsula served as a battleground for both Allied and German troops. Taking advantage of the mountainous topography to slow down Allied troops, German forces remained in control of the northern part of the peninsula. For Italy, this meant an extensive period of double occupation, once again splitting them after decades of hard-fought unity less than a century earlier. To Americans, Italy was essentially an "Allied enemy."³ Italians were viewed as a passive and effeminate nation, who, throughout its history, continually fell prey to invaders. Many American servicemen thus perceived Italy as a conquered and occupied nation, without forgetting her status as

³ D. W. Ellwood, *L'alleato nemico: la politica dell'occupazione anglo-americana in Italia, 1943-1946*, (Milano, 1977).

a former enemy: “These Ginsoes have made war on us; so it doesn’t matter what we do to them, boost their prices, shatter their economy, and shack up with their women.”⁴ Thus, Italy’s position as a ‘co-belligerent’ or ‘allied-enemy’ also made the experiences of American GIs in Italy unique because they were perturbed as how to view Italians. On one hand, Italians were backwards and childlike, but they were also viewed as puppets of Germany and with pity. Moreover, the role of American servicemen was also unclear, whether they were occupiers or liberators. Italians were overjoyed that the war was over, particularly because they were unhappy with the choices of Fascist leaders and ‘Il Duce’s’ decision to enter into the war in the first place. Yet, they also remained apprehensive toward Allied servicemen.

In the words of American historian Stuart Hughes, “in the South, the Italians were the wards of the Allies – scorned, misunderstood, suffering from every kind of shortage and privation, yet for the most part free from danger and permitted to live their own lives.”⁵ Americans would officially become familiar with Italians starting in September 1943, as occupiers and ‘liberators’ on the island of Sicily and subsequently on the Italian peninsula. American first impressions of Italy were that of an agrarian and impoverished South in Sicily and the Campagna region, rather than the more prosperous and industrial North. Most southern Italians were illiterate and starving, completely destroyed by the effects of war. This seemed to confirm already existent American prejudices of the Italian people as “dark, dirty,

⁴ D. W. Ellwood, *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century*, (Oxford, 2012) 282.

⁵ Stuart H. Hughes. *The United States and Italy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) 137.

and ignorant people, corrupt, thieving and cowardly.”⁶ This undoubtedly reflected how American soldiers treated the Italian people as inferiors rather than equals. In sources such as Norman Lewis’ *Naples ’44* and other first-hand accounts from American soldiers, we see many aspects of this exploitation, such as the black market, the comfortable lives of high officers, and most significantly, the treatment of Italian women. This may not seem different than the situation in other Allied-occupied areas in Europe; however, Italians were undeniably viewed as inferiors; as those who did not belong on the same level as the British, French, and even Germans. Italy’s position in the Second World War was that of humiliation – “the ally first of one side, then of the other, called traitor by both, respected by neither.”⁷ Italy’s entry into the war was ill-prepared and even less supported by its home population.

Before examining life in Naples, we must first establish how Allied forces came to the city and also, the terms of occupation between Italians and soldiers. Following their victory in North Africa in July 1943, the joint Anglo-American forces led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower invaded Sicily in an offensive known as Operation Husky. The incredibly low morale of Italian troops on the island posed little resistance to Allied troops, making their invasion of the Italian island easily attainable and successful. Although Sicily had easily fallen, Allied troops did not have the manpower to conduct a full-scale invasion on the mainland and would therefore need the help of Italian troops and the support of the civilian population

⁶ Hughes. *The United States and Italy*, 10.

⁷ Hughes, *The United States and Italy*, 47.

to do so. In response to Operation Husky, King Vittorio Emanuele III, along with other high-ranking Fascists, removed 'Il Duce' from power and appointed a new Italian Prime Minister. Shortly after, on September 3rd, an armistice was negotiated with the Allies, thus deciding the fate of the Italian people. According to the Allied Control Commission (ACC), created in November 1943 and comprised of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, there were five main objectives for the occupation of Italy. These included:

to organize military government operations, to give practical help to civilians to prevent disease and unrest, to prepare the governmental administration and economy in such a way that it could be returned to civilian control as quickly as possible, to supervise and execute the terms of Italy's surrender, and to be the spokesman of the United Nations to the Italian government.⁸

Particularly because Germany had not yet surrendered, the Allies needed the aid of Italian forces and the support of its people. These ACC objectives reflect this, proving that the Allies aimed to treat Italians with respect in order to reintroduce them into the United Nations. They were held to a different degree than Germany in regard to their negotiation of peace.

In addition to American servicemen in Naples, British forces also occupied the city. The joint occupation of Naples included American, British, and Canadian forces. For the purpose of this paper, however, my sources will focus almost entirely on American soldiers with the exception of Norman Lewis, who as a British sergeant and writer, wrote one of the most notable memoirs of the occupation of Naples. His book, *Naples '44: A World War II Diary of Occupied Italy*, is an excellent first-hand

⁸ Thomas R. Fisher, "Allied Military Government in Italy," in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 267, no. 1 (January 1950): 114-22.

account. He vividly describes life in the city, and because he worked as a sergeant in the Field Security Service of the British Army Intelligence Corps, it shows much of the inner workings of the administration of occupation. His memoir recounts the wartime suffering of Naples, as well as the desperation of the civilian population. His discussions of the black market and prostitution particularly capture life in Naples. Lewis was fascinated with Neapolitan civilians and was full of admiration for their resilience and resourcefulness. According to his memoir, prostitutes and 'black marketeers' could come in many shapes and forms. They could range from children all the way to members of the *Camorra*, the Neapolitan mafia. Later in the book, it becomes Lewis' job to limit black market activities and capture the associated thieves, but it becomes clear to him that they cannot shut it down. This will be reflected in chapter one, where primary sources from American soldiers also recounted the prevalence of crime and corruption in Naples as it became a Neapolitan way of life during occupation.

The Allied occupation of Italy had particularly deep implications for Italian women, far more directly than its men. Italian towns were filled with women, children, and the elderly as their husbands, brothers, and fathers continued fighting in the war. Even after the armistice, Italian men did not necessarily return home. They continued to either fight with the Allies against German forces in Italy, or they were captured as prisoners of war by the Nazis, thus leaving Italian women to provide for themselves and their families. Following the invasion of Sicily, Salerno, Anzio, and then Naples, were identified as strategic beachheads for the Allies.

Naples came to be known as their Italian “bitchhead,”⁹ which could have referred to Neapolitan women or simply the subordination of Naples itself. It became the epicenter of black market activity, causing an intercultural gender shock in a conservative and Catholic Italian South obsessed with the notion of the chastity and honor of women. In Naples, “remarks about sisters are strictly taboo to Southern Italians, and the final insult *tu sora* (thy sister) is calculated instantly to produce a duel or *vendetta*.”¹⁰ However, without the authority of their husbands or fathers, these women were free to act as they needed to survive. Neapolitan women acted according to their needs and prostitution thus became a viable survival strategy.

Also, southern Italy’s connection to Italian-Americans cannot be ignored. Americans had a distinct connection with southern Italians in the United States and that carried over into their occupation of the region. Some American soldiers describe their interactions with the Italian people as kind and courteous, saying they were mostly received with open arms.¹¹ This was partly due to their Italian-American soldiers who not only could speak their native language, but could also reassure Italians of their supposed benevolent intentions. One American soldier described his experience with Neapolitans: “I think in a large measure because so many of us had known Italian people back home. They weren’t strange to us. They

⁹ Rick Atkinson, *The Day Of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy 1943–44*, (London, 2007) 240.

¹⁰ Norman Lewis. *Naples '44: A World War II Diary of Occupied Italy*. (Open Road Media, 2013).

¹¹ Allan Prince. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth, Greg Kupsy, and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. July 19, 2001.

were part of our European heritage whether we, ourselves, came from Italy or not. I think there was a lot of familiarity.”¹²

We can argue that this Italian-American connection provided an initial bridge between the two. Moreover, initially, southern Italians welcomed the Allies as liberators and saviors as they were desperate as a result of the war. Yet, as we will see in the first chapter, these connections to Italian-Americans quickly dissolved as underlying stereotypes of Italians, as well as the city's corruption, caused American soldiers to quickly racialize Neapolitans.

PREVIOUS HISTORIANS AND THEMES

Many of the sources on occupation during the Second World War speak of France and Germany. There are much fewer historians writing on the occupation of Italy, particularly that of Naples. However, those who do discuss the occupation of Italy, such as Isobel Williams, primarily discuss prostitution and the ways in which soldiers participated in the black market in Naples.

While Mary Louise Roberts discusses the American occupation of France in *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*, she particularly focuses on the margins of occupied society, which undoubtedly included women. Due to the overwhelming majority of women in occupied territories, prostitution therefore becomes commonplace. As American soldiers entered into various kinds of ‘relationships’ with French women, army leaders attempted to control the sexual economy that emerged but were unable to do so. Chapter two will focus on the army’s attempts and failures to control the sexual economy of Naples. Yet, as was

¹² Thomas Kindre. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler. June 28, 1994.

the case with France, prostitution and then venereal disease, were rampant.

Although prostitution existed long before occupation in both countries, the fact that most women turned to prostitution upset the balance.

Also, France was not unlike Italy in that they were highly weakened by German bombings and invasions. With a majority of its male population gone due to continued fighting, capture as prisoners of war, or even death, women were essentially open for the taking. Moreover, France was viewed by soldiers as a *feminine* country, as its men were missing and it had been previously invaded by German forces and required 'saving' by American troops. This was also reflected in Italy where its population was seen as child-like, fawning over Allied troops upon their arrival. Italian stereotypes come to light in Naples, which included how Neapolitans were inherently immoral and corrupt, thus causing a surge in the black market and sexual economy. Yet, what set Italy apart from France was its position as an 'allied-enemy.' To Americans, Italians were somewhere between an ally and an enemy due to their former position as an Axis-power and co-belligerent of Nazi Germany.

Because there are several first-hand accounts that discuss race during occupation, Maria Hohn's *GIs & Frauleins* can be compared to the black experience in Italy. Although she discusses the U.S. occupation of Germany, she describes the kind welcome that black soldiers received which compares to Neapolitans' experiences with black soldiers. Similar to Italians, Germans were surprised at how well black soldiers treated them and even experienced a sense of kinship with black soldiers as they were both treated poorly and suspiciously by white, American soldiers. In a

quote from *Ebony* magazine in 1946, they say, “strangely enough, here where Aryanism ruled supreme, Negroes are finding more friendship, more respect and more equality than they would back home.”¹³

However, Hohn also discusses apprehensions toward black soldiers. Similar to what was done by Italian Fascists, the Third Reich attempted to demonize black American soldiers through propaganda.¹⁴ Yet, black GIs were said to be more generous with food rations, thus making them more popular with the civilian population. Thus, could German kindness simply be interpreted as a survival strategy, and could the same be said for Neapolitans? It is not to say that black soldiers did not receive any complaints from Germans for fraternizing with their women. Although black soldiers could socialize with German women and could date them, a good portion of the German population remained weary and uncomfortable with it. As was in the case of Italy, it was believed that “true love could not exist between the two, only sexual confusion.”¹⁵

Isobel Williams, in *Allies and Italians under Occupation: Sicily and Southern Italy, 1943-5*, particularly focuses on the Allied occupation of Italy. She points out initially that the main goal of Allied forces was to quickly, and without ‘distraction,’ occupy the Italian peninsula. However, as will be seen in chapter two and in many primary sources, this proved disastrous for the Allied military command as Germany continued to fight in northern Italy and most soldiers turned to prostitution and black marketeering. Italy essentially became a playground for

¹³ Maria Hohn, *GIs and Frauleins* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). 91.

¹⁴ Hohn, *GIs and Frauleins*, 90.

¹⁵ Hohn, *GIs and Frauleins*, 104.

many soldiers who hoped to get away from the harsh front lines. Yet, Williams does not emphasize the city of Naples even though American primary sources and fiction point to the port city as a major center of illegal activities. She spends much of the book discussing Sicily and the southern Italian countryside, focusing on the violence experienced by Italian civilians. Nonetheless, she provides us with a rare and one-of-a-kind example of bottom-up historical literature, specifically on the civilian population of Italy during occupation.

In order to fully discuss the sexual economy of Naples, the definitions for both prostitution and fraternization must be identified. So what exactly can we characterize as prostitution in Italy when both are muddled by varying definitions? There was a fine line between innocent fraternization and prostitution, particularly because prostitutes were often nothing more than housewives. American soldiers wrote that prostitutes were an informal occurrence and rarely included brothels as a place of meeting. Rather, it could occur anywhere. Even as the U.S. military attempted to limit prostitution in Italy by placing all brothels off limit to soldiers in December 1943, they would either ignore this or go to “*seniorina casa*” (young woman’s house).¹⁶

Civilians were forced to participate in the black market for goods. Women were undoubtedly included in that black market as goods to be traded or bought. They used their bodies as bargaining chips. Thus, the borderline between love affairs and prostitution became blurred because nearly all GIs supported their

¹⁶Susan Zeiger. *Entangling Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010) 97.

Italian lovers with food and material supplies. Due to the extreme circumstances of war, women resorted to prostitution to save themselves and their families from starvation.¹⁷ The prevalence of prostitution in Naples is widely discussed by American soldiers as they describe the black market happenings of the city.

During the years of fascism in Italy, women were viewed as chattels of men and of their families. Therefore, women could be punished on the grounds of immoral conduct and as an adulteress whereas men could be unfaithful without consequence. A wife could spend up to two years in jail if her spouse accused her. According to the Rocco codes, rape was prosecuted as a crime of honor and men who seduced minors went unpunished. In order to restore honor, the man could marry the girl to preserve her virginity or try to prove that the girl was already 'corrupted.' Morality was significant in a conservative and Roman Catholic country such as Italy.¹⁸ For instance, the Catholic Action was attempting to fight prostitution in a battle for morality in Naples by posting on the walls of public buildings.¹⁹ Therefore, the lack of reported rapes could have been due to the way in which rape was viewed in Fascist Italy from 1922 onward. These women were used to being the victim but not being able to report it in fear of being viewed as "impure" or as the adulterer herself, particularly because many rapes during occupation were on married women whose husbands were still at war or returning from war.

¹⁷ Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, 91.

¹⁸ Victoria De Grazia. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 89-90.

¹⁹ Eugenio Corti. *The Last Soldiers of the King: Wartime Italy, 1943-1945* (University of Missouri Press, 2003) 257.

Moreover, as fraternization rose in occupied areas so did the rise in sexually transmitted diseases. In the spring of 1945, it was roughly 5 percent, after VE Day it rose to 19 percent and by September 1946, 3 out of 10 GIs would be infected with either gonorrhea or syphilis.²⁰ We repeatedly see mentions by American soldiers of venereal disease and the attempts of the US military to contain it. It was difficult to stop it from occurring, but they could at least treat it in army hospitals in an attempt to control its spread. Cases of venereal disease thus point to a rise in prostitution and fraternization in Naples.

ABSENCE OF ITALIAN SOURCES AND LITERATURE

Italian archives make it difficult to locate sources as they are reported to be “notoriously slow and bureaucratic.”²¹ This makes speaking from the Italian standpoint nearly impossible. Thus, a majority of archival materials come from American and British sources, such as military records and first-hand accounts. As a result, my primary sources reflect this and are the perspectives of American soldiers and their experiences in Naples. In Southern Italy, it is even more difficult to locate source material as this portion of the country was far more agrarian as compared to the industrial North and contain less records during the war and shortly after. Southern Italy experienced hunger, disease, and far more casualties and destruction than the north, which undoubtedly affected their release of information and record-keeping. However, American GI accounts help us determine not only the situation in

²⁰ Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, 93.

²¹ Silvia Trani and Pier Paolo Battistelli, “The Italian Military Records of the Second World War,” *War in History* 17, no. 3 (June 2010): 333-51.

Naples at the start of occupation in October 1943 through 1945, but also the existence of a sexual economy.

There is an extensive collection of secondary sources on the American occupation of France and Germany, however, it is markedly lacking on the Italian side. Much of the work previously written by historians focuses on the relationships of occupied women and soldiers, only quickly discussing issues of prostitution. Few historians in Italy have written on the Italian public's reactions to the occupation of Naples, but many have written about postwar Italian politics. Thus, there is an obvious absence of Italian sources and literature on the subjects of prostitution during occupation. Although they discuss the difficulties of war, specifically the destruction of Naples, they do not speak of the sexual economy of the city. The lack of sources in Italy on the subject of prostitution could be tied to the occupation itself. Because Italy was being occupied by the Allies, primary sources, such as newspapers, police reports, and other first-hand accounts, if available, appear to present them as liberators rather than occupiers. This is perhaps due to the control and censoring of the military to prevent any ill-discussions of the Allies. Thus, by looking at the reactions and discussions of American soldiers during the occupation of Naples from 1943 to 1945, we begin to understand life in the city during that time. They had a first-hand look at the desperation and ingenuity of the civilian population and would eventually participate in the black market. Moreover, in chapter three, fiction will further show the ways in which Naples acted as a center of vice in Italy. However, soldiers will take the role of conqueror, of both the city and its people, rather than a savior.

Italian primary sources do highlight a joint effort between Italians and Americans to combat German forces throughout Italy.²² German forces are repeatedly discussed in newspapers as menacing, with Neapolitans screaming “Cut the Germans’ throats!” to American troops as they entered into Naples.²³ Italian newspapers called for Italians to treat Allied forces with respect and kindness and as their newfound ally. They hoped that the liberty experienced by the Allies could be brought to them during occupation, and in return, they would give soldiers an “affettuoso saluto” (affectionate hello).²⁴ Particularly in areas such as Naples which had been recently terrorized by German forces, Neapolitans turned to Allied troops as their ‘saviors.’²⁵ In order to highlight the United States as a ‘liberator’ rather than occupier, it is no surprise that the *New York Times* reports that the American troops were welcomed as heroes in Naples by its citizens where “flowers and grapes poured into our jeeps.”²⁶ The Neapolitans are shown to have an intense hatred for Germans and admiration for Americans. As Italian newspaper articles recount a similar story, it is once again perhaps due to their status as an occupied nation that Italian sources corroborate American ones. The Germans are said to have slaughtered Neapolitans, “machine-gunning women and children and forcing soldiers and civilians alike into slave labor battalions.”²⁷ This occurred after the

²² “Nell’ eroica lotta contro l’invasore il popolo italiano costruisce la sua unita.” *L’Unita*, 19 March, 1944.

²³ Herbert L. Matthews. “Naples Showers Gifts on Allies: Flowers and Fruit Pour Into Jeeps – Shouting Crowds Line Roads to City.” *New York Times*, October 3, 1943.

²⁴ “Per la nostra Sicilia.” *L’Unita*, December, 1943.

²⁵ Rick Atkinson. *The Day of Battle: the War in Sicily and Italy 1943-1944* (London: Henry Holt, 2007) 240.

²⁶ Matthews. “Naples Showers Gifts on Allies.” *New York Times*, October 3, 1943.

²⁷ Matthews, *New York Times*, October 3, 1943.

signing of the armistice between Italy and the Allies on September 8, 1943 as a final effort to bomb the city before American and British troops arrived. Thus, it was not until the arrival of Allied troops, the providers of goods and participants in the black market, that we see the emergence of illegal activities in Naples.

So, in the end, is the military conquest of Italy successful or were there in fact too many distractions for American soldiers? The answer is quite blurred in Naples. Allied forces eventually reorganized the city and re-utilized the port of Naples, once again creating a major thruway to the rest of Europe. They also made their way northward and successfully pushed out German forces. However, they could not control the debauchery of Naples. Rather, there was increasing crime, venereal disease, and prostitution and the military could do little to control it. Therefore, even though American newspapers point to triumph in Naples, primary sources provide readers with something much different –the prejudicial treatment of Italians, rampant sex and disease, and utter chaos. Finally, fiction takes that one step further. While the words of American GIs prove the existence of vice and prostitution, they were often not released in the United States until many years later through oral archives and memoirs. Both *The Gallery* and *The Skin* were released within several years of the end of occupation, thus providing Americans with their first glimpse of war-torn and chaotic Naples.

CHAPTER 1:

Why Naples?:

The Italian Port City as a Major Juncture for Allied Functions, Corruption & Prejudice



1

"I saw some Italian kids with old tin cans and stuff, trying to get some food from our G.I.'s. You hear all the time that the G.I.'s are fighting for the honor of their country. But when I saw those kids begging for food, I knew what I was fighting for. To keep my kids from having to do the same thing."

- Richard C. Johnson, Library of Congress Veterans Project

Prior to looking at sources on the sexual economy of Naples, it is important to determine the situation that civilians and then GIs faced in the city itself. The dire circumstances of the city are reflected in the corrupt economy that took hold between 1943 and 1945. Naples would become "the largest resting camp for Allied

¹ Robert Millett, *Italian Children Playing in the Street in Naples*. 1944. The National World War II Museum, New Orleans.

servicemen in all of liberated Europe.”² It would also hold a reputation as the epicenter of black market activity in Italy. According to an American officer stationed in Naples in the winter of 1943-1944, Naples was “the worst-governed city in the Western world.”³ It appeared to “live only on schemes and cunning” before and during the occupation.⁴ With the additional arrival of the Allies in Southern Italian cities, particularly Naples, this also provoked a wave of crime and illegal activities, which included theft, prostitution, and the selling of illegal goods. Hunger and misery, the practical disappearance of the state, the loosening of moral restraints, and the existence of Allied troops were all factors that caused a collapse of Neapolitan society. Naples not only acted as a stopover for many Allied soldiers but exists in letters, memoirs, and spoken recollections as *the* main center of Allied participation in the black market (and all it had to offer) in Italy. Although it was Allied servicemen who eagerly bought and sold items on the black market, Neapolitans were believed to be untrustworthy and those responsible for all of the city’s corruption.

² P. De Marco, *Polvere di piselli: la vita quotidiana a Napoli durante l’occupazione alleata: 1943-1944*, (Napoli 1996) 47.

³ D. W. Ellwood, *The Shock of America*, 284.

⁴ Eugenio Corti. *The Last Soldiers of the King: Wartime Italy, 1943-1945*, (University of Missouri Press, 2003) 253.

Naples: A City Destroyed

As Allied troops entered Naples on October 2, 1943, they saw a city in ruins, completely devastated by bombings. By 1943, Naples is described by an OSS officer as “a city of ghosts” and “heavily scented with the sweet heliotrope odor of unburied dead.”⁵ No Neapolitans had running water due to bombed aqueducts and municipal reservoirs. German forces had recently gutted industrial plants – including steelworks, oil refineries, and blocked the railroad tunnel into Naples by crashing two trains into one another. Coal stockpiles were burned in one big pile, making it so that the Luftwaffe could easily target Naples from the sky. Finally, they burned the whole fleet of ships in Naples, even those of fishermen, in an attempt to starve them out.⁶ Naples had particularly been attacked by the Germans following the armistice as Germans used a ‘scorched earth’ policy while retreating through southern Italy. Demolition teams targeted all forms of transportation, communication, water, and power grids, which would undoubtedly affect Allied forces once they reached the Campagna region.

⁵ Atkinson. *The Day of Battle*, 240.

⁶ Atkinson, *The Day of Battle*, 241.

Moreover, prior to the armistice, allied bombings had already severely



damaged the city through air raids. It is estimated that between November 1, 1940 and September 8, 1943 that Naples had been bombed by the Allies over 76 times.⁷ Neapolitans had been ill-prepared for these bombings and because many structures were in Italy were constructed of dry-stacked stones, they were easily blown apart.⁸ Air-raid shelters existed only in the vast underground network of train stations, quarries, caverns, and ancient Roman aqueducts. The Allied air strikes against Naples were significant because they interrupted Axis movements of men and materials to North Africa. On October 27, 1941, the *New York Times* reported that,

⁷ Arnaldo Mondadori. "Allied Bombings of Italy," *Storia Illustrata*, October 1964.

⁸ Terence John Tully, *General William Harrison Inspects a Pile of Rubble That Was Once a Naples Telephone Building*. 1944. The National World War II Museum.

“the bombing of Naples’ port means that the British are now hammering at both ends as well as the middle of the Axis supply line to Africa. Eighty percent of the Axis supplies reinforcing the troops reaching the Libyan front is sent via Naples.”⁹ So, it is particularly telling that American newspaper articles from September and October 1943 claimed that German forces had done most of the damage to Naples’ port and the city itself when a majority of its destruction was caused by Allied forces in the years prior. Once again there is an emphasis on responsibility in Naples. In this case, German forces are primarily blamed for the bombing of the port city, in both American newspapers and soldier accounts, while Allied forces are idolized as heroes.

As if the situation in Naples was not dismal enough, the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in March 1944 caused even more destruction to the city and its outlying villages. The photo on the next page shows the eruption that took place in March 1944.¹⁰ The eruption lasted nearly two weeks, beginning on March 18th and concluding on March 29th, 1944.¹¹ Allied aircrafts, as part of the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) 340th Bombardment Group, stationed in the Pompeii airfield, were the only casualties of the eruption. Hot ash damaged the planes’ engines and guns, destroying roughly 78 to 88 aircrafts.¹² However, the spewing of hot ash and cinders affected many nearby towns, as well as the flowing lava. The American *Travel Film Archive* recounts the eruption as “a giant specter of grief for the Italian

⁹ “Bombing of Naples.” *New York Times*, 27 October, 1941.

¹⁰ Sidney D. Butterfield Jr., *Mount Vesuvius Erupting in Naples Italy*. 1944. The Digital Collection of the National WWII Museum.

¹¹ Dr. Leander K. Powers, 1944.

¹² Don Kaiser. “The Mount Vesuvius Eruption of March 1944,” <http://www.warwingsart.com/12thAirForce/Vesuvius.html>.

people. Suffering under many years of brutal Fascism, then German occupation, then Allied bombing, then the devastation of battle, now it is Vesuvius.”¹³ The *Travel Film Archive* is a compilation of travelogues and archival films from around the world between the years 1900 and 1970. This particular film was released in 1944 in the



style of a newsreel as part of Castle Films’ series known as the “News Parade” for Americans during the war. These “News Parade” films recounted main events of the war in Europe and the Pacific, such as the eruption of Vesuvius and the occupation of Italy by Allied troops. As it shows actual footage of the eruption, the film highlights the desperation of outlying villages, particularly orphans of war, the elderly, and the destruction of buildings and residences as the lava continued to

¹³ Robert Stevenson (1944). *Mt Vesuvius erupts near Naples, Italy in 1944* (The Travel Film Archive). Naples: Castle Films, YouTube.

flow outward. Although the lava did not reach Naples itself, the eruption caused blackouts within the city.¹⁴ Moreover, Dr. Leander K. Powers, an American soldier who served in Pompeii and Naples in March 1944, recounts the eruption: "All during the night and Sunday there were quakes of the earth with tremendous roars - similar to thunder - from Vesuvius. The windows rattled, and the entire building vibrated."¹⁵ Though it caused much more damage to American military operations in Pompeii than to Naples itself, the eruption of Mount Vesuvius was yet another blow to Neapolitans as they attempted to pick themselves up from "the dead."

Neapolitans as "Ginsoes" & "Wops"

Moreover, the stereotypical ways in which Allied servicemen viewed Neapolitans affected their views of the city and its people. Due to these prejudices, Neapolitans were characterized as criminally inclined and corrupt. Stereotypes provided a convenient 'out' for GIs who wanted to defer responsibility by creating a scapegoat. While Neapolitans were viewed as criminals, Allied soldiers were exalted as war heroes as evident by American newspapers who portrayed the Allies as liberators of Fascism. One American serviceman recalled: "On the LTC leaving Naples, I turned around and I looked at the country and it looked so dismal and so black and I knew that Naples was a nest of ... sharp individuals. ... I saw this dismal black outline of Naples as we were pulling away and I said to myself, 'I'll never come back to Italy.'" ¹⁶ Thus, many American soldiers viewed Neapolitans with dismay and

¹⁴ George Kost, *Library of Congress Veterans Archive*.

¹⁵ Dr. Leander K. Powers, March 17, 1944.

¹⁶ Arnold Lasner. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Dustin Elias. April 26, 2002.

apprehension as a result of the corruption they witnessed in the city. It was also due to prior prejudices toward Italians that caused this feeling of trepidation. GIs, such as the man quoted above, could not look past the corruption and illegal activities to see a desperate population grasping for anything that could feed themselves and their families. This is not to say that all Neapolitans were pious, however, it was an easier assumption to categorize them as ‘thugs’ rather than victims of war. Thus, prejudice toward Italians played an important role in the treatment of Neapolitans by American soldiers, who referred to Italians as “ginsoes” or “wops.”¹⁷

A large majority of Italian immigrants in the United States were from Southern Italy, particularly Naples and Sicily, thus making Americans somewhat familiar with Italians. However, this ‘familiarity’ was often based on mafia films and war propaganda. To American soldiers, “they [Italians] were seen at once as comical buffoons, workshy, and gangsters... particularly to the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, they were characterized as ‘lazy, untrustworthy, superstitious, excitable, and Catholic.’”¹⁸ Also, they were seen as an *allied-enemy*, somewhere between a friend and foe. On one hand, Italians were seen as naïve and apathetic, but on the other, they were viewed as cold, merciless killers due to gangster films such as “Scarface.” Italy was nonetheless an unfamiliar land to most Americans and *Mediterraneans* were believed to be part of a different race, particularly an inferior one.

¹⁷ John Horne Burns, *The Gallery*,

¹⁸ Isobel Williams, 31.

These dire conditions in Naples also led to a fresh wave of superstition, and a deep-rooted Neapolitan belief in the metaphysical, something that Allied soldiers could not quite comprehend. Norman Lewis also commented on the desperate nature of Neapolitans, “Everywhere there is a craving for miracles and cures. The war has pushed the Neapolitans back into the Middle Ages. Churches are suddenly full of images that talk, bleed, sweat, nod their heads [...] and anxious, ecstatic crowds gather waiting for these marvels to happen. [...] Naples has reached a state of nervous exhaustion when mass hallucination has become a commonplace, and belief of any kind can be more real than reality.¹⁹ Allied servicemen believed Neapolitans to be superstitious and backwards in their belief of miracles. It was as Lewis claimed that Naples had returned to the Middle Ages when superstition ruled over logic. All normal functions of society had ceased to exist as a result of the war.

Superstition played a role in how American soldiers viewed Neapolitans. An example of this superstition is discussed in Benedict Alper’s memoir *Love and Politics in Wartime*. He particularly discusses the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and the reactions of Neapolitans. For instance, during the eruption, Alper spoke to some peasants in Naples and they told him that “San Gennaro had spoken and said that the flow would stop at midnight.” When he asked how this could be possible, they told him “His statue moved his fingers.” When the lava did not cease flowing that night, the peasants simply said that San Gennaro had “sbagliato” (made a mistake).²⁰

¹⁹ Lewis, *Naples '44*, 10.

²⁰ Benedict Alper, *Love and Politics in Wartime*, 67.

Their belief in miracles and saints was markedly strange to American soldiers, thus making them appear “overly-Catholic.”²¹

Norman Lewis also discusses the miracle of San Gennaro, the patron saint of Naples. The “liquefaction” of the saint’s blood three times a year was believed by Neapolitans to give protection to the city against misfortune particularly associated with Mount Vesuvius. This myth of San Gennaro’s blood entailed the liquefaction of what is believed to be a vile of the saint’s blood. It primarily occurs three times a year and its failed attempts to do so are believed to coincide with disease, famine, and war. Therefore, in *Naples ’44*, Lewis states that “three out of four—and he included the educated classes—were openly or secretly of the belief that Naples could only be protected from Vesuvius with San Gennaro on its side.”²² Thus, the prosperity of Naples was connected to the patron saint.

Moreover, Allied soldiers not only dealt with local customs and superstition in Naples, but also disease, particularly outbreaks of typhus. The city had several outbreaks and soldiers were forbidden entry to most of the infected city, as the military labelled it “out for bounds” or “off limits.”²³ Yet, soldiers rarely adhered to these restrictions, which created a massive grey zone where black market, prostitution and crime ruled supreme. American One American officer recollected, “We saw black market everywhere. [...] Truck drivers were distributing cartons of stolen food that had just been delivered by Liberty Ships at the docks. The daily ration of 125 grams of bread was much too low, and the sight of Allied supplies was

²¹ Williams, 31.

²² Lewis, *Naples ’44*.

²³ DeMarco, *Polvere di piselli*, 32.

irresistible.”²⁴ Because unemployment, misery, and starvation were pervasive in Naples, Italian women were forced to uphold the role of provider for their families as their fathers and husbands were absent due to war. Therefore, in *Naples '44*, Lewis reports that the Bureau of Psychological Warfare claimed there were “42,000 women in Naples engaged either on a regular or occasional basis in prostitution. This out of a nubile female population of perhaps 150,000. It seems incredible.”²⁵ Yet, if Southern Italians were incredibly moral and religious, how could such a large number of women be involved in prostitution? For instance, in the *Soldier's Guide to Sicily*, it states that “morals are superficially very rigid, being based on the Catholic tradition... the Sicilian is well known for his extreme jealousy, in so far as his womanfolk are concerned, and in a crisis resorts to the dagger.”²⁶ However, in the dire circumstances in Naples, women did not enter into prostitution by choice but rather out of necessity. An American military historian argued that between 1943 and 1945, “the people [of Naples] did what they had to do in order to survive... and the experience has left a



²⁴ R. M. Hill, E. Craig Hill, *In the Wake of War. Memoirs of an Alabama Military Government Officer in World War II Italy*, (Tuscalloosa, AL, 1982) 49.

²⁵ Lewis, *Naples '44*, 115.

²⁶ *The Soldier's Guide to Sicily*, 1943, 3.

scar.”²⁷ And although this discusses Sicily in particular, the situation was nonetheless similar in Naples. Naples was and still is known for its Catholic traditions as evident by the myth of San Gennaro.

Soon after Italy entered into the Second World War, alongside Germany, there was a rising suspicion toward Italian-Americans in the United States. Similar to the treatment of German-Americans, but not nearly as much as Japanese-Americans, Italians were viewed with distrust as they were after all, the ‘enemy.’ Therefore, many Italian-Americans retreated from politics in fear of being viewed as a traitor. They continued to glorify Italy but not the Fascist regime. This became the case in Italy as well, where Italians rejected Mussolini and Fascism during occupation in order to appear pro-American.

As a result of Italian involvement in the war, American troops did not necessarily believe Neapolitans to be their allies. Their position in the Axis powers undoubtedly cast doubt on their intentions. Allied servicemen considered them to be ignorant; “the would-be recipient of American beneficence: bewildered, trembling and literally child-sized, the perfect subject for paternal tutelage.”²⁸ The American government believed that Italian Fascism was thrust upon a malleable people but Nazism and militarism reflected the true characters of the Germans and Japanese. There was thus an element of fear between Neapolitans and American soldiers as the armistice essentially said that the Italian government was in the

²⁷ E. Morris, *Circles of Hell: The War in Italy 1943–1945*, (New York, 1993) 199.

²⁸ Buchanan, Andrew. “‘Good Morning, Pupil!’ American Representations of Italianness and the Occupation of Italy, 1943-1945,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 43 (April 2008): 217.

wrong. Troops were seen as menacing and “an armed soldier in uniform was a person of authority to be treated with some care and deference.”²⁹

American GIs believed themselves to be of a higher stock than Italians, particularly as they arrived in Sicily. They compared Sicilians to children – looking to the United States for leadership and guidance. The above photo is a 1943 political cartoon drawn by Edmund Duffy for the *Baltimore Sun* just ten days after the Allied invasion of Sicily.³⁰ It shows an American soldier towering over a small, nervous, peasant-like Sicilian. The giant American is drawn to be an intellectual as he is carrying books and wearing glasses. The slogans on the briefcase are ‘democracy’ and the ‘three-R’s.’ Moreover, the American is shown as innocent as to show American newness and benevolent apprehension to occupation.

According to President Roosevelt’s speech on July 28, 1943 – “On the Progress of the War and Plans for Peace,” America aimed to restore the Italian people to the dignity of human beings. Their goal was to establish democracy because they did not fault the Italian people with following Mussolini and “from the beginning, the projection of American power into Italy would be conducted in the name of reforming Italian society by the promotion of American-style democracy.”³¹ Mussolini was shown in war propaganda to be a buffoon rather than a monster like Hitler or Tojo. According to the “Soldier’s Guide to Italy,” American soldiers were to treat Italians differently from the Germans and to act with “moderation and tact”

²⁹ Williams, *Allies and Italians Under Occupation*, 35.

³⁰ Edmund Duffy. Editorial cartoon, ‘Good Morning Pupil!’ *Baltimore Sun*, 19 July 1943.

³¹ Buchanan, 220.

and to “gain the future confidence and support of the Italian people in our effort to restore world order.”³²

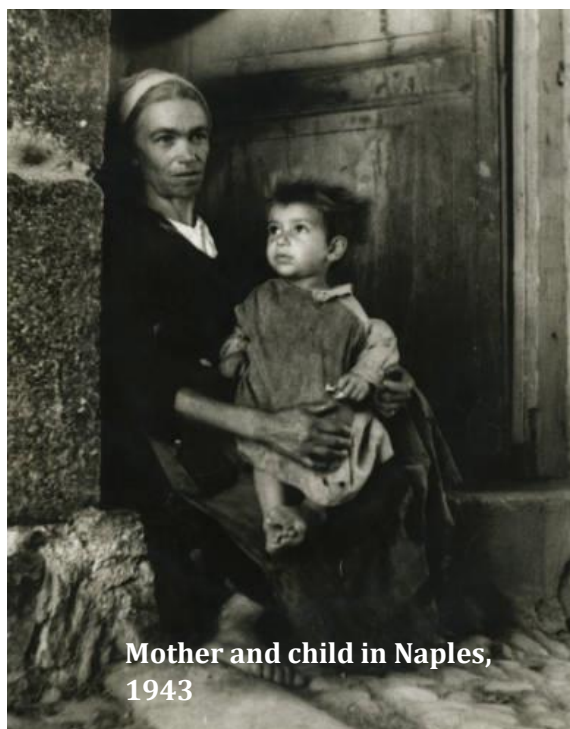
Additionally, Italian women were viewed differently from other European women. They were viewed as sexual partners rather than marital ones because “Italy occupied a midway point between the advanced industrial to the north and the colonial societies to the south.”³³ Command policy attempted to limit soldiers’ interactions with Italian women which affected the number of Italian to American marriages. Undoubtedly due to existing prejudices, Italian women were categorized as prostitutes or venereal risks, especially in a city such as Naples. Yet, it was prolonged military conflict that caused a dire situation for locals who were consequently starving.

Yet, most American soldiers varied in race, religion, and ethnic background. For instance, many GIs coming from the Northeast were of Italian descent. As a result, not all American servicemen were prejudicial toward Italians. This was also the case with African American soldiers, who upon entering into Naples felt a sense of camaraderie with Italians as they were welcomed by many Neapolitans regardless of their race. Nonetheless, those prejudices continued to exist as evident in first-hand accounts from soldiers. Their descriptions of Naples, as well as the accounts of historians, recount a desolate and shattered city.

³² United States War Department. *Soldier's Guide to Italy*, (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943).

³³ Zeiger, 81.

As Australian journalist Alan Moorehead wrote of Italy in 1943, "In every direction there was a wall of emaciated, hungry, dirty faces. Hunger governed all...



**Mother and child in Naples,
1943**

they thrust their dribbling children forward to whine and plead.”³⁴ Women and children begged on the sides of the streets as Allied soldiers drove through, “screaming in relief and in pure hysteria.”³⁵ Hunger in fact ruled all activities in Naples as women and children were found thin and begging on the sides of the streets.³⁶ Because of the extreme destruction of the city,

Neapolitans looked to the Allied servicemen for aid, instruction, and mostly importantly, food. American serviceman, George Kost, recounted:

The hunger there, [in Naples] that's the first time I had experienced that kind of hunger. I was a poor boy, but I was never hungry. And it was awful. Women were lying on the streets on Via Roma in Naples, and they were starving. They'd give the kids the food, and then they would starve. The kids would be running around crying. It was just a pitiful sight. It traumatized me, really.³⁷

The threat of starvation therefore pushed many Neapolitans to participate in the black market.

³⁴ Alan Moorehead, *Eclipse*.

³⁵ Moorehead, *Eclipse*.

³⁶ Melvin C. Shaffer, *Mother and Child, Poor Section of Naples*. 1943.

Central University Libraries, Southern Methodist University.

³⁷ George J. Kost. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. June 18, 2001.

Neapolitans sold everything they could, sending it to the black market where it could be bought and sold for any price. The religious morality that had guided the behavior of people in previous years, was now buried in a sea of corruption. In order to survive in this difficult period, they had to give up ethical requirements in favor of disreputable ones. Even children participated in the black market in a variety of ways. The above photo shows the participation of children in the black market, in this case: the selling of wine.³⁸ They are described by American soldiers as thieves and schemers. One American serviceman recalled: “On the side of the ambulance



Little boy attempting to sell wine to an American soldier

was a rack where we kept the gas and oil cans. I looked in the passenger side rearview mirror, and here was this kid, trying to steal stuff off the ambulance.”³⁹ Others remembered that “the kids, of course, were bumming cigarettes all the time”⁴⁰ and those “in Pompeii at that time were selling lava from the smoke of a volcano. As I went around the streets of Naples, there was dust on the gutters [that] had piled up and these kids were

³⁸ Melvin C. Shaffer, *Frank Davis and Friend Viewing Available Wine*. 1945. Central University Libraries, Southern Methodist University.

³⁹ Allan Prince. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth, Greg Kupsky, and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. July 19, 2001.

⁴⁰ Lea Terry. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*.

just taking plastic toothbrush holders... scooping it up and selling lava.”⁴¹ Most families were forced to sell everything until the wedding ring and the last piece of clothing. Children were frail and had swollen bellies caused by malnutrition. They would eagerly wait by American soldiers for any food scraps, “always rooting through your garbage. If you had anything left, why, they took it.”⁴² Often, Neapolitans would attempt to sell goods on the streets to soldiers, such as wine, jewelry, and watches. Whether or not these goods were stolen, we do not know but it is likely considering the deprived conditions of the city. American soldier, Richard Wagner, recalled a piece of jewelry he purchased on the streets, “I bought the cameo because a fellow came up [to me]. I was looking in the window of the jewelry shop and the fellow said “Do you want to buy a nice cameo, cheap?” I said, “Yes.” So, he took me up to his apartment and his father was working [on] cameos.”⁴³

Black Market: “Cigarettes and coffee bought us all the goodies we wanted”⁴⁴

Allied goods and rations were eagerly bought and sold in Naples. The rations that Neapolitan civilians were given by the Allies were not enough to fully sustain them, so the black market was quite the enticement. The economy that existed in Naples was based upon this black market. With little access to goods, other than stolen ones, Neapolitans turned to illegal means. According to an American GI, “Oh, yeah...anything you want on the black-market was available. You just had to know

⁴¹ Richard Wagner. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth and Jason Hutchins. January 29, 2004.

⁴² Leland O. Carmany. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. By Tom Swope. May 7, 2001.

⁴³ Richard Wagner. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth and Jason Hutchins. January 29, 2004.

⁴⁴ Douglas Allanbrook, *See Naples: A Memoir of Love, Peace, and War in Italy*, (Houghton Mifflin, 1995) 193.

who, where, and when and how. You know, and it was always available.”⁴⁵ Just about anything was available in the lucrative black markets of Naples during occupation, whether it was American rations, food from outside the city, or Allied clothing and jewelry. Citizens had little access to fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, and eggs, so it was brought from outlying villages. Though scarce, it fetched high numbers at the black market. Powdered eggs and canned goods were much more common, particularly because they were part of GI supply kits. Neapolitans would have to create recipes from the little that they had.

Those profiting from the black market were rarely poor citizens, but rather the Camorra or high-ranking British and American officers looking to make a profit. For example, Benedict Alper, in one of his letters home on June 20, 1944, talks about two British sergeants who had been his superiors and were arrested for supporting foodstuffs on the black market as 25,000 lire was found on them.⁴⁶ Men, such as these officers, looked to make the highest profits. Neapolitan citizens often made just enough to survive.

Moreover, Benedict Alper, who served in Italy for two years and dealt with the resettling of Italian civilians from front lines, wrote of his time in Naples in 1944 in a collection of letters to his wife which was then published as *Love and Politics in Wartime*. His managerial position allowed him to live in a large apartment in an old palazzo with several other officers. They even had the luxury of a housekeeper and cook, however, they still had little access to fresh food, having to rely on “powdered

⁴⁵ Elvin Davidson. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. April 4, 2000.

⁴⁶ Alper, 93.

eggs, powdered onions, potatoes, and soup” – their weekly rations.⁴⁷ In his discussions of Naples, he says that “the only way to get around the army diet was to dabble in the black market, which flourished throughout my stay.”⁴⁸ Alper writes quite a bit about food, claiming that it was one of the only things that servicemen sought refuge in during their time in Naples. While this may have been the case for some, other forms of ‘entertainment’ seemed to capture the attention of servicemen much more than food. This undoubtedly centered on prostitution and alcohol.

Nonetheless, with food so valued, Neapolitans went to extraordinary means to find and distribute it. An American GI amusedly recalled the black market: “I don’t know whether you’ve ever seen a hearse, a horse drawn hearse, in Italy? You’ve seen those, how ornate they are? and they have a window on the side and black horses with plumes. Well, they were all over the place in Naples and I was told that there weren’t always bodies in there [laughter] black market.”⁴⁹ After the Nazi retreat from Naples in the fall of 1943, no boats survived in the port of Naples, so their livelihood of fishing ceased to exist. So, although fishing was prohibited and the Allies imposed a ban on civilian boats in the port, fishermen often set out from the harbor on makeshift rafts. The rafts were usually crudely built, such as from salvaged doors tied together with rope, wire and rubber tubing.

Moreover, Douglas Allanbrook, an infantryman in the U.S. Army, suggested that “Naples had become an economy based on the black market. The peasants became capitalists. They had what counted: cheese, vegetables, hams, grain, wine,

⁴⁷ Alper, 82.

⁴⁸ Alper, 40.

⁴⁹ Prince, *Rutgers Oral History Archive*.

and oil.”⁵⁰ Peasants, who lived in outlying villages, had access to goods made from the land, whereas Naples was blocked off. In the few days before the Allies arrived, German bombs had nearly decimated the city and closed off all access points, so as a result, “the black market burgeoned.”⁵¹

Allied goods not only included food rations, but also blankets and clothing. Whether they were stolen or traded, soldier uniforms were used in a variety of forms. Norman Lewis wrote that “tailors all over Naples are taking uniforms to pieces, dying the material, and turning them into smart new outfits for civilian wear.”⁵² Women were seen wearing army blankets as dresses. Even more popular than food or clothing was soap, which was non-existent in Naples throughout the war. American soldiers reported that Neapolitans smelled rancid and were sick due to the filthy conditions of the city. Moreover, they would seek refuge under the city in catacombs and underground aqueducts, usually living in their own waste. Therefore, soap was a significant item on the black market. Allan Prince told the *Rutgers Oral History Archive*, “Soap was a prime thing with the civilian population of Italy. ... Sometimes, we were able to get our clothes washed by a local woman, we’d supply the soap to her, and we’d supply candy and things like that, and even help out with some food, in trade for doing our laundry.”⁵³

The black market also included intangible items. Eating out was uncommon in Naples as soldiers were not allowed to enter into civilian restaurants. American

⁵⁰ Allanbrook, *See Naples*, 149.

⁵¹ Allanbrook, *See Naples*, 148.

⁵² Lewis, 123.

⁵³ Prince, *Rutgers Oral History Archive*.

GI, Frederick De Sieghardt, remembered an illegal restaurant in Naples that a citizen had put together in his living room. It used products that were intended for Neapolitan citizens, but was instead used in a 'pop-up' restaurant for soldiers. De Sieghardt recalled: "I remember taking two hostesses from the Red Cross Club and a friend, a buddy from the organization, to this place and getting steak and eggs and spaghetti and a big salad for eight dollars apiece. The MPs knew all about it. It was not a matter of working under some sort of blanket of secrecy."⁵⁴ Thus, similar to the poor regulation of prostitution, authorities and higher officers knew of these illegal restaurants and black market dealings, but did little to stop them.

Outside of the black market, simpler forms of trading existed throughout Naples. Benedict Alper described a meal he had in Naples: "Had lunch with an Italian family today – very meager but very nice. I ate the thinnest possible slice of bread, and not much else, and in exchange gave them cigarettes and candy and watches. Food's really hard here."⁵⁵ Soldiers would often eat in civilian homes, usually for something in return. Luxury items such as cigarettes, candy, and chocolate were common GI gifts given to families and children.

The black market is attributed by some Allied soldiers, such as Norman Lewis, to the persistence of Neapolitans, essentially as a survival strategy. In order to live, they were forced to steal, sneak, and scrounge for food. Although according to Norman Lewis, "Nothing has been too large or too small - from telegraph poles to phials of penicillin - to escape Neapolitan kleptomania," he considered Neapolitans

⁵⁴ Frederick De Sieghardt. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth. September 23, 2004.

⁵⁵ Alper, 49.

to be resourceful and compassionate.⁵⁶ Ultimately, the beauty of the Mediterranean setting and the Neapolitans' love of life, their rich traditions, and their stubborn dignity won Lewis over. As he prepared to leave, he wrote: "A year among the Italians had converted me to such an admiration for their humanity and culture that I realize that were I given the chance to be born again and to choose the place of my birth, Italy would be the country of my choice."⁵⁷ Lewis is a sympathetic witness, and although there are moments of humor, he describes plenty of poverty, horror and suffering. He also highlights resilience, which he ascribes to Neapolitans and an overall theme of survival.

However, this notion of survival was not thought by all Allied soldiers, who often negatively characterized Neapolitans based on their actions during the war and occupation. It also ignores the actions of soldiers, who eagerly participated in black market activities, and as we will see, this included prostitution. The prejudicial treatment of Neapolitans due to existing stereotypes, compounded with the ways in which citizens participated in the city's corruption, placed all responsibility on them. Yet, in reality, those who benefited from the black market were generally high-ranking officers and members of the Camorra rather than the lower classes. The black market was thus used as proof of an Italian's 'gangster' mentality, including their laziness and deceitful nature. Yet, the city's destruction due to both German and Allied bombings, and also wartime recession, caused a collapse of the city's infrastructure, which undoubtedly included jobs. As a result, Naples turned to illegal

⁵⁶ Lewis, 79.

⁵⁷ Lewis, 183.

sales and operations, ranging from simple transactions of wine and jewelry, to the selling of women and children. In the subsequent chapter, I will therefore discuss this sexual economy that took hold in Naples during occupation as women and children were regularly sold for Allied amusement.

CHAPTER 2:

U.S. Military Attempts & Failures to Control Rampant Sex, Venereal Disease, & Fraternization in Naples



1

"But we had lots of interesting adventures, personal type, in downtown Naples, which was very hazardous in one respect. A lot of guys caught ... diseases down there."

- Leo Inglesby, Rutgers Oral History Archive

Prostitution was epidemic, as were the consequent diseases in Naples during occupation. While there were legal and congressional attempts to control sex and the spread of disease, fraternization was largely overlooked, even consciously advocated by high-ranking American officers. American GIs have confirmed the existence of prostitution, brothels, and venereal disease in their memoirs, oral interviews, and letters home. As a result, in occupied Naples, several different kinds of relationships existed due to food scarcity – as sex and companionship became Neapolitan methods of survival.

¹ U.S. Army Medical Department. *Soldier Seeking Diversion and Recreation in Naples*. Office of Medical History.

Officers and military personnel viewed Italy through the lens of racism, quickly characterizing Italians as dishonest and corrupt. Thus, rampant venereal disease in Italy was unsurprising to the military, who already saw Italian women as *prostitutes*. Although desperation undoubtedly played a role in the existence of prostitution, the military “insisted nonetheless that sexual immorality was almost universal in certain regions of Italy and it cut across all social classes.”² There were many contradictions in the military policies regarding sex in Naples. While policies attempted to prohibit relationships, both sexual and platonic, officers believed they and their soldiers were entitled to sex and required it. In a quote from General Patton, he put it even more frankly: “If they [soldiers] don’t fuck, they don’t fight.”³ In May 1926, the Veterans Regulation Act said that any soldier who contracted venereal disease through illegal sexual acts would then lose their pension and any pay. This was further confirmed with the May Act of 1941 which also illegalized prostitution. However, in September 1944, the War Department wrote that soldiers infected with sexually transmitted diseases would not be punished or have any pay taken away while receiving treatment in army hospitals.⁴ Therefore, Patton’s viewpoint was reinforced by military laws.

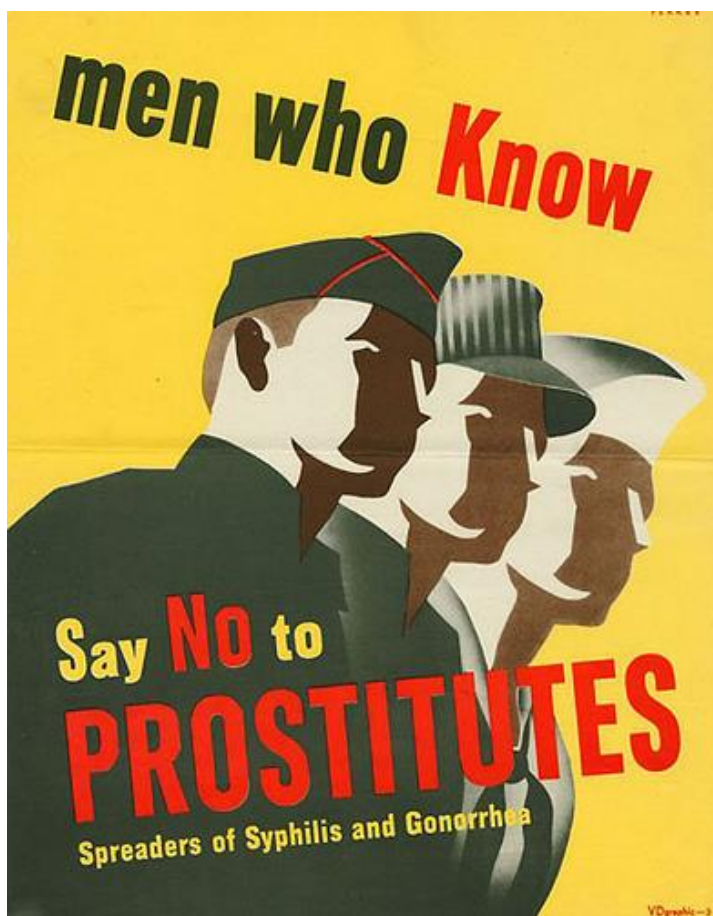
The military was tasked with organizing and regulating brothels, because of their disorganized and informal existence throughout the city of Naples. However, they could not control prostitution. One such way of controlling it came in the form

² Zeiger, 95.

³ Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, 160.

⁴ Daniel E. Bender, and Jana K. Lipman, *Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism*, (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 144.

of the May Act, passed by Congress in 1941 which forbade any prostitution around United States military camps.⁵ Yet, as soldiers began fighting on foreign soils, the May Act became irrelevant. Attempts to control prostitution were inextricably tied to morality and the prevention of venereal disease in the military as it had become an epidemic in occupied Italy. According to American soldiers, GIs returned week after week for the treatment of VD in Neapolitan hospitals. It seemed the more the U.S. Military attempted to control prostitution, the more it existed in Naples. By April 1944, venereal disease had become such a problem in Italy that it was



reported 168 cases per one thousand men, or five times the norm set by the War Department, pervaded occupied areas.⁶

The U.S. Army and the Politics of Sex in Occupied Naples

Sexually transmitted diseases and the 'World's Oldest Profession' were, in the eyes of the United States

⁵ Roberts, 163.

⁶ Roberts, 163.

government the “military saboteur number one.”⁷ Moreover, women, particularly those in occupied Italy, were characterized as the real saboteurs and true carriers of disease, as shown in the poster to the left.⁸ According to medical historian and the author of *Sex, Science, and Sin: A History of Syphilis in America*, John Parascandola, “controlling these women was considered important to the defense effort.”⁹ In 1939, the War Department, the Navy, the Federal Security Agency, and state health departments wrote the Eight-Point Plan, a set of measures intended to curb the spread of STDs “in areas where armed forces or national-defense employees are concentrated.”¹⁰ This plan gave the military an applied and aggressive measure to track the spread of venereal disease to encourage the infected to seek medical care, to provide treatment to those who were infected; to repress prostitution and finally, to promote sex education to arrest the further spread of the diseases.¹¹

However, a major problem was in the lengthy and complicated treatment of venereal disease. Penicillin was first used as a treatment for syphilis in 1943, but was scarcely available for civilians during the war. These treatments included regular injections of arsenic-based drugs, administered once a week for up to a year. Moreover, gonorrhea could be cured with a round of pills, but even that needed

⁷ “Military Saboteur Number One is the World’s Oldest Profession,” *War Department Office*, January 21, 1942, quoted in Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women’s Army Corps during World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

⁸ U.S. Government, “Men Who Know Say No to Prostitutes, Spreaders of Syphilis and Gonorrhea,” *Venereal Disease Visual History Archive*, accessed April 24, 2016, <http://vdarchive.newmedialab.cuny.edu/items/show/99>.

⁹ John Parascandola, *Sex, Science, and Sin: A History of Syphilis in America*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008).

¹⁰ Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II*, (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 165.

¹¹ “State Venereal Disease Control is Highly Praise in New Book,” *Dallas Morning News*, January 1944.

careful adherence to a dosing schedule in order to work properly. Oftentimes, soldiers and civilians during war could not cooperate fully with these schedules.¹²

Susan Zeiger in *Entangling Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century*, concluded that sex was considered by American military officials in World War II to be a major problem in controlling troops in occupied territories. Whether it was legal or not, prostitution existed in every place troops went throughout Europe and the Pacific during the Second World War. She uses U.S. military records, such as medical and health reports and surveys, to determine whether or not sex, particularly prostitution, was pervasive in occupied Italy. According to Zeiger, “women of all classes engaged in the trade” in Italy due to the “complete collapse of all civilian functions.”¹³ This is mirrored in primary sources from American soldiers stationed in Naples from 1943 to 1945. They continually discussed the existence of prostitution in Italy, whether in the context of brothels or on a smaller, more informal scale. In Naples, we see a fine line between informal and organized prostitution. With the existence of prostitution, American soldiers also speak of several other issues that emerged in occupied Naples which shaped relations between GIs and Neapolitans.

In the early months of occupation in Italy, the MTO (Mediterranean Theater of Operations) attempted to control prostitution by monitoring and screening brothels. They tried to determine which brothels were ‘better’ than others,

¹² Thomas H. Sternberg, “Venereal Diseases: Significant Policies in Prevention and Control,” *U.S. Army Medical Department Office of Medical History*, <http://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/wwii/communicablediseasesV5/chapter10.htm>.

¹³ Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances*, 78.

essentially, testing women to make sure they were disease-free. However, just a couple months later, the MTO closed brothels in Italy in December of 1943, thus making them off-limits to soldiers. Yet, we know that according to soldier's accounts from Naples, this did not actually stop them from 'fraternizing' with Italian women, nor did they actually close all brothels.¹⁴ Policies such as these continually went back and forth in Italy, from one of complete closure to the simple testing of Neapolitan women in hospitals. Zeiger also recounts the duties of an American attorney for the AMG in Naples, Robert Hill, whose sole responsibility was to find housing for the city's prostitutes.¹⁵ Moreover, another attempt to control American soldiers was the barring of taking Italian women into military vehicles. But, as a result, these GIs went to "seniorina casa," or the girls' houses.¹⁶ While it was an attempt to limit fraternization, it actually promoted private encounters. An American GI reported: "After all a guy is used to going out with girls when he wants to. But here you can't do nothing about it... so as a result he goes out and tries to find something to fuck."¹⁷

In Naples, prostitution occurred in the private sector and was known as "clandestine prostitution,"¹⁸ which was the practice of sexual activities outside of "what Italians call a 'casa di tolleranza' – what we call a 'whorehouse.'"¹⁹ This undoubtedly made it difficult to control prostitution. American soldiers claimed that

¹⁴ Zeiger, 96.

¹⁵ Zeiger, 96.

¹⁶ Zeiger, 97.

¹⁷ Zeiger, 97.

¹⁸ Zeiger, 98.

¹⁹ Alper, 38-39.

sex could occur anywhere they wanted and for almost any price. The conditions of these 'case di tolleranza' were often terrible and comparable to the deteriorating conditions of the city itself. While many soldiers solicited prostitutes anywhere, "others were put off by the lack of regular 'houses' and objected to dirt floors with grass mattresses on the floor."²⁰ American GI John Rosta explained that "in North Africa, there were brothels that ... seemed to be government approved or sponsored. They were like a business. ... Our troops lined up after hours...waiting their turn to go into the brothel." However, he explains that in Italy, this was not so common. Rather, "prostitutes operated privately, I guess, but, you couldn't see it. There was a lot of propositioning on the streets."²¹

Additionally, American servicemen were often angry with their superior officers, who had more opportunity and access to prostitutes. Although they punished GIs for fraternizing with women, they often did so themselves, thus adding to the hypocrisy. One American servicemen recounted the disciplinary problems he witnessed between soldiers and MPs (Military Police). Thomas Kindre says, "they [soldiers] hated the MPs because the MPs were inhibiting their fun. They were back in Naples to have a great time and that meant just letting off steam totally, and the MPs were rotten people to them."²²

American soldiers reported that army officials attempted to keep soldiers away from prostitutes and from contracting venereal disease. They were adamant that soldiers should be disease-free but not necessarily that they should stay away

²⁰ Allanbrook, 101.

²¹ John Rosta. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler and Mark Rybak. October 18, 1997.

²² Thomas Kindre. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler. June 28, 1994.

from women. The army attempted to educate servicemen on the dangers of venereal disease. American GI Domer Zerbe recalled: "There was a lot of VD in Italy, but I suspect it was everywhere. ... You had lectures and films on VD every so often, just to keep it foremost in your mind."²³ However, he also says that these measures did not necessarily convince all soldiers as they continued to engage with prostitutes. Army officials ultimately realized that they could not control a soldier's actions, particularly in social terms. An American GI recounts, "The official position was strictly a defensive one in terms of disease control." Stay away from these women because you'll get sick, and we can't have you getting sick because we need you to work here in the Army." However, he also says, "The unofficial position was do whatever you want to do as long as you don't have a problem, and that was true of the officers as well as everybody else. Nobody was told not to deal with prostitutes--only in terms of keeping disease free."²⁴ You could almost pick out which girls were on the make, or in the business, propositioning the soldiers, but, it was not a disciplinary problem. It was not something that ... upset the regime or the operations."²⁵

Ultimately, women were classified by soldiers as one of the fruits of victory to be 'used.' Sexual relationships with women could range from consensual, romantic relationships, to prostitution, to rape. Neapolitan women used their bodies as forms of payment in a city that had little left to offer to American troops. This meant that

²³ Domer Zerbe. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler and David Brown. November 16, 1994.

²⁴ Thomas Kindre.. June 28, 1994.

²⁵ John Rosta

women's sexuality was "mobilized in the context of war," where women were oppressed and stigmatized, whereas the American soldier possessing women represented "the power that the United States asserts over foreign lands and people."²⁶ Even when unrestrained behavior in the form of rape occurred, the army's response was generally to downplay the problem scapegoating African Americans as the primary perpetrators.²⁷ In the words of American soldiers, sex was more common in Naples than other occupied territories in Italy. Prostitution, on one hand, is described in a light-hearted manner, where soldiers say their favorite part of Naples was "the girls" as well as in explicit terms, involving sexual acts with children.²⁸

Susan Zeiger discusses an army survey in the summer of 1945, where American soldiers were asked: "Have you ever had intercourse in Italy?", 74% of white men and as many as 96% of black men responded in the positive, most of them declaring they had sex once a month.²⁹ Although U.S. officials attempted to separate their men from health hazards, this came too late as already in October 1943, according to army statistics, 1 in 4 Allied soldiers suffered from venereal disease.³⁰ Between September 1944 and April 1945, over 3000 servicemen were put out of action in Italy due to sexually-transmitted diseases while only 900 were reported as casualties from battle.³¹ Since, as we have seen, unemployment, misery

²⁶ Zeiger, 2-3.

²⁷ Roberts, 10.

²⁸ Leland O. Carmany, *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. By Tom Swope. May 7, 2001.

²⁹ Zeiger, 96.

³⁰ De Marco, *Polvere di piselli*, 39.

³¹ Williams, 197.

and famine were ubiquitous in Naples and all of the Italian South, it now fell again to Italian women – since their fathers and husbands were physically or symbolically absent – to provide for their families’ needs. As a result, soldiers believed that a majority of Neapolitan women were engaged in prostitution, more so than the surrounding areas.³² Moreover, one American soldier recalled that he was told by his peers that “Nine of every ten girls -- nine of every ten girls has a disease.”³³ While he did not claim that this was 100 percent accurate, this shows that soldiers were being told that “the city of Naples is off limits to soldiers because of a type of hepatitis epidemic and also because of syphilis.”³⁴ Therefore, it became a common misconception, widely shared by American officials, that in Italy, prostitution was accepted as the norm.

Sex for Survival

The phrase ‘sexual economy’ refers to the exchange of ‘goods’ between Neapolitan women and American soldiers during the occupation of Naples. Whether they bartered, such as sexual acts for food, or soldiers paid with actual currency, they exist within the same category of a ‘sexual economy.’ In war-ravaged and postwar Europe, this economy existed in a time of extreme poverty, particularly in occupied areas where all other societal functions ceased to exist, such as job opportunities. Moreover, women assumed the roles of provider and caretaker for their families as a majority of young men remained fighting post-armistice. They were either in the North fighting against German forces, or in POW camps

³² Lewis, *Naples '44*, 115.

³³ Carmany. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. By Tom Swope. May 7, 2001.

³⁴ Carmany, *Library of Congress*.

throughout Europe. Thus, the men that remained in Naples were the young and old. What then, had these women to offer these soldiers? In Naples, we saw that food and supplies were scarce as the city was bombed incessantly and nearly starved out. As a result, women used their bodies as collateral and payment. This may not be a new occurrence; however, its surplus within Naples is seen in nearly every recollection of the city by American soldiers. Whether discussing prostitution, the black market, or venereal disease, American GIs are quick to label Naples as a city of excitement, vice, and the “clap, clap, clap.”³⁵

Occupation economy can be examined as a marketplace in which men seek to acquire sex from women by offering other resources in exchange. Gender roles are thus defined where women were the sellers and men were the buyers of sex. Southern Italian society regarded female sexuality with value, such as virginity, fidelity, and chastity. However, American soldiers claim that desperation altered these societal norms. American GI, Thomas Kindre, told the *Rutgers University Oral History Archives of World War II*, “I felt such sorrow for the Italian people in one way and that is because of the prostitutes. There were so many of them and of course the coming of the war and the foreign troops and the shortages of food and virtually everything turned so many, many into prostitution. The family had nothing to eat and so they entered into prostitution, and they didn't necessarily all feel very good about it.”³⁶ It would be hard to believe that anyone felt necessarily ‘good’ about prostitution. However, as the soldiers stated, prostitution was a necessity in a city

³⁵ Leo Inglesby, *Rutgers Oral History Archive*.

³⁶ Thomas Kindre, *Rutgers Oral History Archive*.

such as Naples. Sex was thus used as a survival strategy for many Neapolitan women. Although extra-marital sex was viewed as taboo, it was one of the only items available for trade.

In addition to prostituting themselves, Neapolitan women also pushed daughters, sometimes young girls, into selling themselves. This was particularly troubling with some Allied soldiers. Norman Lewis in his memoir, *Naples '44*, recalls his time in Naples: “this, was her child, aged thirteen, and she wished to prostitute her. Many soldiers, it seems, will pay for sexual activity less than full intercourse, and she had a revolting scale of fees for these services. For example, the girl would strip and display her pubescent organs for twenty lire.”³⁷ While we learn that some soldiers, such as Norman Lewis, were revolted by the prostituting of children, others appeared to participate. Although shocking to Lewis, it was common for soldiers to engage in sexual activities with young girls. It is also particularly shocking to find out that according to Italian medical statistics 310 among women treated for VD at Naples’ Pace Hospital were minors, some of them barely five years old.³⁸ As far as the idea of sex for food is concerned, a British serviceman recalled a letter from a father, most likely written put by the village priest directly outside Naples:

This girl, as you know, has no mother, and she hasn’t eaten for days. Being out of work I can’t feed my family. If you could arrange to give her a good square meal once a day, I’d be quite happy for her to stay [with you], and perhaps we could come to some mutually satisfactory understanding in due course.³⁹

³⁷ Lewis, 1501.

³⁸ De Marco, 47.

³⁹ Lewis, 43.

The awful circumstances in Naples forced families to enter into survival mode, which included the prostituting of their children. Moreover, although racism existed in Italy, just as it did nearly everywhere, African American soldiers were treated moderately well in Naples as they were believed to be the most generous with gifts. Survival undoubtedly had a part in this as Neapolitan women and children readily accepted food and rations from black American soldiers.

Racism or Tolerance in Naples?

When the Allies arrived in Naples, they were an ethnically diverse mass of



soldiers in which Neapolitans had never encountered before. The existence of African American troops in Naples during occupation was enough to disrupt the norm as Italy had been a generally homogenous population. What little interactions or familiarity they had with people of color came in the form of propaganda or the failed Fascist colonization of

Ethiopia. Fascist propaganda portrayed Africans particularly African Americans, as

caricatures, which highlighted their stereotypical features, violent tendencies, and supposed susceptibilities to rape.

Similar to other occupied areas in Europe, such as Germany and France, Black GIs often complained about “Jim Crowism” existing in Italy between white, American officers and Italian civilians. This occurred particularly with Italian men, whose traditional status, previously existing in Fascism, was now seriously threatened. As a result, they vehemently attempted to stop the fraternization of Neapolitan women and black soldiers. They believed there was a moral collapse of their country and their women, especially in regard to their relations with African Americans. According to war propaganda posters displayed throughout the city of Naples in 1944, a white, Italian woman is shown resisting an ugly black soldier, with a caption saying: “Defend her! She could be your mother, your wife, your sister or your daughter!” or “No Italian woman for those beasts!” alongside a photograph of a black soldier with exaggerated racial features.⁴⁰ Certainly, to Italians, what was happening in Naples constituted a major shock, especially related to Italian masculinity. One Neapolitan wrote:

In Naples, [there is] black market and trade of all kinds, especially of woman flash, the moral and spiritual condition is terrible. [...] [Americans have] ruined everything in Italy, literally everything, not only the houses, roads, railroads, bridges and aqueducts, but also its good customs and morale. [...] In Naples there are 4000 girls and boys in hospital, all sick with venereal disease, caught from those damn blacks.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Porzio, 106-107.

⁴¹ Porzio, 110-112.

Italian women were thus stigmatized for having sexual relations with “those damn blacks.”

One can understand what a shock it proved for Neapolitans to witness the births of black children born to local women from nameless African American fathers beginning in 1944. It was an undeniable proof of what was regarded as a deep shame for Neapolitan women. While fraternization and sex was commonplace in Naples during occupation, children of Italian women and soldiers could be hidden to some extent, but not those from African American fathers. Therefore, the newborn was the irrefutable evidence of a woman’s relationship with an African American soldier. It was often desperation that drove them to engage in prostitution or simply, sexual relationships, with soldiers of all colors in order to obtain food, clothing, or ‘sweets’ for their families.

The song, “Tammurriata Nera,” or the “Black Drumsong,” captures some of the reactions to the American occupation of Naples. It also shows the existence of a black market, prostitution, and the obvious fraternization of Neapolitan women and African American soldiers. The popular folk song was originally written in 1944 by Eduardo Nicolardi, when he was an administrator for the *Loreto Mare* hospital in Naples. His lyrics recount the confusion that followed the birth of a black baby to a Neapolitan mother in the maternity ward.⁴² The air of uncertainty is encapsulated in the words of the “Tammurriata Nera” as they found it difficult to categorize or explain the existence of this baby. Yet, it does not problematize the existence of

⁴² Grace Russo Bullaro. *From Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema*, (Troubadour Publishing, 2010), 46.

mixed children in Naples, but rather proposes the possible reasons for it. The song's origin is meant to show the "undying Neapolitan spirit, and is exemplary of how the Italian people survived the struggles brought about by the war."⁴³ It claims that Italians were desperate and suffering, thus attempting to excuse their relationships with black soldiers. It does not necessarily point to rape as a reason for the births, but rather desperation. While it highlights the racial difference between black American GIs and Neapolitans, it also ignores Italy's history as an attempted colonial power in Africa and an ally to Nazi Germany.

Black soldiers are referred to in the song as "American espresso," who give "cigarette a Papa; caramelle a Mamma; biscuit a bambino; due dollare a signurine." This translates to "cigarettes to dad, sweets for mom, cookies for the kids, and two dollars to the young ladies," which shows the handing out of rations by African American soldiers. Moreover, the "Tammurriata Nera" refers to the illegal selling of goods on the black market and also the excusing of it: "si nun era po contrabbando, i'mo gia stevo 'o compusanto" (was it not for smuggling, I'd now be stone dead).⁴⁴ The black market is further discussed by a Buffalo Soldier (the all-black, 92nd Infantry Division), Elvin Davidson, in a 2000 interview to the *Library of Congress Veterans Project*. When asked by the interviewer if he could get anything on the black market, he responded with "Oh yeah... anything you want on the black market was available. You just had to know who, where, and when and how. You know, and

⁴³ Grace Russo Bullaro. *From Terrone to Extracomunitario*. 46.

⁴⁴ Eduardo Nicolardi and E.A. Mario, *Tammurriata Nera*, 1944.

it was always available.”⁴⁵ Also while in Italy, another Buffalo soldier, J. Curtis Foster, comments on seeing two Italian prostitutes on the front line near Naples.⁴⁶ While these accounts do not differ from those of white, American soldiers, they further confirm what was said in the “Tammurriata Nera.” However, Roi Ottley, an African American soldier and journalist wrote of race relations in Italy during occupation.

He claimed that Fascist groups in Italy, particularly in Naples, attempted to gather support against black soldiers during the occupation. They distributed leaflets, fabricating a committee known as the “Italian-American Committee for the Preservation of the Italian Race.” Based on the anti-black sentiment of Americans on the relationships between black soldiers and Italian women, Ottley claims that they distributed these leaflets in the hopes that it would excite tensions between black soldiers and white American troops. Although the Psychological Warfare Branch of the U.S. Army insisted the organization did not truly exist, Ottley believed it was an old Fascist technique to divide American troops in occupied Italy. The leaflet read,

We, Italo-Americans, most with deep regret take notice that a group of women in Naples, dragging themselves in the gutter, dare to go out on the streets with Negroes, even dare invite them to their homes. Only the lowest type of people lower themselves thus; and the Italian people, already beaten and humiliated, should not allow that more mud be thrown on the land.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Elvin Davidson, *Library of Congress Veterans Project*, April 4, 2000.

⁴⁶ J. Curtis Foster, “Memoirs of J. Curtis Foster, Jr.” *Library of Congress Veterans Project*, October 26, 2011.

⁴⁷ M. A. Huddle (ed.), *Roi Ottley’s World War II. The Lost Diary of an African American Journalist*, (Lawrence, KS 2011) 178.

This is directly tied to the Fascist propaganda discussed earlier. Fascist leaders, especially during the rape and pillaging of Ethiopia, tried to create anti-black sentiment among the Italian people. Yet, in reality, Ottley claims that “the Italian people are wonderful in their hospitality to the Negro troops, inviting them to their homes, churches and social affairs.”⁴⁸ Thus, while some Neapolitans treated African Americans with apprehension and prejudice, many families did not. It was said that black soldiers tended to be more generous to their Italian families and this could be attributed to the treatment they received in Naples which was apparently much better than what they experienced in the United States. In an effort to gain favor with Neapolitans, black soldiers thus gave more to civilians. Moreover, African American soldiers were often delegated with menial or service jobs in the military, such as truck drivers or cooks, which resulted in them obtaining food and rations much more readily than other soldiers.⁴⁹

In reality, many white, American soldiers viewed black GIs with the same racist haze in which they viewed Neapolitans. The stereotypes they often associated with Italians, such as laziness and immorality, were also tied to African American soldiers. Thus, black soldiers often felt a camaraderie with Neapolitans. This was reflected in how they treated Italians – with respect and empathy. Perhaps Neapolitans did not necessarily care about racism, because black soldiers often provided them with generous gifts. As Neapolitans overlooked racism during

⁴⁸ Huddle, *Roi Ottley*, 177.

⁴⁹ David P. Colley, “African American Platoons in World War II,” *World War II*, November 2006.

occupation, albeit for their own benefit, the U.S. Military limited marriages between American servicemen and Italian women, thus exhibiting racism themselves.

Italian Women as Prostitutes Rather than Brides

Under the War Bride Act of 1945, roughly 9,046 Italian women were brought to the United States to be married to American soldiers. Considering the enormous amount of soldiers who occupied Italy, this number was quite modest. The photo is below is one of the few examples of marriages between an American soldiers and



Neapolitan women.⁵⁰ Very few soldiers asked for permission to marry Italian girls, other than Italian-American GIs who spoke the language and came from homes where they were encouraged to bring someone home from the 'motherland.' The fact that Italian-American soldiers could speak the language created a bridge between Italian women and American men. It was reported by the Red Cross in Italy

⁵⁰ Frank J. Davis. *Soldier Marrying an Italian Woman (Naples)*. 1944. Frank J. Davis World War II Photographs, Southern Methodist University, DeGolyer Library.

that up to 40 percent of husbands were Italian Americans, largely based on their surnames on processing forms.⁵¹ The bias of U.S. military officials also played a role in limiting the marriage of American soldiers and Italian women, as they rapidly dismissed their soldiers' marital requests.⁵² One soldier wrote, "I had my papers filled out and they refused to send them in. They think if I marry this girl I will ruin my life."⁵³ This also occurred because upon closer inspection, prospective Italian war brides frequently turned out to be notorious prostitutes attempting to find their way to the United States.⁵⁴ Because this occurred, it undeniably cast doubt on other Italian women and American GIs attempting to marry.

Why were 'relationships' with Neapolitan women thus considered to be transactional rather than viable for marriage? Perhaps it was due to the limitations placed on social interactions between soldiers and Italian women, however, as we know, those restrictions scarcely worked. If over 9,000 Italian women came to the United States as wives of American servicemen, bureaucratic restrictions of marriage failed.

As seen with the prejudicial treatment of Italian women due to stereotypes and racism, Italy was thus considered to be "a midway point" between the industrialized Northern Europe, such as Germany and Great Britain, and the colonial South. Italy could never attain a status similar to that of Great Britain, partly because of the beliefs that Italians were less "white" and also because they were seen as an

⁵¹ Zeiger, 100.

⁵² Zeiger, 99-102.

⁵³ Zeiger, 99.

⁵⁴ Lewis, 114.

“allied enemy.” It also did not help that the Allied view of Naples in 1943 was that of complete desperation and defeat, which resulted in the black market and prostitution for survival. One Italian officer told an American army official, “Ninety-nine out of a hundred Neapolitans are crooked. I should know. I’m a native of Naples myself.”⁵⁵ Yet, though American servicemen were quick to judge Neapolitans for their corruption, they eagerly participated in the black market.

The more ways in which the military attempted to control prostitution or fraternization in Naples, the more soldiers wanted to participate in it. Prostitution existed in every occupied area, as it did in every war prior to the Second World War. Government policies, albeit lacking, were not going to change this. Soldiers recounted the ways in which they side-stepped policies and commanding officers, whether they went to private residences or provided ‘gifts’ for women and children in return for favors. Rather than exhibit racism toward African American soldiers, Neapolitans respected them, perhaps out of starvation, and eagerly accepted food and rations from black GIs. While they reacted shockingly to the birth of mixed babies, the “Tammurriata Nera” tells us that Neapolitans did not demonize black soldiers as rapists, although Fascist propaganda had previously suggested this. Rather, it was American military policy that racially categorized Italian women as prostitutes, instead of as viable wives. Ultimately, military attempts were generally ineffective, yet they did establish procedures and treatments for circumventing the spread of venereal disease. The ways in which American soldiers participated in the sexual economy of Naples is not only expressed in primary sources, but also in the

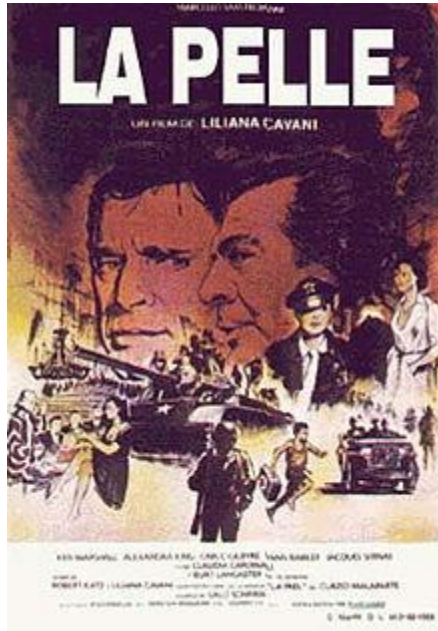
⁵⁵ R. M. Hill, E. Craig Hill, *In the Wake of War*, 20.

fiction written during the post-war period. The next chapter will examine the ways in which these fictional works have characterized the sexual economy of Naples, particularly through the embellished lens of imagination.

CHAPTER 3:

The Skin & The Gallery:

How Historical Fiction Discusses the Sexual Economy of Naples



1

“The price of freedom is high – far higher than that of slavery. And it is not paid in gold, nor in blood, nor in the most noble sacrifices, but in cowardice, in prostitution, in treachery, and in everything that is rotten in the human soul.”

- Curzio Malaparte, *The Skin*

Throughout history, wars, battles and struggles have provided novelists with a fount of inspiration for grand works. Some focus on the fighting and the treacherous conditions experienced by soldiers while others examine how wars change people and society. The novels discussed in this chapter will focus much more on the latter:

¹ *La Pelle*. Theatrical Poster. 1981. Italy.

the effects of war on the people of Naples and how it consequently changed Neapolitan society. Although World War II took place on foreign soil, many Americans found themselves writing of war as they themselves were fighting in Europe and the Pacific. Among these novels are Curzio Malaparte's *The Skin* and John Horne Burn's *The Gallery*. Although Malaparte was in fact an Italian, his book was translated and published in English in 1952 and principally focused on American soldiers in occupied Naples. Burns, an American soldier, further discussed the role of his fellow soldiers in Neapolitan society and the effects they had on the city. Recently, in the United States, there has been a rise in dystopian novels – books that describe a world in disarray where pandemic or war has left humanity with a temporary government attempting to rebuild a broken society. Their rise in popularity is undoubtedly a response to a time of uncertainty in the world, one that includes widespread terrorism. The same could be said after the Second World War, where in response to the horrors that they witnessed during battle, soldiers quickly penned war novels. However, unlike dystopian fictions, these novels adhere to a certain realism in their depictions of the Second World War, albeit embellished at times.

In examining a topic such as the post-war occupation of Naples, it is interesting to find that there are several *novels* regarding civilian life during occupation. While historians have focused much more on military strategies and the invasion of Italy itself, the existing war novels reflect life from the bottom-up. We can assume that the corruption and near decimation of the city plays a role in influencing who has written on the subject, such as soldiers and officers, simply due

to their access to information and first-hand knowledge of the city's happenings. The lack of sources coming out of wartime Europe was undoubtedly due to censorship by the United States military. Soldiers' letters were often censored or destroyed by officers and there were no archives or oral histories in the few years following the war. Thus, the two pieces of fiction discussed in this chapter were first to describe the occupation of Naples and all of its horrors. Whereas first-hand accounts could not describe Naples in all its *splendor*, the city's overabundance of crime and prostitution is a perfect backdrop for fiction. Moreover, fiction does something that media of that time could not so easily do. For instance, these novels candidly discussed sex, homosexuality, venereal disease, and prostitutes as a normal occurrence, and while they came from reality, readers and reviewers could simply view them as works of imagination as they were published as *fiction*.

Historians have written little on civilian life in the Mezzogiorno (Southern Italy), particularly Naples, but these novels almost entirely focus on the people. Fiction also allows the writer latitude and the ability to focus on more shocking and scandalous aspects of occupation, most significantly, sex. Some of the first gruesome and in-depth accounts of the occupation of Naples thus came in the form of fiction. By 1949, two writers, one an Italian and ex-Fascist and another an Irish-American soldier, recounted the horrors and amusements of what they witnessed in Naples post-armistice. Yet, instead of writing memoirs, both men wrote in the form of fiction. Curzio Malaparte wrote his novel, *The Skin (La Pelle)* in response to what he had experienced as an officer of the Italian Co-Belligerent Army, even placing himself within the novel's narrative. John Horne Burns' *The Gallery* recounts life in

Naples through the eyes of demoralized soldiers and civilians and their resentment of the military. As the Allied Military Government (AMG) controlled all life in Naples, these two novels represent the ways in which soldiers and the citizens of Naples responded to occupation. Both writers come across as highly anti-American and anti-AMG, as they wholeheartedly blame the Allies for the city's overabundance of crime and vice. These views, along with the 1981 film adaptation of *The Skin*, directed by Liliana Cavani, present contrasting views of occupation to those posed in the primary sources discussed in chapter two. This includes the discussion of rape in Cavani's film as well as the childishness of American soldiers as they excitedly participated in the city's entertainment.

When dealing with the fantastical events that occurred in Naples from 1943 to 1945, primary sources already provide quite a dramatic backdrop. Therefore, why examine fiction? However, when reading these two fictional works, readers are confronted with characters, a setting, and some sort of problem to be solved. Readers are easily captivated by stories that provide them with the opportunity to imagine themselves in the events of the past, or to explore how people responded to dramatic circumstances such as those involving fear, discrimination, or tragedy, particularly those in the occupation of Naples. Historical fiction also encourages a search for meaning in the past where a story is not a random list of events but rather a narrative that has a plot and some kind of resolution. Fiction also reaches a much more diverse audience than historical texts. Similar to media outlets, such as newspapers, fiction exists as yet another source of information for Americans with the intention to also shock and entertain them.

Traditionally, history has been represented by the victor, but through fiction, readers experience perspectives otherwise ignored. Hence, the pieces of fiction discussed in this chapter provide us with multiple perspectives all at once. Together, *The Skin*, both novel and film, and *The Gallery* introduce us to characters who have different viewpoints thus offering us examples of how people deal differently with problems they are presented with. Although both novels take place during the same time period and place, they are quite different. The same could also be said for Cavani's film, *The Skin*. Unlike Malaparte and Burns, Cavani provides us with several female lead characters, another group of perspectives otherwise disregarded.

In examining these books and film, we once again deal with an issue of responsibility during occupation. Especially in newspaper accounts, American GIs are described as liberators.² As we saw with Edmund Duffy's cartoon in the *Baltimore Sun*, Americans are depicted as intellectuals who are tasked with restoring order and democracy in Italy. As Italians are scapegoated for the corruption that took place in Naples post-armistice, Allied soldiers are portrayed as war heroes. However, in *The Gallery* and *The Skin*, we view an Allied soldier that is greedy, lustful, and violent. Although the primary sources discussed in chapter two argue soldier participation in the black market and prostitution, they are nonetheless described by newspaper articles as 'saviors' and teachers. Curzio Malaparte and John Horne Burns explicitly highlight the ill-treatment of Neapolitans at the hands of the Allies.

² Matthews, *New York Times*, October 3, 1943.

Though there are striking similarities between the first-hand accounts in chapter two and the pieces of fiction that will be discussed in this chapter, these stories portray a corrupt and disorganized AMG. Malaparte, Burns, and Cavani may also be controversial to reviewers as they often exhibit embellishments, however, the horror and destruction that was discussed in soldier accounts are fully reflected in these fictional works. Journals, memoirs, interviews and the words of Allied soldiers nonetheless describe similar occurrences in Naples during occupation, thus corroborating the fictional characters and stories described in these novels. The daily happenings in Naples from 1943-1945 were so outrageous that they did not always require exaggeration or imagination. The black market, crime, and prostitution provided plenty of material, whether fiction or reality, or even a combination of both. The only discernable differences are those of perspective. Each writer focuses on different groups of people and events during occupation, yet, their conclusions are quite similar. All three revealed the ways in which Allied forces gained power and control during their time in Naples.

In examining the reviews of both Malaparte and Burns' novels at the time of their release in the United States, we can gauge the ways in which Americans interpreted the occupation of Naples shortly after it occurred. Moreover, book reviews undoubtedly reflected the release of information in the United States, particularly through major newspapers. Reviewers had been barraged with anti-Italian propaganda for years as well as a media that portrayed American soldiers as liberators and propagators of democracy.

In a November 1952 review of *The Skin* in the *New York Times*, William Barrett discusses Curzio Malaparte's intentions in writing the novel. This review is one example of how *The Skin* was interpreted in America shortly after its publication in the United States. Barrett titles his critique "To Save Their Own," which is perhaps an interpretation of the book's main theme and how Malaparte believed that soldiers and Neapolitans both acted in ways to save themselves and 'their skin.' Barrett is especially critical of his style of writing, claiming "he is alternatively fawning and aggressive, and much given to exaggeration."³ And although Malaparte embellished in his accounts of Naples, such as his story of the manatee, how exactly can Barrett claim anything in *The Skin* was an exaggeration? We do not know exactly what Barrett has read or heard about the occupation of Naples and if that can qualify as less than an exaggeration. However, his particular discussion of one theme in the novel perhaps points to his views, as well as some of the views of Americans, of the occupation of Naples. Barrett believes *The Skin's* main theme is: "the humiliation of Europe before the invading Americans as symbolized by the fantastic vice and squalor of Naples."⁴ On one hand, Americans are unexpectedly described as 'invaders' rather than 'liberators;' however, Barrett also claims that Europe is humiliated, as seen in the corruption of Naples. Italians are therefore shamed by their loss of the war as well as their loss of morality.

In another review of *The Skin* from November 1952, John Henry Raleigh commends the Italian writer for his direct, yet shocking stories of Neapolitan

³ William Barrett, "To Save Their Own," *New York Times*, November 9, 1952.

⁴ Barrett, "To Save Their Own," *New York Times*, November 9, 1952.

desperation. Raleigh provides us with another American viewpoint, one that is much less critical of Malaparte and Neapolitan vices. He refers to Naples as 'the pit' where unexplainable horrors have taken place during wartime. Once again, the title of the review (*The Skin We Save*) refers to the origins of Malaparte's title choice: "what a man will do, what deeds of heroism and infamy he can accomplish to save his skin."⁵ *The Skin* is a depiction of an Italy devastated by war and moral collapse. Essentially, in order to save one's own skin it did not matter what sins or acts of heroism were performed. This could be said for the actions of either Allied servicemen or Neapolitan citizens. Similar to Barrett, who portrays American soldiers as childlike and naïve, Raleigh does the same. However, Malaparte's portrayal of soldiers is also that of cunning and deceit, rather than simple innocence. This could be another example of how Americans viewed soldiers during occupation. Even as Malaparte wrote of their participation in corruption, these two reviewers still come to the conclusion that soldiers were naïve bystanders and if they did participate, it was to 'save their own skin.'

Burns was in fact a gay man, even if he never actually "came out" in contemporary terms.⁶ His "gayness" was consequently ignored by readers and reviewers. Upon its release in 1947, *The Gallery* explicitly included a vivid account of a gay bar in occupied Naples named "Momma's Bar" but was overlooked in reviews. And while we do not know if the bar actually existed in Naples, its mere existence in the novel highlights *The Gallery's* scandalous undertones for the 1940s. Moreover,

⁵ John Henry Raleigh, "The Skin We Save," *New Republic*, Nov. 17, 1952.

⁶ Margolick, *Dreadful*.

Burns' constant discussion of sex throughout the novel also made the book quite shocking for the time, however, it did not affect its positive reviews. The book was nonetheless seen as a fictional portrayal of wartime Italy due to its believed embellishments.

In the United States, *The Gallery* was praised for its account of wartime Naples. In the *New York Times*, Burns was celebrated for his "rancorously vivid portfolio of portraits."⁷ According to David Margolick, in the *New York Sun*, he was also named a "clever professional novelist."⁸ Additionally, Margolick says that *Harper's Bazaar* named Burns one of their "Men of the Moment" and the *Saturday Review of Literature* named him the best war novelist of 1947.⁹ Other writers of the time, such as John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway, called John Horne Burns a new literary power.¹⁰ Richard Sullivan, in his *New York Times* review, titled "Under the Shattered Roof of an Italian Galleria," says that although Burns discusses sex for a good portion of the novel, it "served as a double panacea for all the ills, not only of war, but of frail and tormented, driving and striving mortality."¹¹ Sullivan is essentially saying that Burns' stress on sex was unsurprising and a consequence of wartime living conditions. However, would he have said that if *The Gallery* was a memoir, rather than a novel? Perhaps Sullivan's quick acceptance of Burns' discussions of sex and homosexuality were quickly overlooked because fiction was inextricably tied to imagination.

⁷ Charles Poore, "Books on the Christmas List," *New York Times*, December 7, 1947.

⁸ David Margolick, "The Great Gay Novelist You've Never Heard Of," *New York Times*, June 11, 2013.

⁹ Margolick, *New York Times*, June 11, 2013.

¹⁰ Margolick, *Dreadful*.

¹¹ Richard Sullivan, "Under the Shattered Roof of an Italian Galleria," *New York Times*, June 8, 1947.

The novel itself was viewed as an accurate depiction of an occupied and war-torn Naples rather than a fictional novel. Yet, as the reviewers praise Burns, they seem to ignore his negative representation of American soldiers. While he highlights a dichotomy between Neapolitans and soldiers: one starving, yet courageous, and the second as bigoted and animal-like, reviewers exclaim the opposite. Sullivan, from the *New York Times*, claims that Neapolitans nearly worship American soldiers with “a sentimental idolatry.”¹² Thus, what about his negative portrayal of America’s war heroes? Perhaps, by 1947, Americans were sick of war and instead craved to hear of an ‘exciting’ and ‘exotic’ foreign land such as Naples. This is in fact mirrored in a review by William Hogan from the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1947, who says, “Burns has a brilliant facility for reproducing the sights, sounds, color, feel, and smell of the places he has seen...recapture what many Americans beyond the frontiers of the antiseptic homeland for the first time found in exotic and warped war centers...and of course the twisted and diseased Napoli itself.”¹³ Burns depiction of war torn Naples confirmed many Americans’ suspicions and prejudices of Italians, even if he attempted to paint his fellow soldiers in a negative light instead of Neapolitans.

The interpretations of these reviewers perhaps stem from the release of information made available to them, particularly in the form of newspapers and newsreels during the occupation of Naples. Many of these sources painted Allied forces in a positive light, far from how Malaparte, Cavani, and Burns portrayed them.

¹² Sullivan, “Under the Shattered Roof.”

¹³ Margolick, *New York Times*, June 11, 2013.

One such example is an article released in the *New York Times* on March 26, 1944.

The article, written by Milton Bracker, titled, "Great Progress Made in Naples," recounts the ways in which the AMG has improved the conditions of the city.

Bracker wrote that although progress was being made, problems continued to exist in the city. While he says that the Allied troops found a "bomb-ravaged city without regular water, gas, or electricity... a general air of tragedy, deprivation and uncertainty," Bracker claims that the Allies made life more comfortable for Neapolitan citizens. Food is highlighted as a major problem in Naples, thus resulting in a rationing system and consequently, a black market. Bracker quickly criticizes Neapolitans for their lack of appreciation of Allied rations, which he believes are quickly increasing. He also stereotypes Neapolitans by calling them "spaghetti-eaters."¹⁴ Bracker specifically says, "the streets are dotted every night with shabby children soliciting every soldier: "Hey, Joe, wanna eat fish steak, spaghetti, cognac?" Those who bite may get a good meal, but they also get typhoid or food poisoning."¹⁵

Just one day later, Bracker published another article in the *New York Times* titled "AMG Learns Much from Naples Rule." Once again he discusses the occupation of Naples and the difficulties troops faced within the city. This article specifically highlights the rooting out of Italians Fascists still living in Naples under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Charles Poletti. "Housecleaning," as he calls it, has been extremely difficult due to Neapolitan citizens looking to protect their own. Also, Bracker makes it a point to discuss the existence of crime in the city. He says,

¹⁴ Milton Bracker, "Great Progress Made in Naples," *New York Times*, March 26, 1944.

¹⁵ Bracker, *New York Times*, March 26, 1944.

“A population left under its own police with insufficient military supervision is likely to feel: We’re free now; law and order don’t count.”¹⁶ As a result, Poletti calls for an increase in military personnel and harsher law enforcement, thus making Neapolitan citizens more of an enemy than an ally.

Another example of pro-American writing can be found in a June 21, 1944 article from *The Washington Post*, “District Men Among Naples Crack MP’s.” The article highlights the ways in which eight American soldiers have aided in the rebuilding Naples. According to the article, “so expert was their work in regulating traffic in the city’s maze of narrow streets that Naples is now considered one of the most efficient ports in the world.”¹⁷ Moreover, because these soldiers have heightened security, the article claims they have limited the actions of black market operators throughout the city. This is yet another example of how Allied soldiers were viewed as saviors rather than invaders and Neapolitan citizens as possible criminals. In seeing these descriptions in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, there is no surprise that reviewers such as Barrett and Raleigh would approach the works of Malaparte and Burns with hesitation.

***The Gallery*, John Horne Burns**

As Malaparte revealed some of the more shocking elements of Neapolitan civilian life during occupation, John Horne Burns, in his best-selling American novel, *The Gallery*, focused largely on military personnel, the sentiments of servicemen, and the difficulties that arose between officers and enlisted men. *The Gallery* is

¹⁶ Milton Bracker, “AMG Learns Much from Naples Rule,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1944.

¹⁷ “District Men Among Naples Crack MP’s,” *The Washington Post*, June 21, 1944.

broken down into 'portraits,' focusing on nine separate characters. The title of the novel is tied to the Galleria Umberto Primo in Naples, a shopping arcade where several of his characters and a majority of Neapolitans regularly passed through. Although Burns was an Irish Catholic and an American, he is highly critical of the military and quite fond of Italians. He even returned after the end of occupation, years later, to live and die in Italy.¹⁸

While he was a private in the army, Burns never actually saw combat. As he was fluent in Italian, he remained part of military intelligence, censoring letters of captured Italian soldiers and of his fellow servicemen. As a censor, it is possible that many of his soldier accounts in the novel could have come from the letters of American GIs and Italian soldiers. As *The Gallery* reveals, he was stationed in Casablanca, Algiers, and Naples, where he witnessed and wrote about the effects of war on those three regions. Although this novel chronicles the lives of other individuals, it undoubtedly reflects how Burns experienced both the war and post-war period. In a letter to a friend, he says that *The Gallery* discusses "the effects of war after the wedge has gone through and left nothing but splinters and pain."¹⁹

Burns saw in Italy the bottom of Dante's inferno:

I remember that my heart finally broke in Naples [...]. I found out that America was a country just like any other, except that she had more material wealth and more advanced plumbing [...]. And I found out that outside the propaganda writers [...] Americans were very poor spiritually. Their ideals were something to make dollars on. They had bankrupt souls. [...] Therefore my heart broke.²⁰

¹⁸ "John Horne Burns, Novelist, 36, Dies". *New York Times*. August 14, 1953.

¹⁹ David Margolick, *Dreadful: The Short Life and Gay Times of John Horne Burns*, (Other Press, 2014).

²⁰ Burns, *The Gallery*, 280-282.

The Gallery was Burns' first published book, a story of the chaos of occupied Naples in 1943 and 1944. *The Gallery* was published in 1947, to considerable acclaim, selling over half a million copies in its first publication.²¹ Throughout the novel, Burns is a narrator as he creates his own *galleria* of characters, thus reflecting his own war-shattered nerves and gradual loss of innocence. This list of characters is well-described in a *New York Times* review from June 1947:

They are a wandering, battle-weary soldier; a stuffy, stupid, buxom Red Cross worker; a quiet maniac; a pair of chaplains who accidentally visit the wrong place of entertainment; a woman who runs a bar for homosexuals; a censorship officer struggling for glory; a lovely little Italian girl who insists on honorable marriage with the American captain who loves her; a sergeant who takes his sixty shots of penicillin for syphilis; a lieutenant who, after portentous interlude with a girl in Naples, is killed by a German.²²

His multitude of characters varies in gender, class, and nationality as Burns discusses both Americans and Neapolitans. In discussing nine different characters, Burns offers a more complex look at occupied Naples, rather than hear the viewpoint of just one character.

Burns also writes on the disgraceful manner in which soldiers treated Neapolitans. "I don't think the Germans could have done any better in their concentration camps."²³ In this, he reveals his anti-American sentiment and compassion for Italians. Comparable to Malaparte's view, the Americans were 'wealthy' and the Italians were starving, which in his eyes was the central problem of the city. So, for Burns, who was worse: Italians selling themselves and all

²¹ Ian Thomson, "Book Of A Lifetime: *The Gallery*, By John Horne Burns," *Independent*, June 11, 2009.

²² Richard Sullivan, "Under the Shattered Roof of a Galleria," *New York Times*, June, 8, 1947.

²³ David Margolick, *Dreadful: The Short Life and Gay Times of John Horne Burns*, (Other Press, 2014).

available items to feed their families, or the American soldiers selling their goods for high prices and purchasing all the Neapolitans had to offer, including their women? Although not all American soldiers viewed Italians with prejudice, Burns fell in love with the “Eye-ties” and “Ginzoos” who he believed were simply surviving the hardships of war. He hated the arrogance of American privilege and power.

For Margolick, Burns’ anonymous G.I.’s are “coarse, bigoted, exploitative... and predatory.”²⁴ Thus, it seems that in Burns’ eyes, they were in every sense of the word: *conquerors*. They purchased sexual acts and favors from Italian women in return for their GI rations. They used the Galleria to search for and fraternize with women, “turning Naples into a giant ‘bordello.’”²⁵ They also purchased items off the black market and ate in illegal restaurants located in Neapolitan homes, while citizens went hungry. As Margolick claims in his discussion of Burns, American soldiers were therefore portrayed as animalistic in *The Gallery*, as married soldiers eagerly fraternized with Italian women. Neapolitans, however, are portrayed as “courageous and resilient.”²⁶ He wrote, “They were our enemies. Yet in those young men of Italy I’d seen something centuries old. An American is only as old as his years. A long line of something was hidden behind the bright eyes of those Italians.”²⁷ Although Italians were supposed to be the ‘enemy,’ Burns did not view them as such.

²⁴ Margolick, *Dreadful*.

²⁵ Margolick, *Dreadful*.

²⁶ Margolick, *Dreadful*.

²⁷ Burns, 97.

The Skin (La Pelle)

Curzio Malaparte's, *The Skin (La Pelle)* in Italian), published in Italy in 1949, is one of the most well-known fictional accounts of the occupation of Naples. Born Kurt Erich Suckert, to a German father and Italian mother, Curzio changed his name in 1925 to 'Malaparte,' which translates to 'the evil side,' as a play on Napoleon's surname 'Bonaparte,' or 'the good side.' As an Italian journalist and writer, Malaparte arrived in Naples as an officer of the newly-established Italian Co-Belligerent Army, thus fighting alongside the Allies against the Germans. However, as a young man after serving in the First World War, he was a known Fascist in Italy. Yet, by 1931, he claimed to have rejected the Fascist regime and Mussolini and even ended up in a concentration camp on the island of Lipari after writing out against Hitler. Moreover, in 1940, after being called to the army in Italy, Malaparte began writing on the Eastern Front for the *Corriere della Sera*. Once again, he was arrested for his anti-Nazi writings and was placed in prison by the SS. His liberation from the Regina Coeli prison in Rome came on August 7, 1943 after the fall of Mussolini. In a response to a *New York Times* review of his novel, Malaparte claimed that this continual imprisonment by the Nazis and Mussolini made him more partial to the Allies as it was their armistice with Italy toward the end of 1943 that freed him.²⁸ Nonetheless, in reading *The Skin*, readers receive the impression that many of those pro-Fascist ties continued to exist as he fervently expressed his dislike of Allied soldiers and sympathy for Neapolitans. His past as a Fascist, as well as the ill-

²⁸ William Barrett, "To Save Their Own," *New York Times*, November 9, 1952.

treatment of Italians by American soldiers undoubtedly affected how he wrote about them in his novel.

Malaparte witnessed first-hand the destruction and tenacity of Naples. However, rather than write a memoir, he fictionalized the city, creating his own characters and storylines, even inserting himself into the narrative. In the novel, he is a liaison officer to an American colonel and thus experiences life in Naples directly. Therefore, in order to fully comprehend the brutalities of life in Naples from 1943 to 1945, we look to Curzio Malaparte. Although a highly contentious Italian intellectual, he was an eye-witness to the events he speaks to in *The Skin*. The novel was first published in Italian in 1949, relatively quickly after the occupation ended. It provides readers with a much different perspective than that of newspapers and newsreels from that time. Americans receive a much harsher and shocking account of what their soldiers were up to in Italy. He is quite sarcastic in his many references to American soldiers, who to him are ‘conquerors’ rather than ‘liberators.’ Malaparte says that Neapolitans, being the first to be ‘freed’ in Europe by the Allies, were “playing the part of a conquered people, of singing, clapping, jumping for joy amid the ruins of their houses, unfurling foreign flags which until the day before had been the emblems of their foes, and throwing flowers onto the heads of the conquerors.”²⁹ While American newspapers and first-hand accounts referred to the Allies as ‘liberators’, Malaparte does not. He undeniably challenges the definitions of ‘victory’ and ‘liberation’ found in post-armistice media and exposes the realities of war and Italy’s convoluted position as an *allied-enemy*.

²⁹ Malaparte, 2.

With his characteristic sarcasm, Malaparte begins the novel with a dedication to “all the brave, good and honorable American soldiers [...] who died in vain in the cause of European freedom.”³⁰ He is continually sarcastic in his references to Americans, who he believes are well-fed and privileged in Naples whereas Neapolitans are dying from starvation, incessant bombings, and plague. Thus the disparity between the two is what created an illegal market in the city, particularly a market of the flesh. Malaparte describes a sort of plague in Naples where bodies were constantly being sold and prostitution permeated the city. The black market eagerly catered to its customers, providing them with whatever they needed.

In his opinion, Naples was in the throes of this plague, quite different from those of the Middle Ages. Rather than corrupting the body, it corrupted the integrity of the soul, essentially a crisis of morality. Yet, he places little blame on Neapolitans, simply believing that they were “saving their skin.”³¹ As a result, Malaparte is keen to introduce his readers to the darkest aspects of Neapolitan life during occupation:

Faded women with livid faces and painted lips, their emaciated cheeks plastered with rouge—a dreadful and piteous sight—loitered at the corners of the alleys, offering to passer-bys their sorry merchandise. This consisted of boys and girls of eight or ten, whom the soldiers caressed with their fingers, slipping their hands between the buttons of their short trousers or lifting their dresses. “Two dollars the boys, three dollars the girls!” shouted the women.³²

This account prefigures that of Allied soldiers, such as Norman Lewis and Douglas Allanbrook, who would later discuss the involvement of children in prostitution and the poor health of Neapolitans; thin, battered, and starving. Several times, Malaparte

³⁰ Malaparte, 3.

³¹ Malaparte, 145.

³² Malaparte. 13.

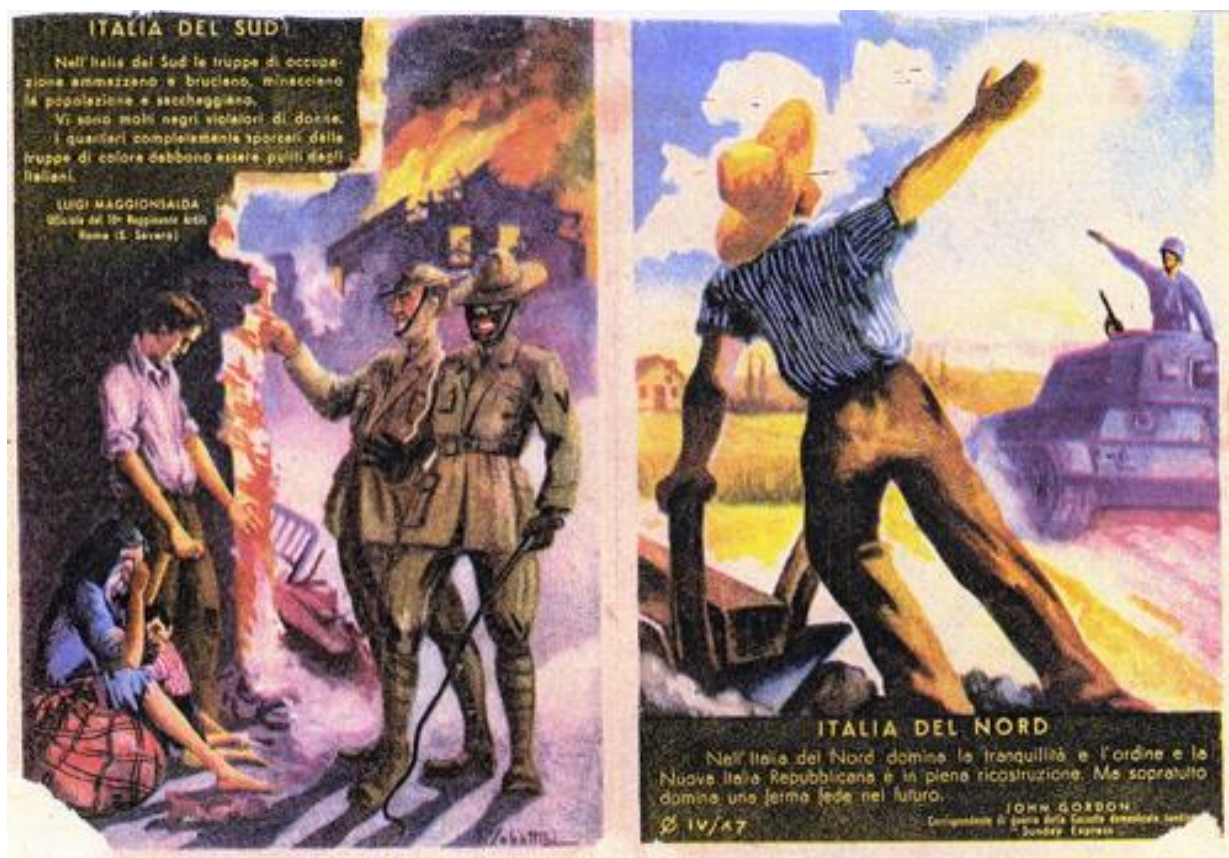
discusses that women were willing to sell themselves to American GIs for as little as five dollars, however he goes one step further in describing child prostitutes.³³ One of the most shocking and disturbing images is that of Neapolitan mothers selling their children to Moroccan soldiers. While Norman Lewis did speak of this, he did not exactly go into as gruesome details as Malaparte, who presents us with a full, detailed picture of how young boys are touched and examined before being bought by soldiers. Often, Moroccan soldiers were blamed for a majority of the sexual violence that occurred in Italy. Norman Lewis referred to Moroccans as “psychopaths” and wrote that, “it is reported to be normal for two Moroccans to assault a woman simultaneously, one having normal intercourse while the other commits sodomy.”³⁴ Malaparte’s account of Moroccans reflects this. He says, “Moroccan soldiers, who came to buy Neapolitan children at the price of a few *soldi*. They felt them and lifted up their garments, sticking their long, expert, black fingers between the buttons of their knickers and holding them up to indicate their price.”³⁵

³³ Malaparte, 61.

³⁴ Lewis, 131.

³⁵ Malaparte, 120.

And while these accounts of Moroccan soldiers are telling, we cannot help but imagine racism played a part in their indictments for rape. War propaganda had



been circulated throughout Italy for years regarding black soldiers. The above propaganda postcard was released by the Italian Social Republic after the King of Italy signed the armistice. It proposes the differences between the 'peaceful' north of Italy still ruled by Fascism and the Allied occupied southern Italy. One card depicts two Allied soldiers, particularly an African American soldier who holds a whip smiling at an Italian man and woman as their country lay burning in ruins. The text on the postcard says, "In Southern Italy, the occupation troops kill and burn, threaten the population and pillage. Many black troops rape women. The districts completely soiled by the black troops have to be cleaned up by Italians." The second

connected card depicts a female farmer in the north waving to a passing soldier in a tank with the text saying, "In Northern Italy there reigns tranquility and order. The new Republican Italy is in full reconstruction. Above all, there dominates a steady faith in the future."³⁶

Propaganda such as this undoubtedly affected the ways in which Italians viewed black soldiers whether they were American or Moroccan. Black was thus connected to rape and violence. Well before the occupation of Naples, American and British white populations had long held racist views of Africans which definitely carried into their time in Italy, even including their fellow soldiers. Moreover, according to historian Isobel Williams, 1035 incidents of rape and 82 of attempted rape, they were mostly attributed to French Moroccan or colored troops.³⁷ Thus, it would appear that a substantial number of Moroccan soldiers were executed without trial for offenses of rape, disproportionately high when being compared to other Allied soldiers.

It appears that Malaparte's intention was to shock his readers and to prove that Neapolitans were forced to commit crimes and prostitute themselves due to the dire conditions of their surroundings. He describes the complete humiliation of Italians, particularly of women and children by Allied soldiers. In doing so, he places the Allies in the wrong – thus establishing them as conquerors and invaders.

The most shocking of Malaparte's chapters is that of American General Clark's arrival banquet in Naples. While aesthetically disgusting, it is also symbolic

³⁶ Herbert A. Friedman, "Race as Military Propaganda Theme," *Psywar.org*, December 8, 2008. <https://www.psywar.org/race.php>.

³⁷ Williams, 33.

of Italo-American relations during occupation. It has been proven that this portion of his novel was based on facts as it is also discussed by Norman Lewis in *Naples '44*.

All Neapolitans believe – our British witness wrote – that at the banquet offered to welcome General Clark – who had expressed preference for fish – the principal course was a baby manatee – the most prized item of the [Naples] aquarium's collection – which was boiled and served with a garlic sauce.³⁸

Malaparte did, however, embellish the orders of General Clark, stating that he demanded fish to be served while at the same time issuing strict orders for no boats to leave the harbor. Lewis does not recall this detail in his account of the banquet. Nonetheless, in an effort to please their new American leader, Neapolitans served what they assured him to be an extremely rare fish from the city aquarium. However, to those at the banquet, the fish they saw resembled the body of a young girl cooked and served on a platter. The bloated and cooked body of the manatee was too much for the American guests to handle as they refused to eat the fish and even accused Neapolitans of savagery.³⁹ Although we know through other accounts that the manatee was served at the banquet, Malaparte does not necessarily make it clear what was served: a fish or a girl. He uses this horrifying scene to highlight the challenging relationship between Americans and Italians. According to Malaparte, Americans undoubtedly viewed Neapolitans as inferiors and barbarians. Essentially, the body of the fish/girl symbolizes the fate of Italian women physically and metaphorically devoured by powerful American men. Thus, in using this shocking metaphor, Malaparte heavily comes down on both groups, believing Americans act

³⁸ Malaparte, 61.

³⁹ Malaparte, 248-256.

as ruthless conquerors, and Neapolitans are too willing to play the part of a defeated and humiliated people.

Malaparte's image of wartime Italy is one of prostitution, depravity and brutality. Having sold over 70,000 copies in its first eight months in the United States, which was twenty times the average novel's sales during that time period, it reached quite a wide audience.⁴⁰ Also, because it was published in 1949, soon after the end of the war, occupation remained fresh in the minds of both Americans and Italians. It was not released in the United States until 1952. Its material was so controversial that it was officially banned by the Vatican in 1950.

***The Skin*, Film Adaptation by Liliana Cavani**

Few other authors have provided us with accounts as sharp as Malaparte. In the 1981 film adaptation of *The Skin*, Liliana Cavani provides us with yet another viewpoint: idle and blasé Italian women aristocrats who refer to young and naive American soldiers as "Vitamin A" to be used for their liking.⁴¹ Similar to the book, the film is a series of vignettes. Malaparte is played by Marcello Mastroianni; Burt Lancaster portrays Gen. Mark Clark, who leads the American invasion of Naples toward the end of World War II, and Claudia Cardinale has a cameo role as an Italian countess. She represents the naivety, yet carelessness, of the 'invading' army, in terms of having any understanding of the Italian, specifically the Neapolitan way of life. As Malaparte portrayed the realities of war, Cavani also displays the disturbing,

⁴⁰ Sergio Luzzatto and Frederika Randall. *The Body of Il Duce: Mussolini's Corpse and the Fortunes of Italy* (New York: Picador, 2006), 146.

⁴¹ Liliana Cavani, *The Skin*, 1981.

often shockingly graphic, representations of prostitution and starvation that took place during and soon after the Second World War.

Malaparte's sarcastic view of a disorganized and messy occupation is also mirrored in Cavani's film adaptation. Yet, Cavani's *The Skin* examines gender relations as she presents viewers with several female lead characters. In 1943, Italian General Malaparte works closely with Mark Clark, a United States general whose presence in Naples, along with hundreds of Allied soldiers, make an attempt to restore Italy's sovereignty following their armistice with the Allies. However, soldiers have the unrestrained freedom to roam the city of Naples and participate in all it has to offer. This, as we know, includes fraternizing with its women and selling their GI rations for companionship, sex, and much more. As Malaparte argued that Neapolitans had no choice in their fraternization with soldiers, she also describes this as a means of survival as they cheaply sell their bodies.

While Malaparte's novel focused mainly on the undercurrents of American exploitation, Cavani's adaptation focuses much more on the women being exploited, creating two dissimilar female characters, varying principally on their circumstances and social status. First is Princess Consuelo (Claudia Cardinale) who often accompanies Malaparte on his trips around the country, but is sexually independent from him. However, she is only allowed this sexual freedom once a natural disaster (Mount Vesuvius) has broken the constraints of marriage. To counter Consuelo's femininity, Deborah Wyatt (Alexandra King), a colonel in the American Air Force, is clever and continually spars with Malaparte as she arrives in Naples. What is most interesting is Wyatt's rank as a colonel, where she specifically

flies planes as part of the United States Air Force, was a position that excluded women during the Second World War. While there were female colonels in the Women's Auxiliary Corps, they did not fly planes like this fictional character. Perhaps this reflects the time in which the film was released (post-feminist movements) and is thus a product of the director. At the end of the film, in typical shocking Malaparte fashion, Wyatt is abducted and raped by a group of soldiers after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius causes chaos in the city of Naples. In using these two very different women, Cavani shows the varying ways in which Neapolitan and American women were both used for their sexuality. Women's bodies were used on both sides, where even American women, in this case a colonel, could also be vulnerable. The fact that Cavani released the film in 1981, following the wave of late-70s feminism is not surprising. Yet, she does not let this manipulate how the film represents the occupation.

Similar to how the novel was received by the public, the film was also understood to be controversial.⁴² However, Cavani's film was controversial because it discussed women's sexuality as its main subject. Women were victims of a patriarchal society, and no matter what position they held, such as Officer Wyatt, they nonetheless succumbed to sexual violence in Naples. Moreover, both the novel and film also suggested that Italy, after the armistice, was reliant upon foreign aid, thus causing a sense of self-shame. Finally, their discussion of prostitution and rampant crime in the city was evidence of dishonorable behavior. Cavani reveals a

⁴² Alessandro Giardino, "Liliana Cavani's *La Pelle*: Debunking the Fake Promises of Postmodern Sexual Emancipation and the Silencing Effect of Cultural Oblivian," *Carte Italiane* 2 (2011).

network of human exploitation in Naples, particularly surrounding women. In doing so, she identifies the voices of the oppressed, thus giving them some sense of agency.

Each of the discussed writers' personalities and influences are reflected in their writing, or film-making. Each focused on specific themes although they wrote about the same subject: the Allied occupation of Naples. Moreover, each is critical of the Allies and their treatment of Neapolitans. As they acknowledge the existence of the black market and prostitution, they do not fault Neapolitans for their actions, but rather commend them for their will to survive. Neapolitans may have acted horribly during occupation as well, also profiting from misery. However, they acted according to survival, which was not necessarily pretty. Essentially, both authors argue that this was what survival looked like during wartime – doing anything to save one's own skin.

Malaparte is highly critical of the social and economic gap between American soldiers and Italians, as well as their mistreatment of Neapolitan citizens. Burns also exposes and shapes a less heroic image of wartime America and its war *heroes* where in contrast, Italy materializes as a refuge for the desperate and lonely. Similarly, Liliana Cavani focused on a particular group in her film adaptation of *The Skin*: women, both Italian and American. She also does not fault Neapolitans for their actions but instead paints Neapolitan women as 'blasé' bystanders simply using American soldiers for food and supplies. Her three female characters, while strong, were eventually subjected to abuse and rape as victims of a patriarchal society. She made it entirely clear that Allied soldiers were also 'conquerors' as well as occupiers.

Moreover, both Malaparte and Burns, wrote their novels shortly after the end of the war, thus shattering the idealized views of American war heroes, who were not supposed to be seen as corrupt participants in the black market. Thus, although Italians are described as immoral, at times prostituting their own children, all three alluded to the desperation of the city as an excuse for their behavior, specifically that they used prostitution and the black market as survival strategies.

All of the oral histories, memoirs, and letters discussed in chapter two were written or spoken in the 1980s and afterward. Therefore, how does time play a role in recounting events as they were experienced nearly fifty years earlier? What could officially be narrated in media and letters home were limited and censored at that time. Through the lens of more recent times, and the ways in which we remember World War II, we tend to sidetrack racism or soldier participation in prostitution. While it is discussed in recent sources and oral histories, the American soldier continues to be valorized as heroic and infallible. Movies and television series such as “Saving Private Ryan,” “The Pacific” and “Band of Brothers,” show an American soldier that is strong, selfless, and most importantly, just.

Thus, in reading these pieces of fiction, we examine another set of viewpoints otherwise undiscussed in primary sources – such as soldier memoirs, interviews, and letters. Malaparte is an Italian ex-Fascist, Burns is an American, but he is disillusioned by war and of his fellow soldiers, and Cavani, is an Italian woman viewing the occupation nearly forty years after the fact. In viewing their perspectives, we examine how Allied soldiers were responsible for much of the crime, disease, and sex going on in Naples from 1943 to 1945, without placing sole

blame on the civilian population. Stereotypes are irrelevant and women are victims rather than objects of desire and exoticism. Thus, fiction provides a more balanced, albeit not perfect, due to each author's intent, interpretation of the sexual economy of Naples during occupation where soldiers were less saints and more sinners.

Ultimately, fiction played a role in the release of information to the American public. Due to censorship, *The Gallery's* release in 1947 was one of the first glimpses into Italy. While media reported on the occupation, its information was limited. Although newspapers and newsreels may have discussed the existence of a black market and venereal disease, they did not go into detail regarding the prostituting of Italian women, particularly children. Soldiers were restricted in what they could say about occupation and as were reporters, such as Milton Bracker for the *New York Times*. Commanding officers and censors, like John Horne Burns himself, regulated the information coming out of occupied Italy. This censorship could have been due to maintaining high morale during wartime as the Second World War did not end for the United States until September of 1945. Fiction maintained a sense of imagination and exaggeration, while also recounting the actual events of occupation. So, as Americans read these two novels during the post-war period, they did not just interpret them as fiction, but as an 'enhanced reality.'

CONCLUSION

Naples, between 1943 and 1945, was a city determined to survive. Facilities were completely disrupted, hunger and disease ruled, and crime, vice, and profiteering were commonplace. As a port city and shipping depot, Naples housed masses of military cargo, including Allied soldiers. As military goods poured into Italy along with its soldiers, nearly one-third of supplies simply 'disappeared.' This vanishing of rations and food, did not always occur as a result of looting, but rather due to the bartering or selling of goods by Allied servicemen as they often participated in the black market. However, in primary sources we viewed that due to withstanding prejudices toward Italians as vengeful, immoral, and 'gangster-like' people, they were frequently characterized as innately corrupt. Thus, while soldiers fed into and also purchased from the black market, they were essentially excused. This is not to say that Neapolitans were innocent bystanders and did not profit from Allied soldiers, yet, they were scapegoated for a majority of crime and prostitution in the city.

Prior to 1943, Neapolitans, or even Italians in general, had little history with Americans and were largely unfamiliar with them, except for the ways in which they were represented in propaganda and stories. Thus, their encounter with them in Naples served as one of the first 'clash of civilizations.'¹ Italy, particularly southern Italy, was a conservative, Catholic, and poor nation, whose people relied on faith and

¹ Porzio, 31.

superstition to guide them through the hardships of war. Moreover, unlike Americans, Italy, as well as many other nations involved in the Second World War, had experienced war on their home front – thus exposing vast atrocities to their women and children. Therefore, the ways in which they fought to survive came in the form of crime and prostitution in Naples. The sexual economy of Naples, in which women used themselves as a good and collateral, thrived, providing Neapolitans with the basic necessities they needed.

Thanks to Curzio Malaparte's sarcasm, we could say that "instead of slavery, the Allies had brought them freedom. [...] Such were these wonderful armies, born, like Venus, of the sea foam."² Yet, during the years of occupation in Naples, the presence of Allied soldiers often proved to be a gender shock for Italian women, and even children, as they experienced sexual exploitation by Allied men which went against all of the customs and gender roles dominant in the Italian South. Although the military attempted to limit fraternization and prostitution in Naples, their efforts were unproductive. So, even as Allied soldiers enthusiastically participated in prostitution, primary sources point to the seducing of soldiers, the prostituting of their children, and widespread venereal disease at the hands of Neapolitan women.

Ultimately, fiction provided us with yet another view of Naples during occupation. While primary sources, such as American soldiers and newspapers, also spoke of crime and vice, they undoubtedly placed blame on Neapolitans, while also

² Malaparte, 33.

making GIs 'savior-like' bent on defending and rebuilding the city of Naples. Rather, Curzio Malaparte and John Horne Burns exposed much of the inner workings of Naples, most significantly, the sentiments and actions of soldiers as they supported the sexual economy of the city. Thus, both pieces of fiction were years ahead of their time in their opposition to the brutalization of women during war and questioning of the intentions of American soldiers. Fiction discussed and deconstructed occupation regardless of its disturbing, ugly, or chaotic nature. Providing readers with a vision of the broken and exhausted Italian landscape encountered by the 'innocent' Allied forces, fiction ultimately critiques notions of evil, freedom, and war, in a city that is literally forced to sell its children.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Memoirs:

Allanbrook, Douglas. *See Naples: A Memoir of Love, Peace, and War in Italy*. Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

Alper, Benedict S. *Love and Politics in Wartime, Letters to My Wife, 1943-45*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

Badoglio, Pietro. *Italy in the Second World War: Memories and Documents*.

Translated by Muriel Currey. New York: Oxford University Press, 1948.

Dole, Bob. *One Soldier's Story: A Memoir*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.

Eisenhower, John S.D. *They Fought at Anzio*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007.

Hill, R.M. and E. Craig Hill. *In the Wake of War, Memoirs of an Alabama Military Government Officer in World War II Italy*, Tuscaloosa, 1982.

Huddle, Mark A. *Roi Ottley's World War II: The Lost Diary of an African American Journalist*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011.

Lewis, Norman. *Naples '44: A World War II Diary of Occupied Italy*. Open Road Media, 2013.

Moorehead, Alan. *Eclipse*, Harper & Row, 1968.

Powers, Dr. Leander K. *Diary of Dr. Leander K. Powers*, 1944.

Toffey, John J. *Jack Toffey's War: A Son's Memoir*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.

Newspaper Articles:

Barrett, William. "To Save Their Own," *New York Times*, November 9, 1952.

"Bombing of Naples," *New York Times*, 27 October, 1941.

Bracker, Milton. "AMG Learns Much from Naples Rule," *New York Times*, March 27, 1944.

Bracker, Milton. "Great Progress Made in Naples," *New York Times*, March 26, 1944.

"District Men Among Naples Crack MP's," *The Washington Post*, June 21, 1944.

"I fenomeni dell'inflazione." *L'Unita*, 23 June, 1945.

"Il gran parco dei divertimenti." *L'Unita*, 11 September, 1946.

"Italians are disappointed." *New York Times*, September 26, 1944.

"L'Italia ha bisogno di un governo progressive e autorevole." *L'Unita*, 2 July, 1945.

Matthews, Herbert L. "Naples is Closed as Typhus Spreads." *New York Times*, December 26, 1943.

Matthews, Herbert L. "Naples Showers Gifts on Allies: Flowers and Fruit Pour Into Jeeps – Shouting Crowds Line Roads to City." *New York Times*, October 3, 1943.

"Naples Civilians Slaughtered By Germans, Fugitives Say." *New York Times*, 30 September, 1943.

“Nell’ eroica lotta contro l’invasore il popolo italiano costruisce la sua unita.”

L’Unita, 19 March, 1944.

Mondadori, Arnoldo. “Allied Bombings of Italy,” *Storia Illustrata*, October 1964.

“Quanto ci costa l’occupazione alleata (La città proibita).” *L’Unita*, 14 September 1946.

Packard, Reynolds. “Roosevelt to Hear of Naples Plunder: AMG Gives Detailed Report on German Atrocities to Secretary Morgenthau,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1943.

“Per la nostra Sicilia.” *L’Unita*, December, 1943.

“Per la purezza del nostro Partito: vigilanza rivoluzionaria!” *L’Unita*, 5 January 1945.

Poore, Charles. “Books on the Christmas List,” *New York Times*, December 7, 1947.

“RAF bombs Naples,” *Toronto Star Weekly*, 25 April, 1942.

Raleigh, John Henry. “The Skin We Save,” *New Republic*, November 17, 1952.

Sullivan, Richard. “Under the Shattered Roof of a Galleria,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1947.

Thomson, Ian. “Book of a Lifetime: *The Gallery*, By John Horne Burns,” *Independent*, June 11, 2009.

Fiction:

Burns, John Horne. *The Gallery*. New York Review Books Classics, 2004.

Malaparte, Curzio. *The Skin*. New York Review Books Classics, 2013.

Films/Newsreels:

Cavani, Liliana. *La Pelle (The Skin)*, DVD. Directed by Liliana Cavani. Italy, 1981.

Giacomelli, L.; Scandone, R. (1996–2009). "The eruption of Vesuvius of March 1944".

Esplora i Vulcani Italiani. Dipartimento di Fisica E. Amaldi, Università Roma Tre. Retrieved December 1, 2015.

Stevenson, Robert (1944). *Mt Vesuvius erupts near Naples, Italy in 1944* (The Travel Film Archive). Naples: Castle Films, YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1bsmv6PyKs0>.

Photos:

Bartoli, Giuseppe. *Tre Popoli Una Guerra*. 1940. Postcard. F. Duval Milan.

Butterfield Jr., Sidney D. *Mount Vesuvius Erupting in Naples Italy*. 1944. The Digital Collection of the National WWII Museum.

Davis, Frank J. *Soldier Marrying an Italian Woman (Naples)*. 1944. Frank J. Davis World War II Photographs, Southern Methodist University, DeGolyer Library.

Duffy, Edmund. Editorial cartoon, 'Good Morning Pupil!' *Baltimore Sun*, 19 July 1943.

La Pelle. Theatrical Poster. 1981. Italy.

"Melvin C. Shaffer World War II Photographs". Central University Library (CUL), Southern Methodist University (SMU).

Millett, Robert. *Italian Children Playing in the Street in Naples*. 1944. The National World War II Museum, New Orleans.

Shaffer, Melvin C. *Frank Davis and Friend Viewing Available Wine*. 1945. Central University Libraries, Southern Methodist University.

Shaffer, Melvin C. *Mother and Child, Poor Section of Naples*. 1943.

Central University Libraries, Southern Methodist University.

Tully, Terence John, *General William Harrison Inspects a Pile of Rubble That Was*

Once a Naples Telephone Building. 1944. The National World War II Museum.

U.S. Government, ""Men Who Know Say No to Prostitutes, Spreaders of Syphilis and

Gonorrhea"," *Venereal Disease Visual History Archive*, accessed April 24, 2016,

<http://vdarchive.newmedialab.cuny.edu/items/show/99>.

U.S. Army Medical Department. *Soldier Seeking Diversion and Recreation in Naples*.

Office of Medical History.

Library of Congress Veterans History Project:

Bonsall, William. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. By Lara Eller.

September 3.

Carmany, Leland O. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. By Tom Swope. May

7, 2001.

Davidson, Elvin. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. April 4, 2000.

Foster, J. Curtis. "Memoirs of J. Curtis Foster, Jr." Library of Congress Veterans

Project, October 26, 2011.

Johnson, Richard C. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. By Louise Forshaw.

May 5, 2008. ‘

Kost, George J. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. June 18, 2001.

Layne, Barney Hence. *Library of Congress Veterans History Project*. By Michael Willie.

February 7, 2003.

Rutgers Oral History Archive:

De Masi, Joseph. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler and Tara Liston.

April 1, 1996.

De Sieghardt, Frederick. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth.

September 23, 2004.

Duerkes, Henry. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth and William Hawkins.

February 25, 2008.

Inglesby, Leo. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth and Jonathan Gurstelle. April 19, 2002.

Kindre, Thomas. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler. June 28, 1994.

Lasner, Arnold. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Dustin Elias. April 26, 2002.

Melso, Domenic. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Sandra Stewart Holyoak and Joseph Pante. October 15, 2005.

Merkle, Gerald. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth, Hans Zimmerer, and Michael Tietjen. October 25, 2004.

Olsen, Robert. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler and Robert Lipschitz. August 8, 1994.

Prince, Allan. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth, Greg Kupsky, and Sandra Stewart Holyoak. July 19, 2001.

Rosta, John. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler and Mark Rybak. October 18, 1997.

Roth, Benjamin. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler. November 4, 1994.

Terry, Lea. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler and Kevin McGuire.

January 26, 1995.

Wagner, Richard. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By Shaun Illingworth and Jason

Hutchins. January 29, 2004.

Zerbe, Domer. *Rutgers Oral History Archive*. By G. Kurt Piehler and David Brown.

November 16, 1994.

Government Documents:

Fisher, Thomas R. "Allied Military Government in Italy," *Annals of the American*

Academy of Political and Social Science 267, no. 1 (January 1950): 114-22.

"Military Saboteur Number One is the World's Oldest Profession," *War Department*

Office, January 21, 1942.

United States War Department. U.S. Government Printing Office. *Pocket Guide to*

Italian Cities. Washington, 1944.

United States War Department. *The Soldier's Guide to Italy*, U.S. Government Printing

Office, 1943.

Secondary Sources:

Atkinson, Rick. *The Day of Battle: the War in Sicily and Italy 1943-1944*. London:

Henry Holt, 2007.

- Battistelli, Pier Paolo and Silvia Trani. "The Italian Military Records of the Second World War," *War in History* 17 (June 2010): 333-51.
- Bedeschi, Giulio. *Fronte italiano: c'ero anch'io. La popolazione in guerra*. Ugo Mursia Editore, 2001.
- Bender, Daniel E. and Jana K. Lipman, *Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism*, New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Bodei, Remo. *We, the Divided (Noi Diviso) Ethos, Politics, and Culture in Post-War Italy, 1943-2006*. Agincourt Press, 2006.
- Bracalini, Romano. "Paisà. Vita quotidiana nell'Italia liberata dagli alleati", Mondadori, 2008.
- Buchanan, Andrew. "'Good Morning, Pupil!' American Representations of Italianness and the Occupation of Italy, 1943-1945," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43 (April 2008): 217-240.
- Bullaro, Grace Russo. *From Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema*, Troubadour Publishing, 2010.
- Colley, David P. "African American Platoons in World War II," *World War II*, November 2006.
- Corti, Eugenio. *The Last Soldiers of the King: Wartime Italy, 1943-1945*. University of Missouri Press, 2003.
- De Grazia, Victoria. *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- De Marco, Paolo. *Polvere di piselli: la vita quotidiana a Napoli durante l'occupazione alleata: 1943-1944*. Napoli, 1996.

- Duggan, Christopher. *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008.
- Ellis, John. *The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II*. London: Book Club Associates – David & Charles, 1980.
- Ellwood, D.W. *L'alleato nemico: la politica dell'occupazione anglo-americana in Italia, 1943-1946*. Milano, 1977.
- Ellwood, D.W. *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century*. Oxford, 2012.
- Fallows, Carol. *Love & War: Stories of War Bride from the Great War to Vietnam*. New York: Bantam Books, 2002.
- Friedman, Herbert A. "Race as Military Propaganda Theme," *Psywar.org*, December 8, 2008. <https://www.psywar.org/race.php>.
- Giardino, Alessandro. "Liliana Cavani's *La Pelle*: Debunking the Fake Promises of Postmodern Sexual Emancipation and the Silencing Effect of Cultural Oblivian," *Carte Italiane* 2 (2011).
- Ginsborg, Paul. *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.
- Goedde, Petra. *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Hohn, Maria. *GIs & Frauleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Holland, James. *Italy's Sorrow: A Year of War, 1944-1945*. MacMillan, 2008.

Hughes, Stuart H. *The United States and Italy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Kaiser, Don. "The Mount Vesuvius Eruption of March 1944,"
<http://www.warwingsart.com/12thAirForce/Vesuvius.html>.

Lamb, Richard. *War in Italy, 1943-1945: A Brutal Story*. Da Capo Press, 1996.

La Gumina, Salvatore. *Wop! A Documentary History of Italian-American
 Discrimination in the United States*. Toronto: Guernica, 1999.

Lilly, J. Robert. *Taken by Force: Rape and American GIs in Europe in World War II*.
 Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Luzzatto, Sergio and Frederika Randall. *The Body of Il Duce: Mussolini's Corpse and
 the Fortunes of Italy*, New York: Picador, 2006.

Margolick, David. *Dreadful: The Short Life and Gay Times of John Horne Burns*, Other
 Press, 2014.

Morris, Eric. *Circles of Hell: The War in Italy 1943-1945*. New York, 1993.

Muschamp, Amy. "Living under Allied Military Government in Southern Italy during
 the Second World War: A Case Study of the Region of Molise," *The Journal of
 Military History* 79 (April 2015): 369-386.

Porzio, Mario. *Arrivano gli alleati! Amori e violenze nell'Italia liberata*. Bari, 2011.

Ramsay, Debra. *American Media and the Memory of World War II*, Routledge, 2015.

Ragione, Ivana. "Napoli Connection: I Figli Della Guerra." *Eventi Napoli*, July, 2008.
[http://eventinapoli.com/tendenze/item/napoli-connection-i-figli-della-
 guerra](http://eventinapoli.com/tendenze/item/napoli-connection-i-figli-della-guerra).

- Risso, Linda & Boria, Monica. *Politics and Culture in Post-War Italy*. Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006.
- Roberts, Mary Louise. *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- Serra, Ilaria. "America's War Bride: How Life Magazine Feminized Italy in the 1950s," *Italica* 86 (Autumn 2009).
- Smyth, Howard McGaw. "The Armistice of Cassibile", *Military Affairs* 12:1 (1948), 12-35.
- Spinosa, Antonio. *L'Italia liberata: 1943-1945 Vita quotidiana guerra e politica nelle fotografie inedite degli archivi americani*. Storia Illustrata, 1995.
- Stein, Eric. "War, Politics, Law – and Love: Italy 1943-1946," *Michigan Journal of International Law* 32 (April 2011): 553-570.
- Trani, Silvia and Pier Paolo Battistelli, "The Italian Military Records of the Second World War," *War in History* 17, no. 3 (June 2010): 333-51.
- Williams, Isobel. *Allies and Italians Under Occupation: Sicily and Southern Italy 1943-45*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Zeiger, Susan. *Entangling Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.