



The Crisis-Woman: Body Politics and the Modern Woman in Fascist Italy (Toronto Italian Studies)

By Natasha V. Chang

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Femininity in the form of the *donna-crisi*, or “crisis-woman,” was a fixture of fascist propaganda in the early 1930s. A uniquely Italian representation of the modern woman, she was cosmopolitan, dangerously thin, and childless, the antithesis of the fascist feminine ideal – the flashpoint for a range of anxieties that included everything from the changing social roles of urban women to the slippage of stable racial boundaries between the Italian nation and its colonies.

Using a rich assortment of scientific, medical, and popular literature, Natasha V. Chang’s *The Crisis-Woman* examines the *donna-crisi*’s position within the gendered body politics of fascist Italy. Challenging analyses of the era which treat modern and transgressive women as points of resistance to fascist power, Chang argues that the crisis-woman was an object of negativity within a gendered narrative of fascist modernity that pitted a sterile and decadent modernity against a healthy and fertile fascist one.

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By Natasha V. Chang Bibliography

- Rank: #4786326 in Books
- Published on: 2015-03-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.30" h x .75" w x 6.30" l, .94 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 176 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

‘This book should appeal to anyone interested in the fascist period, and not only to literary critics. Historians of Italy and of fashion, as well as feminist scholars, to name a few, will find much to learn in Chang’s engaging and well-written monograph.’

(Cristina Mazzoni *Annali D’Italianistica* vol 35:2016)

Review

“*The Crisis-Woman* is a welcome and multi-layered picture of a subtle dynamic between power and resistance on the role of women under the fascist regime. It comes as an important contribution to the growing scholarship on Italian fascism.” (Eugenia Paulicelli, Professor of Italian, Comparative Literature, and Women’s Studies, Queens College, City University of New York)

“Chang has picked up on one of those fascinating phrases, ‘crisis-woman,’ which has circulated in the absence of any definition, much less research, captured its usage in the periodicals of the time, and pinned down practically all of its meanings to the fascist regime.” (Victoria de Grazia, Moore Collegiate Professor of History, Columbia University)

About the Author

Natasha V. Chang is a visiting assistant professor in the Department of Comparative Literature and the Dean of Brainerd Commons at Middlebury College.

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