Gabriella Romani and Jennifer Burns, editors. *The Formation of a National Audience in Italy, 1750–1890. Readers and Spectators of Italian Culture*. Madison and Teaneck: The Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017. Pp. 303. ISBN-13: 9781611478006.

Alessandro Manzoni realized his characters had personal agendas in his benevolently amusing description of how he had to chase after them as they went about their own business. However, he likely ignored that the 25 readers of *I promessi sposi* were similarly active. *The Formation of a National Audience in Italy, 1750–1890* shows just how involved and dynamic his readers turned out to be. The study is not about Manzoni, although he is not overlooked; rather, it is about the rapidly changing desires and attitudes of spectators and the reading public that developed in nineteenth-century Italy. Specialists of the period have come to expect sophisticated, well documented, and highly original work from the desk of Gabriella Romani. Once again, together with her co-editor, Jennifer Burns, she delivers admirably.

Using as a point of departure studies on gaze, spectatorship, and reader reception, this compendium focuses on the Italian post-Risorgimento when Italians could no longer be divided into elite and not. As economic, educational, and social changes overturned traditional societal determinations, Italians became consumers as well, and as consumers, they demanded further sectorial divisions (gender, age, class, education, interest, politics) to support their consumption, including in literary matters. Consequently, writers, too, had to understand and address their readers as consumers and valid shapers of culture.

The essays of this study are divided into three main sections. On the whole, the work does not define an audience, recognizing the multifaceted and unstable nature of the term. On the other hand, there are documented milestones that help describe audience. Giacomo Mannironi, in “The Economics of Reading Cultural Consumption of Novels and *letteratura amena* in Eighteenth-Century Venice,” reminds us not to overlook the quantitative aspects of literature, including the price of books and cost of living. Roberto Riso’s essay, “‘The Virtue of Wanting’: *Galatei* and Readers in Nineteenth-Century Italy: Training the Citizen and Educating the Public between Bourgeois Values and the Risorgimento,” deals with self-help books that became popular once again in Italy after the success of Melchiorre Gioia’s *Nuovo Galateo*. Here was an open admission, directed at different sectors of society and not just intended for upper classes, that the new Italy

needed such guides to “buy” its way into “all elements needed for shaping how to create [her]self and [her] people in harmony” (44). Galateï, readily discounted for not being literature, reveal the collective memory of a disparate society forming itself through new manners and mores.

In “National Readership and Cultural Consumerism in Late Nineteenth-Century Italy: Edmondo De Amicis’s *Sull’Oceano* and Its Strategic Appeal to Emotions,” Gabriella Romani describes the inevitable importance of emotions to Italian audiences; she pinpoints moments of high sentimentalism in books dealing with the new problem of mass emigration that Italians had to contend with even as they searched for their own *Italianità*. She emphasizes the importance of addressing consumer feelings such as “loyalty, sympathy, piety, love for the country and the family, etc.” (65) through sentimental works such as those of De Amicis and Serao. Nor were authors unaffected, as Giulia Brian shows in “A ‘Question of Rule of Thumb’!: Antonio Fogazzaro between Publishers and Readers,” which poignantly depicts how authors had to accept the new power of editors, who knew the often-sentimental tastes of consuming readers far more realistically. Fogazzaro was not alone among those contemporaries who considered putting pen and paper away forever because of fickle audiences.

Editors, reviewers, and commentators, of course, also held notable sway in shaping consumer tastes, as Martina Piperno describes in “Constructing the Myth of Vico between Press and Literature (1802–1846).” Similarly, Italian Romanticism, a literary phenomenon that is often ambiguous in Italian literature, came about through such constructions of taste as we read in “Toward an Archaeology of Italian Modernity: Rethinking the Classicist/Romantic Quarrel” by Fabio Camilletti. Inevitably, taste changed further as new audiences, mostly students and unproven writers, demanded that their emergent works be published. How profound was the consternation of editors, then, as Federico Casari shows in his article entitled “Defining Young Audiences in Post-Unification Italy: Participation and Interaction in the Political and Literary Press.” Evidence of a new consumer audience could also be seen in the Sunday journalism of papers such as *Fanfulla della Domenica* and others. This was literature that could literally be thrown away, not made to last, according to Fabio Finotti in “A Force Field: Literature, Journalism and the Market at the End of the Nineteenth Century.”

The new consumers affecting viewing and reading tastes most were women readers and female audiences. The essays of section three convincingly argue that, given new social infrastructures and the ineluctable societal changes they

stimulated, by the late nineteenth century, women as consuming spectators and readers had to be taken seriously. From the changes brought about in theatres and academies, as we read in the essays by Paola Giuli (“From Academy to Stage: Improvisation, Gender, and National Character”) and Katharine Mitchell (“Evenings Out: Female Spectators of Opera and Theater in Late Nineteenth-Century Italy”), to considerations of how reading materials moved away from edification and from confirmation of acceptable moral behaviour (in the essays “The Revolution in Reading: From Manzoni’s ‘twenty-five readers’ to the ‘twenty-five-thousand female readers’ of *romanzi d’appendice*” by Adriana Chemello; “Reading as ‘evasione militante’: *Fosca* (1869) by Iginio Ugo Tarchetti” by Olivia Santovetti; and “Bovarism in a New Key: The Reader of Novels and the Social Sciences in fin-de-siècle Italy” by Maria Grazia Lolla), we arrive at the carefully elucidated and valid connections made to a similar audience revolution in social media today in Ombretta Frau and Cristina Gragnani’s piece, “La Piccola Posta: Twitter for the Nineteenth-Century Woman?”

Supported by highly informative and often thought-provoking notes, as well as a rich bibliography, this volume offers noteworthy material for reflection in any arena where modern audiences, and not just Italian ones, are the focus of study and discussion.

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Han Lamers and Bettina Reitz-Joosse. *The Codex Fori Mussolini: A Latin Text of Italian Fascism*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. 152. ISBN 9781474226950.

Han Lamers and Bettina Reitz-Joosse present for the first time in English translation the *Codex Fori Mussolini*, a Latin text commissioned to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Italian Fascism. Written by the classics scholar Aurelio Giuseppe Amatucci (1867–1960), the 1,200-word text presents an idealized history of Fascism from its origins through the first decade of Mussolini’s rule. The *Codex* was printed on parchment and enclosed, along with some gold commemorative coins, in the base of the giant marble obelisk inscribed MVSSOLINI DVX that was erected in 1932 at the Foro Mussolini sports complex in Rome.