

‘Seen Through GI Eyes’: American Soldiers’ Travel Narratives in Occupied Italy and Sicily

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As the Allied frontline pressed through the rugged Italian peninsula during the Second World War, it left in its wake a cast of beleaguered soldiers across Italy and Sicily in a series of military institutions and bivouacs. The lingering presence of soldiers the men and military to seek out entertainment, leisure, and new experiences within the occupied territory. In cities and towns, the military organized experiences and curated spaces for soldiers with spare time or on leave. Military newspapers and other military ephemera helped to curate Italy and its many cities and spaces as tourist destinations for soldiers to experience. As these soldiers ventured out across the peninsula, the *Stars and Stripes* newspapers, the most widely distributed U.S. military newspaper, published soldier narratives and narrations of Italians and Italian spaces that constructed contradictory and complimentary images of soldiers, Sicilians, and Italian peoples. The travel narrative columns, “Yank About Italy” and “Yank About Sicily,” provided a space for soldiers to recount their adventures traversing Italy and making them widely accessible to other U.S. soldiers.¹ In doing so, the authors constructed imaginaries of Italy and Italians as both familiar and foreign, gendered and feminized, and commodified and experiential; while simultaneously constructing an image of a peripatetic American male soldier that was simultaneously a cosmopolitan traveler, hegemonic tourist, and indifferent occupier.

¹ This essay explores a series of travel narratives depicted within the columns, “Yank About Italy” and “Yank About Sicily,” in conjunction with other travel related articles in *Stars and Stripes* newspapers. These columns were published within three editions of the *Stars and Stripes*: Sicily (1943-1944), Naples (1943-1945), and Rome (1944-1946).

Soldier's travel narratives published in the *Stars and Stripes*, like the other travelogues that were particularly popular in the nineteenth century, were first-person narratives of soldiers' subjective experiences travelling across Italy and Sicily. Authored by individual soldiers, captivated by the images and experiences of their travels abroad, these travelogues functioned as entertaining pieces that stimulated a curiosity, encouraged travel, or interpreted the space and people of their newly occupied territory. These are exceptionally personal and vivid narratives of soldiers experiencing Italy from spending time at tourist sites to a night at the opera. The travel column sought to make exploration accessible to all soldiers with access to the newspaper. Yet, the accounts are entirely fashioned by the travelling soldier's "viewpoint and perceptions," signifying a narrative that exists somewhere "between imagination and reality".² The travelogues published within *Stars and Stripes* underscore this liminality as soldiers melded their subjectivities and various priorities, from the military to the personal, to construct narratives that both encouraged and shaped an interest in their occupied territory.

However, these travelogues in the *Stars and Stripes* newspapers existed in a negotiated space between soldiers' reflections and military messaging. The history of the *Stars and Stripes*, as Cindy Elmore has shown, is one of continuous conflict between journalistic independence and government-military oversight. Throughout World War II, the paper was commended for its journalistic integrity and the efforts of journalist soldiers, but soldiers often engaged in selective self-censorship and fell victim to military oversight for stories that could impact troop morale.³ Luigi Bruti Liberati's study of the Algiers edition in 1943 and 1944 argued that the newspapers are

² A. Dadhich, "Travelogues as Source of History: An Overview of Francis Bernier's Travel Writings," *Dialogue*, vol. xiv, no. 1 (June 2018), p. 57.

³ C. Elmore, "Stars and Stripes: A Unique American Newspaper's Historical Struggle against Military Interference and Control," *Media History* vol. 16, no. 3 (August 2010), p. 304-305.

indicative of soldiers' sentiments, because of the lack of military oversight and their maintenance of journalistic integrity.⁴ In addition to be reflective documents of soldiers' sentiments, soldiers' travel possessed the ability to construct soldiers perceptions and understandings. In her study of postwar travel narratives, Anne Wingenter argued that Americans' travel writings ascribed war and fascism to the figurative idea of Italy and helped to normalize postwar war tourism.⁵ Nonetheless, the newspaper and these travelogues operated in a negotiated space of depicting subjective experience and militarily conformed narratives, while shaping perceptions and subsequent soldier-tourist experiences.

As socially reflective and constructive documents, soldiers' travel narratives, if investigated collectively, represent the promotion of a gendered, imperial, and tourist gaze by American soldiers. Offering a distinct perspective to soldier mobility and tourism, soldiers' travel narratives reveal that not only did soldiers think of themselves as soldier and tourist, but also the consequences and limits of this mobile perspective. In one respect, these narratives generated new imaginings of what it meant to be American and Italian or soldier and civilian by portraying Italian civilians and the nation as feminized, antiquated, and consumable through the construction of the Italy and Sicily as a place to experience. By engaging in the unfamiliar, soldiers interpreted themselves and their world through travel and tourism, while also othering, and specifically gendering, Italians and Sicilians as they moved about the peninsula. This othering was done by creating narratives that centered an American male soldier that toured, adventured, othered, and consumed the sights and people of Italy and Sicily, and defined himself and American masculinity

⁴ L. Liberati, "The Stars and Stripes e la campagna d'Italia dall Sicilia a Roma, 1943-1944," in M. Bacigalupo (ed.), *America and the Mediterranean*, Torino, Otto Editore, 2003, p. 613-623.

⁵ A. Wingenter, "'Eternal City, Sawdust Caesar': Americans on Tour in Post-WWII Rome (1944-1960)," *Annali d'Italianistica* vol. 28 (2010), p. 317-40.

through his experiences abroad. Indicative of the toll of occupation and war upon soldier-civilian relations, soldiers' accounts in the "Yank About" columns stressed soldiers' ambivalence towards occupation and at times their complete indifference towards occupied civilians. In other respects, these narratives ran contrary to soldiers' desires and military intention by revealing that soldiers both embraced and criticized travel and tourism, either because of its inaccessibility or their disinterest. Soldiers expressed a desire for an end to the war and a return home as travelogues depicted both a nostalgia and superiority of America. Expressing a disdain for military policies and restrictions on their movement, soldiers argued they were unable to experience Italy in similar ways as the column writers. Their immobility ran contrary to the constructed imaginaries of soldiers traversing Italy embodying the limits and consequences of soldiers' travel narratives.

These travel narratives worked with other military ephemera to shape occupation and soldiers' perceptions of Italy and Italians. Upon entering the Italian peninsula, the Allied military created and dispersed a series of tourist guides and other military ephemera for soldiers that provided rough outlines of Italian history, mapping and listing points of interest to help soldiers tour cities and spaces for a soldier on furlough or with a day pass. For these guides, it was about the curation of Italy and Italian spaces for an invading army. This was not necessarily about enabling active participation and integration with society. Rather, through their curation, they functioned as supervisory documents, as they served to "*guide*, if not *control*" soldiers' interactions abroad.⁶ The importance of structuring this encounter for the American soldier was rather clear to the authors and military leaders. Tying the significance of Rome's history and Allied conquest with the upright conduct expected of the soldier, General Harold Alexander wrote in the foreword to

⁶ C. Anderson, "Accidental Tourists: Yanks in Rome, 1944–1945," *Journal of Tourism History*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2019), 32 [italic font in original].

Soldier's Guide to Rome, "The eyes of all the world are upon our actions in the 'Eternal City', and we will show the world by our example the high standard of conduct and bearing of our victorious Allied Armies."⁷ While helping to control occupation and soldier conduct, these types of guides seized upon past perceptions of Italy as a tourist destination and the image of the American tourist and crafting, as Marisa Escolar has shown, an image of the soldier-tourist that was, for the American soldier, a more palatable and "more familiar role than the invader;" an image that persists within soldier travel narratives.⁸

Moreover, these military guides worked with soldier travel narratives to help soldiers interpret themselves as masculine soldier-tourists within an occupied space. Andrew Buchanan has demonstrated that the Allied occupation of Italy was comprised through an interconnection of war and tourism as soldier's interpreted themselves as soldier-tourists.⁹ Questioning the consciousness of soldiers' tourist experiences in relation to the deliberate postwar tourists, Carolyn Anderson emphasized the incidental aspects of soldier-tourism as the military and soldiers responded to the dynamics of occupation.¹⁰ Soldiers' tourist experiences amidst war and occupation and their interpretation in travel narratives were gendered phenomena that reified and reconstructed American and Italian femininities and masculinities. Soldier-tourism and their accounts of them were spaces in which soldiers could construct their masculinities and interpret their occupied places. As a result, soldiers constructed "hegemonic masculinities" within their travel narratives

⁷ *Soldier's Guide to Rome*, Italy, Allied Control Commission, 1944, p. 6. This and several other soldier-tourist guides are digitally accessible through the American Academy in Rome.

⁸ M. Escolar, *Allied Encounters: The Gendered Redemption of World War II Italy*, Fordham, Fordham University Press, 2019, p. 17.

⁹ A. Buchanan, "'I Felt like a Tourist Instead of a Soldier': The Occupying Gaze—War and Tourism in Italy, 1943–1945," *American Quarterly* vol. 68, no. 3 (2016), p. 593–615.

¹⁰ C. Anderson, "Accidental Tourists," p. 22–45.

that demonstrated their ways in which they would “legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance”.¹¹ From their sexual pursuits to their assumptions of American cultural superiority, travel and tourism became the means for which they justified occupation and their positions abroad, but also feminizing and othering their occupied peoples. The construction soldiers’ masculinity was constructed alongside the feminization and othering of Italy and Italian peoples through narratives of Italian women’s sexual availability or the failures of the Italian man and nation. Allied occupational forces utilized sexualized and gendered imaginaries of occupied peoples and nations and these images had consequences for soldiers’ behaviors and understandings.¹² In her study of the cultural representations of Italy and the United States during and after World War II, Marisa Escobar argued that the American military employed images of a “white, masculine United States redeeming black, feminized Italy”.¹³ A throughline that resonated within soldiers’ travel narratives and impacted their tourist experiences and perceptions in Italy.

This framing of soldiers as tourists was immediate in August of 1943. Less than a month after arriving in Sicily, the military published its first newspaper for the Sicilian front. The newspaper announced the opening of American and Allied spaces for soldiers’ leisure to make their new occupied territory more tenable for the newly arrived soldiers. They described the setup and importance of these Allied spaces from military installations, Red Cross stations and amenities, Sicilian theaters, sport recreation areas, beaches, and officers’ clubs in Sicily. Scattered throughout news of the home front and warfront and throughout the Sicilian edition, as well as in the

¹¹ T. Carrigan, B. Connell, J. Lee, “Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity”, in H. Brod (ed.), *The Making of Masculinities*, Winchester: Allen & Unwin, Inc., p. 92.

¹² M. Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013.

¹³ M. Escobar, *Allied Encounters*, p. 7.

Neapolitan and Roman editions, the significance of travel, tourism, and the experience of Italy emerged from male soldiers' articles, poems, and op-eds. Experiences that were substantially more intimate and blunt about the priorities and experiences of the soldier. Whether the ruins of Pompeii, the Altar of the Fatherland, a night at the cinema or opera, or dinner at the home of an Italian family, travelogues depicted an American soldier whose experiences of occupation and occupation were shaped through tourism and travel across Italy.

The sights and history of Pompeii helped the soldiers interpret themselves as cosmopolitan tourists and hegemonic soldiers fighting for an interconnected history of western civilization. A soldier iterated to the reader the importance and significance of Pompeii being “seen through GI eyes.” This Pompeii travelogue could read as though it was written for any typical tourist of Italy that desired a deeper appreciation for its history, except for its emphasis on the perception of the male soldier. By stressing soldiers' perceptions, the author reified the defining processes of occupation and mobility on the male identity of the soldier. Defined against their fellow occupied citizens, the column contends that the Pompeiians were a laudable people for soldierly admiration because they “concentrated upon drinking, the fair sex, gladiatorial combat, the theater, and prodigious eating,” all the things desired by the American soldier. Pompeiians were presented as “a happy and prosperous people who had the misfortune to run afoul of an obstreperous volcano” whose pertinence to the soldier stemmed from a culture and way of life that any soldier could appreciate. The author discussed how this history and experience was accessible and easily accessible to any GI with “a guide (100 lire) and reasonably strong legs.” Illustrating the ever-present context of war, the author ominously described this inescapability as the tourist area was scattered with “great, gaping holes caused by twentieth century bombs”.¹⁴ The article poses the

¹⁴ J.A.B., “Yank About Italy,” *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, November 5, 1943, p. 2.

opportunities available to the cosmopolitan and hegemonic soldier-tourist that was enriched and enthused by the history and peoples of their occupied territory.

Yet, soldier-tourism did not always mean a foreign and new experience, it could also mean nostalgia for Americana and a larger intermingling of cultures. American silent films at Sicilian theaters had the ability to craft social and cultural blending. A soldier's trip to the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele, the "smallest and shabbiest cinema" of Sicilian movie theaters was packed with soldiers and Sicilian children and "dozens more than there was room for". The doorman, smoking a cigarette, told the GI, it's "always a full house when we have Tomma Mixa." A silent film from acclaimed actor Tom Mix, twenty years after the fact, enthralled Sicilian children and the nostalgic American soldier. Angelo, the 12-year-old Sicilian child that sat next to the soldier, "I, too like Tomma Mixa... This picture I have seen already seven times." Upon leaving the Sicilian theater, the GI observed two sailors entering the theater, "I'll be damned... Tom Mix. Hell, it's been ten years since I saw him. Let's go in".¹⁵ Sicilian theaters with American films helped soldiers intermingle with the rest of Italian society, but while also noting Sicily's perceived lack of modernity through an appreciation for American silent films.

Such an appreciation of the United States and its culture are throughout the travelogues as American exceptionalism emerged as soldiers defined themselves and America against Italy. Their observations also teetered upon outright rejection. One author found an American soldier that would, "gladly trade all the grandeur and historical lore of the Old World for one handful of [American] dirt." While observing the Tyrrhenian Sea, the author pontificated to the stonewalling soldier about its relation to Homer's *The Odyssey*. In their travels they discussed Ancient Rome

¹⁵ B. Meza, "Yank About Sicily," *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, May 30, 1944, p. 2.

and Julius Ceaser to the Colosseum and catacombs, but the implacable soldier argued that Italy could never be as great as his hometown of Little Falls, Minnesota. While the soldier had no interest in the ruins of Ancient Rome, the stubborn soldier declared his limited interest in touring Italy: “I just want to send home a postcard to Mom with Rome on it. She’ll be tickled pink.” Much to the dismay of the author, all the soldiers’ experiences in Italy and the information and history gathered by the soldier solidified an idea of America to demystify Italy. His dismal of Italy and tourist experiences was not alone in the newspaper articles. Yet, the soldier expressed an aspect of Italian society that found particularly enchanting: Italian women. The stubborn soldier had an unequivocal interest in Italian women as he frequently sought to bring them back to his quarters upon his travels with the author.¹⁶

As soldiers moved through Italian spaces, they always noted the beauty of the scenery and they usually also emphasized the beauty of women, but also the lack of it; observations that placed Italian women into contradictory roles and imaginaries. A travelogue about Mondello beach discusses its significance as a strategic foothold in the invasion of Sicily in the summer of 1943 and how one year later it was filled with beachgoers, in the form of Allied soldiers, service women, and Sicilian women. For the male GI in the summer 1944, the Mondello beach still offered the imposing sight of American and Allied militarism in the form of naval vessels, but also the beauty of the Mediterranean Sea and Sicilian sailboats, and now it was filled with beachgoers. The beach now offered, “lovely, live pinup girls in the form of nurses and local products.” Far from hiding the commodification and dehumanization of Italian women by describing their presence as “beach ornaments,” the author warns that American “Army Nurse Corps gals put all Sicilian women to

¹⁶ J.A.B., “Yank About Italy,” *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, September 24, 1943, p. 2, 4.

shame,” and that this is evident to any GI that possesses “a pair of high-powered binoculars from the enlisted men’s side of the beach”.¹⁷ They were sexualized but secondary to Allied women; a othering gaze that emphasized the femininity of both Allied and Sicilian women, but degraded one to the other. While Mondello beach no longer served as a formidable beachhead and contributed directly to the warfront, it now served the purpose of leisure and functioned as a space in which to experience and other through the feminization and degradation of the foreign feminine. A feminization that continued as Italian and Sicilian women were depicted as a contest and trinket, a perception that constructed an American soldier’s masculinity and the loss of the Italian male’s masculinity.

Within the travelogues, Italian women took on a more prominent and visible role than Italian men. The soldiering male writers sexualized them by depicting their perceived sexual availability, attractiveness, and promiscuity. However, the stories additionally othered Italian women by tying their sexuality to their perceived lack of modernity, poverty, or conservative values. In both instances, Italian and Sicilian women became a means to other and sexualize while affirming the soldiers’ masculinity. Addressing a soldier’s potential desires for courtship, Corporal Theodore N. Webster described the cultural and social impedances of acquiring a “young signorina” for the inexperienced soldier in a “short guide” for “pursuing the elusive female.” He described the potential for an encounter, but also its limits: “In case you, a pleasure-seeking GI, happen to meet a ravishing svelte-eyed, well-molded signorina and succeed in making a hit with her, the chances are, unless you are extremely clever, you will be held on first base by forces stronger than yourself.” These forces are that of a socially conservative Italian family. Upon the

¹⁷ H.M., “Yank About Sicily,” *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, May 26, 1944, p. 4.

invitation to the Italian home, the soldier constructs the stereotype of a conservative Italian family and the dynamics that would impede any soldier's advance, from an overbearing older brother to an over inquisitive mother. Yet, the brother and father are presented as useless deterrents in the face of a persistent GI, as the soldier ambiguously contemplates a wide array of possibilities if he could "only get that baby somewhere alone".¹⁸ This unmodern and socially conservative perception and portrayal of the Italian family presents them and their efforts as hopeless, no matter how difficult or resistive they are to the persistent determination of the Allied soldier. Yet, in this case the soldier was unsuccessful in his advances, but he would try again another day. The family then becomes a contest for the American soldier; a game, that if won, possessed sexual possibilities. Then Italian women and the family, win or lose, became about the pursuit, the attempt, and the story of the chase.

This feminization and consumption in soldiers travel narratives reaffirm two competing views of the Mediterranean in the American imagination. On the one hand you have an idealized version of Italy through the tourist lens of indulgent, affluent, and erotic experience through picturesque cities, beaches, and women. The other is an ethnic or racial prejudice against peoples of the Mediterranean and soldiers perceived their occupied peoples through both imaginaries.¹⁹ In soldiers' jockeying for power in a contest with the Italian family, Italian men tended to be framed around a general laziness and inability to support a family—a larger symbolization for the defeat of the nation and a loss of masculinity. A stereotype that parallels other images constructed during the war, from Italian men as loser, as they were unable to maintain the nation, women, or the

¹⁸ T. Webster, "Yank About Sicily," *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, September 28, 1943, p. 2, 4.

¹⁹ F. Moramarco, "'Imagine All that History': American views of the Mediterranean and its People," in *America and the Mediterranean* eds. M. Bacigalupo and P. Castagneto, 46

family. In a write-up on a “typical” Sicilian family, Salvatore Lauricelli, a “happy man” that “never said a word” was representative of the failures of the nation. Recently returned from war, Salvatore suffered from shellshock from his time in the service. His large extended family was “very poor, but no poorer than many others” and they all resided in a one room apartment. The house consisted of an “entrance broken out” with a “fishing net” functioning as a door. The pregnant 15-year-old sister-in-law is married to Carlo who sold “American tobacco and cigarettes on the black market”.²⁰This evaluates the actions of the sister-in-law through the qualifier of her age, passing a judgement that asserts his own sense of moral superiority. Carlo, unlike Salvatore, sustains his family but it is through his dependence upon American goods and criminality. This travelogue is much less whimsical than the previous analysis of the Sicilian family as it takes an observational and unbiased tone. An impartial tone that solidified stereotypes of poverty, loss of masculinity, and the failure of the traditional family through a tone that asserts the objectivity of observations.

The previous two authors were particularly invested in crafting stereotypes of Italian and Sicilian families through observational and whimsical narratives, but they also took on a more apathetic tone. Sergeant Stanley Meltzoff depicted a time that he was having wine at a restaurant and was entirely confused by the strained dynamics of an Italian family. The story constructs and affirms stereotypes of the failed and lazy Italian father and emotional mother, and a baby of “indeterminate sex. It was undeniably ugly. Its features were too large and heavy and made it look like a dwarf.” Upon sipping his wine, the soldier recognized the ugly and dirty baby because he had crossed paths with the child and father several nights before. He asks what happened to the child’s father and his bartender, the Italian woman, recounts that the father had left the child and

²⁰ P. Furst, “Yank About Sicily,” *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, May 23, 1944, p. 2.

her in an emotional tirade. In the end, he leaves and contemplates that he will never understand their or any Italian family's dynamics.²¹ Through the tropes of the lazy and absent Italian father, racialized and degrading perceptions, and dissolution of the family articulates an othering that fueled soldier ambivalence.

Soldiers' indifference was further stimulated as the war dragged on and soldiers grew wearisome of their time abroad. While attending a performance of the opera, *La Bohème*, in Naples, Private First-Class Clarence Bennet confided his interest to the author, "This is the first opery show I ever seen." Halfway through the first and second act, the soldier criticized: "I like music with a lot more snap to it, with a lot more pep... like hillbilly songs and square dances... I just love that kind of stuff... Now don't get me wrong. I like sad stuff too. One of my favorite songs is 'I've Got the Blues,' especially the way Benny Goodman plays it." Yet, Bennet found joy in the dramatics of the second act as he was "slapping his knee and chuckling." However, the length of the opera took its toll on the soldier as his eyes wandered the audience, "See that chicken in the eighth row... I'd like to meet her..." Upon the final act, Bennet contemplated the length of war to the length of the opera as he "fidgeted impatiently" and questioned, "Say, do you think the war will be over in four months?"²² It would be another eighteen months before the end of the war, but soldiers' exhaustion of war was a common theme in the newspaper column, something that tourism, and stories about tourism, could not remedy.

While these narratives of travel and tourism understood Italy as a commodified experience and Italians as an othered people, soldiers argued that they could not achieve a similar type of experience in Italy and Sicily because of military restrictions on soldier mobility. Writing to the

²¹ S. Meltzoff, "Yank About Italy," *Stars and Stripes (Rome)*, Oct 17, 1944, p. 4.

²² R. Martin, "Yank About Italy," *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, December 7, 1943, p. 2.

paper in September of 1943, Private First-Class Milt Grossman wrote that military restrictions on soldier mobility—off-limits towns, bars, clubs, etc—inhibited soldier-tourism. The narratives of tourism and travel contrasted the actual soldier experience, as he responded directly to the “Yank About” column and travelogues:

We, the undersigned are indebted to you for giving us fine script and beautiful verbal scenes of Sicilian countrysides and the local equivalent of life. However, we wonder how long this will last—for we too would like to wander out and dip our fingers into the Sicilian scenes on occasion. We can’t always copy what you have and send it home in a letter.²³

Hinging his argument upon the importance of being able to send the experiences of the foreign and exotic home, drives home the importance of defining the nation and self against the other. While also allowing us to consider the significance of immobility in relation to mobile imaginaries.

The military utilized “off-limits” towns, bars, and areas to structure the encounter, usually attempting to avoid venereal disease and other actions deemed undesirable by soldiers. The use of “leave centers”—military installations that offered recreation and relaxation—to alleviate the realities of war for troops on several day furloughs did not come into use until 1944 and 1945.²⁴ Writing a week earlier, Private First-Class Carl G. Rondinelli similarly questioned the soldier’s travel limits and restrictions placed on soldier mobility when compared to travel articles: “Many of us are wondering why Palermo is on limits to troops and all the other towns are barred to soldiers.... It seems to all of us that we GIs deserve an opportunity to walk into any town and just look around and enjoy a change of scenery.” Rondinelli argued that that the military gave them much more freedom in North Africa and that since most soldiers had been abroad so long, he

²³ M. Grossman, “Off Limits Towns,” *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, September 24, 1943, p. 2.

²⁴ F. Steckel, “Morale Problems in Combat: American Soldiers in Europe in World War II.” *Army History*, no. 31 (1994): p. 1–8; 6.

contended that they knew how to properly conduct themselves.²⁵ Envyng the agency of movement depicted in the travelogues, Rondinelli and Grossman depicted their reality of furloughs, day passes, and off-limits towns that ran contrary to the soldier-tourist and travel narratives.

Aside from a disdain for military restrictions, there was also a rejection of soldiers' travel and tourism more broadly within the newspapers. Every issue, while shaping an ideal soldier-tourist, consists of the news from the home front and a longing for home. Poetry was one venue that expressed an intense longing for home and a disdain for the occupation and tourist experiences abroad. One soldier recorded in a poem entitled, "Travelogue":

I've had my fill
Of exotic sights.
I'd greatly prefer
A chorine in tights.²⁶

Expressing a desire for freedom of mobility to return home, the soldier rejected both war and the foreign experiences of tourism through an end of war and the companionship of a woman. It portrays soldiers' exhaustion and indifference to the war; a sentiment identified in Luigi Bruti Liberati's study of the *Stars and Stripes*.²⁷ It also shows the limits of tourism and travel narratives as these experiences could be unobtainable or undesired. Therefore, soldiers desired an autonomy over their own mobility that ran contrary to military policies, soldiers' deployment, and the tourism propaganda in the military ephemera.

Collectively, this selection of soldier travel narratives depict the mutually constitutive aspects of travel, tourism, war, and occupation in the experiences of male soldiers abroad and their

²⁵ C. Rondinelli, "Off Limit Towns," *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, September 14, 1943, p. 2.

²⁶ T-Sgt. Stan Swinton, "Travelogue," *Stars and Stripes (Sicily)*, December 21, 1943, p. 2.

²⁷ L. Liberati, "The Stars and Stripes e la campagna d'Italia dalla Sicilia a Roma."

ability to construct imaginaries of civilians and themselves. Yet, soldiers were only piece of a larger war and postwar encounter with Italy. Soldiers' imaginaries emphasized curiosity and ambivalence, cosmopolitanism and provincialism, and militarism and tourism to establish their masculinity and interpret their precarious positions abroad. Consequently, soldiers feminized and othered their occupied peoples. Overall, it was a mutual masculinization and feminization that would impact the immediate specifics of war and occupation but also postwar relations. While the bulk of American soldiers would leave at the end of the war and occupation, the ideas and concepts developed during the war and occupation continued to shape postwar thinking and relations. The image of the male soldier persisted into the postwar, but it was supplanted by a much more prominent postwar image of Italy and its peoples and cultures as a feminized and commodified American object.²⁸ Marisa Escolar has shown that this gendering of Italy as feminine during and after the war was required for its postwar redemption and incorporation into the western relations.²⁹ A consequential midcentury restructuring of the U.S.-Italy relationship during and after World War II that was initially shaped and reassessed through the eyes of GIs.

²⁸ I. Serra, "Italy: America's War Bride. How Life Magazine Feminized Italy in the 1950s," *Italica* 86, no. 3 (2009): p. 452-70.

²⁹ M. Escolar, *Allied Encounters*, p. 4-6.