



Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America

Elizabeth Fraterrigo

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Playboy was more than a magazine filled with pictures of nude women and advice on how to mix the perfect martini. Indeed, the magazines vision of sexual liberation, high living, and the good life came to define mainstream images of postwar life. In exploring the history of Americas most widely read and influential mens magazine, Elizabeth Fraterrigo hones in on the values, style, and gender formulations put forth in its pages and how they gained widespread currency in American culture. She shows that for Hugh Hefner, the good life meant the freedom to choose a lifestyle, and the one he promoted was the playboy life, in which expensive goods and sexually available women were plentiful, obligations were few, and if one worked hard enough, one could enjoy abundant leisure and consumption. In support of this view, Playboy attacked early marriage, traditional gender arrangements, and sanctions against premarital sex, challenging the conservatism of family-centered postwar society. And despite the magazines ups and downs, significant features of this playboy life have become engrained in American society.

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